

## **Rural France, War, Commemoration and Memory**

### **The Relationship between the Past and Present**

#### **A Microhistory**

##### Villecroze



##### Aups



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## **Chapter 1: Introduction and Methodology**

By the summer of 1940 the Vichy government had become the political authority in Southern France within which the Var region is situated. The presence of both Italian and German soldiers varied between villages as did the level of resistance. The Var remained under the control of Vichy until allied bombardments on 11<sup>th</sup> August 1944 and the arrival of Allied troops along the coast between le Dramont and Cavalaire on 15<sup>th</sup> August. Throughout the subsequent weeks the liberation of the region occurred village by village.<sup>1</sup> This dissertation provides a micro historical analysis of Villecroze and Aups, two villages in the Var. These two rural villages of Haute-Provence are approximately eight kilometres from each other with very little but dense forest in between. This dissertation carries out primary research into the social and cultural history of these villages and explores the relationship between the past and present, experience and memory. On the one hand this dissertation compares and contrasts everyday life within these two villages during World War Two (WWII). On the other hand it analyses the legacy of war, the construction of myths and the evolution of memory.

As argued by Bartov: ‘the difficulties involved in reconstructing the history of that [French] fractured society are reflected in the competing narratives of the period’.<sup>2</sup> With the liberation came distortions, fabrications and myths; the past was ‘whitewashed’.<sup>3</sup> Charles de Gaulle, provided the first ‘version of the occupation’ with a narrative of French heroism. It was reinforced by films glorifying the Resistance such as *Au Coeur de L’Orage* (1948) by Marc Ferro and *La Bataille du Rail* (1945) by J.C. Simmonds.<sup>4</sup> This narrative is seen to have aided national reconciliation and individual political interests but marginalised the truth. Russo has demonstrated how in the 1950s and 1960s France saw a growth in illusions and

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<sup>1</sup> J.M. Guillon, *Le Var, La Guerre, La Resistance 1939-1945* (CDDP Var, 1994), p.7-51.

<sup>2</sup> O. Bartov, ‘Review: The Proof of Ignominy: Vichy France's Past and Presence’ *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Mar., 1998), pp. 107-131, p.107.

<sup>3</sup> The term ‘whitewashed’ was taken from: S. Fishman, ‘Review: The Power of Myth: Five Recent Works on Vichy France’, *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 67, No. 3 (Sep., 1995), pp. 666-673, p.667.

<sup>4</sup> *Au Coeur de L’Orage* by Marc Ferro is about the Resistance in the Vercors region and *La Bataille du Rail* by J.C. Simmonds is about Lyon. Bartov, ‘Review: The Proof of Ignominy’, pp.108-9, 128.

myths pertaining to its experience of war.<sup>5</sup> However in the 1970s the historiography of France and WWII underwent reassessment. This process was given momentum by the publication of Robert Paxton's *Vichy France* (1972).<sup>6</sup> Although similar ideas had previously been published, notably by Eberhard Jackel, Paxton's work was the first to be widely reviewed and discussed in France.<sup>7</sup> *Vichy France* was published during the Touvier affair in a climate of upheaval and it captured a 'generation eager to find fault with their fathers and elders'.<sup>8</sup> It was seen as a 'turning-point in post-war French historical memory' and numerous works on the topic followed, including Henry Russo's *The Vichy Syndrome* (1987).<sup>9</sup> Marcel Ophuls' documentary *The Sorrow and the Pity* (1969) and Harris and De Sédouy's *Français Si Vous Saviez* (1973) brought this surge of interest to a popular level.<sup>10</sup>

Myths surrounding the Vichy regime and heroic depictions of France united in patriotic resistance were scrutinised at every level. The effect and extent of the Resistance were re-analysed, motives were reassessed and the post-war social rehabilitation process was criticised. The works of Paxton and S. Hoffman led to recognition that collaboration was not solely German-imposed, that Vichy's supposed 'Double Game' was a myth and that anti-Semitism in France was also 'home-grown'.<sup>11</sup> A more nuanced understanding of the past has thus emerged since the 1970s, acknowledging that many Frenchmen fought and killed their

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<sup>5</sup> R. Scullion, 'Georges Perec, W, and the Memory of Vichy France', *SubStance*, Vol. 27, No. 3, Issue 87, (1998), pp. 107-129, p.110; J. Hellman, 'Wounding Memories: Mitterrand, Moulin, Touvier, and the Divine Half-Lie of Resistance', *French Historical Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Autumn, 1995), pp. 461-486, p.472.

<sup>6</sup> M. Temkin, "'Avec un certain malaise': The Paxtonian Trauma in France, 1973-74", *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (Apr., 2003), pp. 291-306; Kedward, 'Patriots and Patriotism in Vichy France', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fifth Series, Vol. 32 (1982), pp. 175-192, pp.176-7; Bartov, 'Review: The Proof of Ignominy', p.108-9; R.O. Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order* (New York, 2001), px-xi.

<sup>7</sup> The French public has been seen to have been unready for the work of German historian Eberhard Jackel. Paxton, *Vichy France*, p.xx.

<sup>8</sup> The Touvier affair was the polarising pardoning of the former member of the Milice, Paul Touvier in 1968 by French president Georges Pompidou. Temkin, 'Avec un certain malaise', p292.

<sup>9</sup> Quote taken from: Temkin, 'Avec un certain malaise', p.291, 293; Hellman, 'Wounding Memories', p.476; Fishman, 'Review: The Power of Myth', p.666; Bartov, 'Review: The Proof of Ignominy', p.108-9.

<sup>10</sup> This can also be seen with the publication of novels such as *La Place de L'étoile* by Patrick Modiano (1968). *Le Chagrin et la Pitié* directed by Marcel Ophuls (1969); *Français Si Vous Saviez*, by Harris and de Sédouy (1973). S. Hayward, *French National Cinema* (New York, 1993), pp.236-7, 205-1. Bartov, 'Review: The Proof of Ignominy', p.108-9; Scullion, 'Georges Perec', p.110.

<sup>11</sup> 'Double Game' refers to the belief that the Vichy government was cooperating only on a superficial level with the Nazis. Temkin, 'Avec un certain malaise', p292-3; Kedward, 'Patriots and Patriotism', pp.177-81; Bartov, 'Review: The Proof of Ignominy', pp.123-7; Scullion, 'Georges Perec' pp.112-3. Paxton, *Vichy France*, pp.x-xx; J. Maignon, *Toulon et le Var dans la Guerre, 1939-1945* (Ecully 1991), p.37.

own.<sup>12</sup> Historiography on this topic has evolved to the extent that it ‘now encourages historians to accept and analyze myths as a cardinal element of the historical process’.<sup>13</sup> This dissertation has used this wealth of thought and study as a springboard for primary research into two local, close-knit communities.

Micro-historical focus has also become increasingly popular amongst Anglophone historians. This can be seen with the works of Megan Koreman’s *The Expectation of Justice, France 1944-1946* (1999) and Robert Gildea’s *Marianne in Chains* (2002).<sup>14</sup> However, much of France remains unexplored and this dissertation adds to their work. Previous studies have highlighted the breadth of experience of war and Koreman insists on the ‘multiplicity of local experience and the vivacity of local identity’. She also notes ‘massive dissatisfaction’ on a local level owing to food shortages and hardships.<sup>15</sup> This dissertation tests the relevance of Koreman’s findings for the villages of Villecroze and Aups. However unlike Koreman’s study which takes three towns spread far apart, this dissertation compares the experience of two small villages within very close proximity.

This investigation tackles a number of conceptual and theoretical issues. The concepts of collective mentality, memory and identity are complex and these terms must be used carefully. In order to grasp an understanding of the collective memory and identity this work investigates views expressed through oral history, publications and commemorative associations, reflecting on the relationship between the individual and the collective and revealing the complexity of public opinion.<sup>16</sup> Microhistory avoids the generalisations involved in large scale analysis and enables a more precise assessment of collective mentality but it must also confront complex internal diversity. The historian can only form educated theories into the collective outlook of a given community, however small.

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<sup>12</sup> Temkin, ‘Avec un certain malaise’ p. 293; Kedward, ‘Patriots and Patriotism’, pp.178-81; Paxton, *Vichy France*, pp.x-xx.

<sup>13</sup> Quote from: Fishman, ‘Review: The Power of Myth’, p.673.

<sup>14</sup> M. Koreman, *The Expectation of Justice, France 1944-1946* (Durham, 1999); R. Gildea, *Marianne in Chains: Daily Life in the Heart of France During the German Occupation* (New York, 2002).

<sup>15</sup> Kedward, ‘Patriots and Patriotism’, pp.186-7; R. O. Paxton, ‘Reviewed The Collaborator: The Trial and Execution of Robert Brasillach by Alice Kaplan *The Expectation of Justice: France, 1944-1946* by Megan Koreman’, *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 106, No. 3 (June, 2001), pp. 1059-1060, p.1060.

<sup>16</sup> Paxton, for example, highlights that *Vichy France* does not adequately address the nuances of public opinion, and points to the worth of microhistories. Paxton, *Vichy France*, p.xxii.

In the course of this investigation it became increasingly apparent how important it is to avoid ‘fitting’ research into a given historical narrative. This dissertation does not attempt to provide a general history of France during WWII. Villecroze and Aups are remote today; during the war they were virtually completely isolated.<sup>17</sup> They are specific case studies with their own history that does not slot neatly into national historical discourses.<sup>18</sup> However, when dealing with microhistory there can also be a tendency to over-isolate and Villecroze and Aups are assessed within their relevant contexts and with attention to surrounding influences. When approached with balance microhistory has the potential to enable great depth of analysis and conclusive investigation.

How collective memory is created and evolves, and its link to the ‘reality’ of the past is a fundamental research topic and focal point of the dissertation. The central research paths are Villecroze’s and Aups’ experience of WWII and how the two villages subsequently came to terms with it. The form that their commemoration takes and its purpose and proximity to the actual events are key. Statements such as, ‘what is often sought is not a total truth but rather [...] a well-functioning foundational myth which can legitimise the post-transitional balance of forces’, will be examined as well as the link between memory and identity.<sup>19</sup> This dissertation investigates these questions with attention to the subtleties involved. It reflects upon the discipline of History and acknowledges the power and responsibility of the historian.<sup>20</sup> Truth in History is precarious and it is partly for this reason that memory and the interaction between the past and present have taken such dominant positions within this research. History is not fiction but reaching the past involves detangling a plethora of

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<sup>17</sup>See appendix 1 for maps and their isolated position within the Var. Interviews and information within the archives also highlight their isolation. M. Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09; Mme Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09; Eliane Peraldi, witness: Marie France Giattinai, Villecroze, 22.10.09; Anthony Beerbhom, Salernes, 20.11.09; Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var : 1W art. 56.

<sup>18</sup>Talking in terms of France as a whole is precarious in itself. Nations are often too readily defined by one dominant or powerful social group, overlooking diversity and difference and ‘eliminating local color’. Gildea, *Marianne in Chains*’ p.13. Bartov questions the danger of using the terms ‘France’ and ‘the French’ in relation to this period but equally questions the danger in not referring to the nation as a whole and the impact that would have for ‘solidarity and identity’. Bartov, ‘Review: The Proof of Ignominy’, pp.107-8.

<sup>19</sup>Quote from: A. J. Norval, ‘Truth and Reconciliation: The Birth of the Present and the Reworking of History’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (Sep., 1999), pp. 499-519, p.513.

<sup>20</sup>History with a capital letter refers to the discipline of history. Paxton accentuated the relationship between memory and history and encouraged discussion on how they influence one another. He was seen by many as a ‘vector of memory’ and destroyer of legends. Equally Russo promoted the concept of historians as ‘carriers’ of memory highlighting both their power and responsibility. Temkin, ‘Avec un certain malaise’, p294-5.

competing historical narratives, contemporary cultural frameworks and purposefully constructed myths.

Research into the chosen area and period is as yet largely unexplored.<sup>21</sup> There are significant works such as, Kedward's *In Search of the Maquis* and David Schoenbrun's *Maquis: The Soldiers of the Night*.<sup>22</sup> However they both focus on the Maquis over a wide area whereas this research specifically looks at the average Frenchman in Villecroze and Aups.<sup>23</sup> There is an absence of analysis into the popular experience of war within these two villages as well as the message and impact of their post-war commemoration. The historiography of the Haute-Var is dominated by autobiographical accounts written predominantly from the perspective of ex-Résistants.<sup>24</sup> These histories have generally been printed locally and have contributed to the creation of legendary stories of the Maquis and helped shape the local historical knowledge. Personal involvement has led prejudice and family honour to confuse Villecroze's and Aups' past. However these accounts, precarious in their factual reliability and for understanding village wartime experience, are of value to this study and analysing the evolution of memory and the legacy of the past.<sup>25</sup> This has made this investigation a challenging untangling of narratives, requiring one to read against the grain in order to unearth the unwritten history of those who lived in Villecroze and Aups.

While the Association National des Anciens Combattants De La Resistance (A.N.A.C.R.) argues that one has to have lived through the war to see it clearly, Paxton highlights how the understanding of France's past has been misled by political agendas and

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<sup>21</sup> Maignon also remarked in his preface that the everyday history of the Var was unknown. While his work provides a useful overview it is limited by the size of its scope. Furthermore the ordinary Frenchman is not his main focus. Maignon, *Toulon*, p.5.

<sup>22</sup> Kedward, H. R., *In Search of the Maquis* (Oxford, 1993); Schoenbrun, D., *Maquis Soldiers of the Night, The Story of the French Resistance* (London, 1981).

<sup>23</sup> The term Maquis refers to those who partook in the rural Resistance. Both terms: 'Resistance' and 'Maquis' are used within this dissertation to refer to the rural Resistance in the Var. Lucie Aubrac's memoirs on her experience within the Resistance in a separate region aptly demonstrate how the 'mundane quality of heroism' has been transformed over time into legend. Fishman, 'Review: The Power of Myth', p.671.

<sup>24</sup> 'Résistant' refers to a member of the Resistance/Maquis. This Résistant perspective, amongst others, can be seen in the accounts of : Dr A. German, *Les Chemins de la Mémoire* (Draguignan, 2007) ; J.M. Sivirine and C. Sivirine *L'homme boussole, Temoignages* (Gemenos, 2007) and G. Sivirine, *Le cahier rouge du maquis, Temoignages* (Gemenos, 2007).

<sup>25</sup> The questionable factual reliability of post-war memoirs has led Paxton to discard them from his own research. Temkin, 'Avec un certain malaise', p.297.

this personal attachment.<sup>26</sup> His foreign status, while criticised by French academics, enables a fresh approach and an invaluable understanding of French history.<sup>27</sup> This dissertation has no personal line to defend or family interest to pursue. This comparative detachment enables distance and a greater degree of objectivity, increasing the potential to shed new light and bringing to mind the statement that ‘the truth about us must be told to us’.<sup>28</sup>

However familiarity with the area is also of value, opening doors for primary research and enabling a starting point for oral history investigation. Knowing the villages and speaking the language cultivates the trust of those interviewed or approached for information. It also allows a greater understanding of the local culture and people, which is especially valuable when conducting and analysing oral history and questionnaires. Understanding the present is useful for understanding the past and this work benefits from approaching the local history of Villecroze and Aups with inside knowledge but without personal attachment.

This dissertation is particularly in debt to the work of local historian and Professor at Aix University, Jean-Marie Guillon. However the angle taken by this analysis and its chosen focus on Villecroze and Aups has not even been explored by local historians and this work required substantial primary research. The sources range from oral history and departmental archives, to remembrance associations and commemoration monuments. Oral history is a key tool for this dissertation. Many claim it to be less reliable than the written word, owing in part to a bias towards these more traditional primary sources.<sup>29</sup> Yet all sources are the result of selective editing by their ‘creator’, can contain falsities and must be approached with attention to historical methodology. Furthermore unlike the static written word, oral testimony has the unique ability to ‘be cross-examined and tested’.<sup>30</sup> It can be revised by both the interviewer and the interviewee and respond to conflicting evidence.<sup>31</sup> The

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<sup>26</sup> Association National des Anciens Combattants De La Resistance, ouvrage collectif editions France D’abord (ed.), *Ceux qui ont fait la Resistance Vous Parlent* No. 2 (Paris, 1998), pp.244; Temkin, ‘Avec un certain malaise’, pp.297-8.

<sup>27</sup> Temkin, ‘Avec un certain malaise’, pp.297-9.

<sup>28</sup> D. Smit cited in: A. J. Norval, ‘Truth and Reconciliation’, pp.514-5.

<sup>29</sup> Russo, for example, argues that history cannot be based on testimonials. Hellman, ‘Wounding Memories’, p.480; Gildea, *Marianne in Chains*, p.12.

<sup>30</sup> O. Figes, ‘Private Life in Stalin’s Russia: Family Narratives, Memory and Oral History’, *History Workshop Journal*, Issue 65, (2008), p.128.

<sup>31</sup> Figes, ‘Private Life’, p.128.



interviewer can probe into hidden elements of the past, and bring to light information that the interviewee would not have considered worth writing down or had not previously reflected on.<sup>32</sup> Oral history has the potential to unveil the unwritten history of Villecroze and Aups.

The fragmented and fragile nature of individual memory is at the centre of the argument against the historical reliability of oral history. Memory is subjective and shaped by the present; it evolves with time and is susceptible to myths and fabrications. It can thus be a barrier to reaching the truth about the past.<sup>33</sup> Moreover those who lived through the war at times had trouble remembering specifics and names and details are often not passed down the generations.<sup>34</sup> Yet oral history provides a unique gateway into a person's impressions of WWII, enabling insight into the atmosphere and psychology of the past.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore the fallibility and personal nature of memory is a valuable asset to researching the legacy of that past. The time-lapse between the past and present accentuates both the values and limitations of oral history. The 60 year gap has meant that first-hand accounts are scarce and that those alive today were young children at the time, providing a limited perspective of wartime experiences. However it enables a 'multi-generational approach' and facilitates research as the past is no longer as 'raw'.<sup>36</sup>

Conducting oral history interviews requires delicacy and an ethical and sensitive approach.<sup>37</sup> The dynamic between interviewer and interviewee determines how the past is told and understood and careful thought went into the wording of the questions posed. Elderly men and women in Villecroze and Aups were generally sceptical of an outsider asking questions about their personal lives but the majority quickly became more comfortable

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<sup>32</sup> Figes, 'Private Life', p.128,135; Oral history society: <<http://www.ohs.org.uk/advice/index.php>>, Rob Perks, British library, (Updated June 2009).

<sup>33</sup> For case studies into looking at how memory can be fabricated see: A. Folman, *Waltz With Bashir*, (2008), Arte France, ITVS International and Orlando Figes, 'Private Life', pp.126-7.

<sup>34</sup> This will specifically be seen in regard to political changes later.

<sup>35</sup> Gildea equally remarks on these values of oral history. Gildea, *Marianne in Chains*, p.11.

<sup>36</sup> As stated by Figes in reference to Stalin's Russia: 'a multi-generational approach is important to understand the legacies of the regime'. This applies equally to the legacy of WWII in France. Figes, 'Private Life', p.121; Upon initial research into this period in France Paxton found the past was 'raw' to the extent of prohibiting research. Paxton, *Vichy France*, p.x.

<sup>37</sup> Trust and ethical approach is widely accepted in the historical profession to be essential to the oral history interview. Caution however must be taken not to become emotional attached to the interviewee. Gildea, *Marianne in Chains*, pp.11-2; T. Meyer and A. G. Crothers, "'If I See Some of This in Writing, I'm Going to Shoot You": Reluctant Narrators, Taboo Topics and the Ethical Dilemmas of the Oral Historian', *Oral History Review*, Vol. 34, Issue 1, pp.71-93, (2007), p.83.

and communicative. As a result of their scepticism and the refusal by a few to be recorded, interviews were not taped. Whilst this prohibits an exact transcript it had the benefit of allowing an informal atmosphere, greater freedom of expression and thus a superior understanding of their overarching sentiments. Furthermore, as noted by Gildea, ‘sometimes the interviewee rehearses a familiar script while the tape recorder is playing and says what he or she really thinks after it has stopped’.<sup>38</sup> Extensive notes were taken throughout and written up immediately after the interviews. Follow-up interviews were also conducted where possible allowing interviewees time to reflect and to develop trust. While it is important for the interviewer to have direction and a set of relevant questions, letting the interviewee discuss freely proved extremely valuable.<sup>39</sup> It provided insight into what they wanted to remember and the dominant legacy of their experience. This was then followed by directed questioning in order to look beyond their historical framework and reach nuggets of information about what life was really like for people in Villecroze and Aups during the war.

A detailed questionnaire was sent to over sixty people across the villages complete with a covering letter, a consent form and a stamped addressed return envelope.<sup>40</sup> Each question was carefully formulated to invite the interviewee’s independent reflection. Attention was also paid to avoid offence, to keep the questions simple and clear and to encourage response. Interviewing by post prohibits the valuable interaction between interviewer and interviewee and the possibility to pursue trains of thought. Furthermore it only gives voice to those that want to respond and excludes those that deem their opinions irrelevant and those that do not want to face their past.<sup>41</sup> Historical curiosity and the unearthing of local hidden truths can cause harm and the historian must not be insensitive or unaware of the impact of their research. While questionnaires alone are limited they allow the interviewee time for reflection and comfort in greater privacy. They also enable efficiency, potential for quantitative analysis and response when oral interviews were not feasible. Sending out the

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<sup>38</sup>Gildea, *Marianne in Chains*, p.11.

<sup>39</sup>Gildea also reached the conclusion when conducting his oral history interviews that ‘the best approach was to have the interviewee simply tell the story of his or her experience’. Gildea, *Marianne in Chains*, p.10.

<sup>40</sup> See appendix 3 for a copy of the questionnaire that was sent out.

<sup>41</sup> A couple of questionnaires were returned virtually blank stating that their impressions were not of value because they were not alive during the war, despite having made clear that research covered all generations. Similarly those from the second or third generation often had to be reassured that their impressions and thoughts were of value to the investigation at the start of the oral history interview. Nathalie Jenkins, Salernes, 10.01.10; Sharon Essex, Salernes, 01.03.10; Jean-Yves Cauty, Salernes, 01.03.10. The issue of the value of questionnaires for gaining a holistic understanding of public opinion is raised in: Kernell, S., Jacobson, G., Kousser, T. and Giroux, G. 2009. *The Logic of American Politics*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, Washington, DC: CQ Press, pp.464-465.

questionnaires was a gamble yet while approximately only a sixth were returned, it yielded useful results. Similar themes ran throughout the questionnaires providing a valuable understanding of the dominant historical discourses and collective memory.

Balance and diversity are crucial to historical investigation and departmental archives are also fundamental to this dissertation. While archives lack the personal touch of memoirs and oral history and have been seen by historians such as Fabre-Luce as incapable of portraying actual human experience, they provide extensive evidence into the functioning of a given society.<sup>42</sup> This in turn enables insight into their experience of war. Due to accessibility and relevance, this dissertation has only used French archives. With a limited presence of either German or Italian soldiers in Villecroze and Aups their archives would be limited for understanding the everyday life of the ordinary Frenchman in these villages. Since 1979 there have been virtually no caps on the subject in question and there is a wealth of personal documents, official transcripts and political correspondence within the archives.<sup>43</sup> Yet it must be remembered that much would have been destroyed or has been withheld from the archives.<sup>44</sup> Moreover the majority of political documents in the Draguignan archives are correspondences between the Mairie and the departmental authority thus defining the local political power predominantly by its official relationship to the Vichy government.<sup>45</sup> Dissenting opinions and conversations within the Mairies are not documented. Moreover many of these correspondences were written by hand and are difficult, and at times impossible, to decipher. Guillon's *Le Var, La Guerre, La Resistance 1939-1945*, provides an accessible compilation of archival sources. However Guillon's own editing of the archives to fit the 'autoportrait' of the Var he wanted to publish accentuates these limitations and it is safer to refer directly to the archives themselves.<sup>46</sup> This historical research is in debt to the departmental archives but, like all genres of sources, they provide only part of the picture and were approached with caution.

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<sup>42</sup> Temkin, 'Avec un certain malaise', p.297.

<sup>43</sup> On the third of January 1979 a law was passed in France allowing all documents over thirty years old to be accessed by the public. Temkin, 'Avec un certain malaise', p.296; Gildea, *Marianne in Chains*, p.8.

<sup>44</sup> In Maine-et-Loire, for example, all documents relating to identity or ethnicity were destroyed in 1946. Gildea, *Marianne in Chains*, p.11.

<sup>45</sup> The Marie is the village political and administrative centre. There is not real equivalent in Britain.

<sup>46</sup> Guillon uses the term 'autoportrait' to refer to his publication. Guillon, *Le Var*, p.5.

Museums and commemoration sites, easily accessible and overt in their aims, are invaluable for studying the legacy of the past. Analysis of the Resistance museum in Aups, statues, monuments and remembrance associations all demonstrated how the history of the period is portrayed to the public, and uncovered the relationship between the past and present. France has a limitless number of commemorative associations and this dissertation looks at the national and local associations that have proven to be influential in Aups and Villecroze.

This dissertation continues with an analysis and comparison of Villecroze's and Aups' wartime experience.<sup>47</sup> It looks to the surrounding influences, the political make-up, public opinion and the everyday experience of war. Each village's involvement in the war and the resistance is assessed. This dissertation then turns to the post-war period and the legacies of war in Villecroze and Aups. The liberation, post-war justice, and community identity are analysed. In light of each village's experience of war the evolution of memory and myths are also assessed and compared. The differences in war and the similarities in commemoration between each village are scrutinised and the relationship between the past and present is confronted.

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<sup>47</sup> The structure resembles Gildea's article 'Resistance, Reprisals and Community in Occupied France' in that it looks at experience and then at memory in different locations. However while Gildea focuses on armed resistance within three areas, Nantes, Ascq and Mont Mouchet, this dissertation is divided into two main parts and looks at two villages in close proximity. Each location in Gildea's research is far from the other. Nantes lies in the west, Ascq in the north and Mont Mouchet in the Auvergne. R. Gildea, 'Resistance, Reprisals and Community in Occupied France', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Sixth Series, Vol. 13 (2003), pp. 163-185.

## **Chapter Two**

### **The Experience of War in the Villages of Villecroze and Aups**

The geographic proximity of Aups and Villecroze and their similar ancestry, culture and broad history suggest that both villages had similar experiences of WWII. Prior to war the two villages, like many others in the Haute-Var, lived on a subsistence basis, relying on harvests. Roads were few and unemployment and poverty were widespread.<sup>48</sup> Meat was a luxury, electricity was non-existent, silkworms were cultivated to create cloth and local superstition meant that sheets were dried in the moonlight.<sup>49</sup> Villecroze and Aups were largely self-sufficient and self-contained and Provençal rather than French was the dominant language.<sup>50</sup> People rarely left their village, even for short lengths of time, and many of the senior generation interviewed have always lived within the same house.<sup>51</sup> Aups' and Villecroze's wartime experience can only be understood with attention to their basic rural existence and identity, and by discarding historical frameworks that encapsulate France under a single national identity.

Moreover both villages are secluded at the foot hills of the Alps and neither was geographically of strategic importance in WWII. The Haute-Var helped feed coastal towns but neither village had much to offer in terms of industry or material resources.<sup>52</sup> Their supply of manpower to Vichy and Nazi Germany was also limited as the population of Villecroze commune was approximately 500 and that of Aups' is estimated to have been fewer than 1,000.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore the people of Villecroze and Aups were also isolated from

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<sup>48</sup> Anthony Beerbhom, Salernes, 20.11.09; Mme Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09; M. Egea and P. Maggio, (eds.), *Il y a 70 ans la Guerre, La vie quotidienne dans ces années de plom* (Grenoble, 2009), pp.9-11, 15, 18-9.

<sup>49</sup> Mme Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09; Anthony Beerbhom, Salernes, 20.11.09; M. Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09.

<sup>50</sup> Mme Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09; Anthony Beerbhom, Salernes, 20.11.09; M. Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09.

<sup>51</sup> Anthony Beerbhom Salernes, 20.11.09; M. Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09; Mme Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09; Mme Peraldi, witness: Marie France Giattinai, Villecroze, 22.10.09.

<sup>52</sup> During an oral history interview with Mme Maunier the 1940s equivalent of the yellow pages were shown. They demonstrated how Villecroze and Aups were self-sufficient but that their production was minimal and hard industry nonexistent. Mme Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09. This was confirmed by the literature, local museum and other interviews. Egea, *Il y a 70 ans*, pp.9-11; Resistance Museum in Aups, Musée Simon SEGAL (Aups, rue Albert 1er); Anthony Beerbhom, Salernes, 20.11.09.

<sup>53</sup> No reliable statistics for the population of either village could be found either in the archives or Village Mairies. Estimates are made after consulting with interviewees and looking at the available census records.

the war by the lack of interaction with life outside their village. The radio was the most effective way to obtain information but few in the villages of the Haute-Var owned one, and contact between villages also reduced significantly after the outbreak of war.<sup>54</sup> The few who had cars were restricted by petrol shortages and required departmental authorisation to use them.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, the bridge linking Villecroze to the villages of Aups and nearby Tourtour was purposefully destroyed by German forces to further inhibit communication between villages.<sup>56</sup> Mme Maunier, who lived in Villecroze at the time, commented that Villecroze and Aups were so far from each other that their experience of war was not related.<sup>57</sup> As stated in a correspondence between Villecroze Mairie and Draguignan departmental authorities, Villecroze was even completely cut off from Salernes, the nearest small town only four kilometres away.<sup>58</sup> Villecroze and Aups were thus largely isolated from the national and international stages and from each other; their experiences of the war were separate and must be analysed individually.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of July 1940, the national assembly voted on empowering Marshal Pétain with the ‘Pleins Pouvoirs’, enabling him to take all ‘necessary measures’ and revise the constitution. This marked the beginning of Vichy France and led to the signing of an armistice with Germany on the 22 of July 1940.<sup>59</sup> Joseph Collomp, the mayor of Draguignan, was one of four out of six parliamentarians in the Var to vote against the ‘Pleins Pouvoirs’, a decision which led to his dismissal on the 11<sup>th</sup> of December 1940.<sup>60</sup>

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Institut nationale de la statistique et des études économiques (INSEE), local statistics for Aups accessed at: <[http://www.statistiques-locales.insee.fr/FICHES/RS/DEP/83/COM/RS\\_COM83007.pdf](http://www.statistiques-locales.insee.fr/FICHES/RS/DEP/83/COM/RS_COM83007.pdf)>. Local statistics for Villecroze accessed at: <[http://www.statistiques-locales.insee.fr/FICHES/RS/DEP/83/COM/RS\\_COM83149.pdf](http://www.statistiques-locales.insee.fr/FICHES/RS/DEP/83/COM/RS_COM83149.pdf)>. accessed on 18.04.10; Anthony Beerbhom, Salernes, 20.11.09; Jenkins, Nathalie, Salernes, 10.01.10; Resistance Museum in Aups, Musée Simon SEGAL.

<sup>54</sup> Egea, *Il y a 70 ans*, p.15; Anthony Beerbhom, Salernes, 20.11.09.

<sup>55</sup> Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 56.

<sup>56</sup> M. Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09.

<sup>57</sup> Mme Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09.

<sup>58</sup> Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 56.

<sup>59</sup> For full details on Armistice and a list of the twenty-four articles see: José M. Rico, ‘Second Armistice at Compiègne, 22 June 1940’, translated by Ulrich H. Rudofsky available at Navel History Forums: <http://www.kbismarck.org/forum/viewtopic.php?f=26&t=2991>, accessed on 04.04.2010.

<sup>60</sup> The national assembly is made-up of the Chambre des députés and the Sénat. Five hundred and sixty-nine voted in favour of ‘Les Pleins Pouvoirs’, eighty voted against, twenty abstained and a hundred and seventy-six were absent. The four that voted against in the Var were: Joseph Collomp, Henry Sénès, Michel Zunnio and René Renoult. Guillon, *Le Var*, p.9.

Guillon sees the Var's vote against the 'Pleins Pouvoirs' as its first act of opposition.<sup>61</sup> However it was not representative of public opinion at the time.

Paxton, for example, argues that a popular 'relief' accompanied Pétain's withdrawal.<sup>62</sup> This was perhaps the result of people's acceptance, as evidenced from the interviews, that Germany had won the war and that soon the whole of Europe would be conquered.<sup>63</sup> Public opinion involves the psychology of the individual and its interaction with the group, making it inherently difficult to measure and requiring analysis of regional culture and history alongside individual attitudes and actions. Guillon and Maignon comprehensively demonstrate that until 1942 Pétain's collaboration was 'popular' in the Var and that the majority of people saw it as a grateful 'return to the normal'.<sup>64</sup> Marshal Pétain's visit to Marseille on the 4<sup>th</sup> of December 1940, for example, was marked by popular enthusiasm and Pierre Abraham's first-hand account describes how the people of nearby Toulon were pro-Vichy. Furthermore the Légion Française des Combattants, the Vichy law enforcement authority, enjoyed success in the Var and there were members in both Aups and Villecroze.<sup>65</sup> Overt allegiance to such an organisation suggests at the very least a popular submissive attitude towards the Vichy regime. However the regime's intolerance of dissenting opinions and the general public's lack of balanced information meant that many were perhaps not whole-hearted supporters of Vichy ideology.

An assessment of the general culture in Villecroze and Aups further suggests support for Vichy. Current voting trends in Villecroze and Aups highlight the prominence of right-wing

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<sup>61</sup> Guillon, *Le Var*, p.9.

<sup>62</sup> Paxton, *Vichy France*, pp. Xviii.

<sup>63</sup> Oral history interviews confirm that German victory was seen as inevitable. Gerard Busquet, Aups, 23.09.09; Bertrand Pradel, Salernes, 21.09.09; Mme Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09; Anthony Beerbhom, Salernes, 20.11.09; M. Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09; Mme Peraldi, witness: Marie France Giattinai, Villecroze, 22.10.09.

<sup>64</sup> Pétain was deemed a saviour. This was partly because of his established personal popularity and hero status after his role in Verdun during World War One as well as his clever public relations and use of language. The armistice was presented as a 'union sacrée'. Guillon states how it was 'inconceivable' to oppose the Vichy regime at the start and that he even enjoyed support amongst left-wing politicians. Guillon, *Le Var*, p.9; Maignon, *Toulon*, pp.42-3.

<sup>65</sup> Letters between the mayor of Villecroze and the departmental president of the Légion Française des Combattants discuss administrative issues and highlight that there were members of the Légion within the region. Wartime correspondences between Aups and the central authorities also highlight the Légion's presence within Aups. Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 56; 1W 33- municipalité; Guillon, *Le Var*, p.10.

politics which interviewees have confirmed to be part of a longstanding culture.<sup>66</sup> Historians have found that villages, such as Villecroze and Aups, which were small in size, catholic in faith and right-wing in political leaning, were often pro-Pétain.<sup>67</sup> Given the relatively passive nature of the public in the Var, it is hard to draw any decisive conclusions on people's opinions of the collaboration during this time. However the evidence presented thus far, along with the lack of contradictory accounts, suggests that the people of Villecroze and Aups were at the very least indifferent and probably mildly pro-Pétain in the beginning years of war.

An analysis of the extent of political collaboration in Villecroze and Aups, although by no means demonstrative of public opinion, helps to establish the villages' relationship with and perception of the Vichy regime in general. Archived letters between M. Jean Coulomp, mayor of Villecroze, and the police inspector reveal minor tensions. The Vichy authorities distrusted Mr Espitalier, an assistant at Villecroze Mairie and a member of the Communist Party. However this affair appears to have faded and was not remembered by those interviewed.<sup>68</sup> Apart from this seemingly non-consequential upset, relations between Villecroze and the regional authorities were amicable and co-operative and correspondences detail how suspicious activity in the surrounding area was quickly reported to the central authorities by the Mairie.<sup>69</sup> Allegiance can also be seen in Mayor Coulomp's friendly correspondence with the authorities and his involvement in the Légion Française des Combattants.<sup>70</sup> His letter on the 19<sup>th</sup> of September 1941 to Vichy official, Charles Bernard-Prés, states: 'You know of my limitless devotion to the work and person of the Marshal as well as to the spirit of his directives'.<sup>71</sup> It is clear from these sources that on a political level Villecroze willingly collaborated.

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<sup>66</sup> Right wing politics is one of the many paradoxes of the area as the Var has always been a region of immigrants and foreigners owing to its close proximity to the Mediterranean. Anthony Beerbhom, Salernes, 20.11.09; Nathalie Jenkins, Salernes, 10.01.10; Jean-Yves Cauty, Salernes, 01.03.10; Marie-Helene Dumas, Salernes, 17.09.09; Sharon Essex, Salernes, 01.03.10; Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 56; 1W 33- municipalité.

<sup>67</sup> Guillon, *Le Var*, p.10; Egea, *Il y a 70 ans*, pp.18-9.

<sup>68</sup> It is unknown if Mr. Espitalier remained at the Mairie part-time but he did later become part of the post-liberation political authority. Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 56.

<sup>69</sup> Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 56.

<sup>70</sup> Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 56.

<sup>71</sup> Translated from: 'Vous connaissez mon devouement sans bournes á l'oeuvre et á la personne Maréchal, aussi que dans l'esprit de ses directives': Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 56.



Village political authorities can influence, and often reflect, the views and allegiances of its people. The mayor of Villecroze was popular, respected and admired for his numerous property holdings; today he is fondly remembered for having brought running water to the village.<sup>72</sup> Such respect, along with the intimate dynamics of small villages, suggests that his political views were shared or at least not strongly opposed. Those alive during the war in Villecroze, for example, emphasise their respect for the wartime local authority and imply a popular harmony with the mayor and his attitudes.<sup>73</sup> The people of Villecroze appear to have been indifferent to political allegiances with Vichy.

The politics in Aups presents a more complicated story than that of Villecroze and in 1941 the departmental authority replaced Mayor Paul Gros. He subsequently wrote to Marshal Pétain to express offence at suspicions of anti-Vichy behaviour within his administration and to strongly profess his previous allegiance and continued 'devoted service' to Vichy.<sup>74</sup> This correspondence appears to be genuine and the referred to suspicious activity minor. Evidence suggests that the mayor's replacement was precautionary and there is no cause to imply that there was any active political opposition to Vichy in Aups prior to replacement. Furthermore Gros' replacement, Emile Morel, was praised by the Inspector of the Police Spéciale for his 'loyal collaboration and his complete devotion' to Vichy.<sup>75</sup> The abundance of letters between Morel, the police inspector and the central authority demonstrates the close, co-operative and amicable relationship that they maintained through the war.<sup>76</sup> Supporting Paxton's findings, research indicates that on a political level both Villecroze and Aups actively collaborated with the Vichy Regime.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Mme Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09; M. Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09.

<sup>73</sup> Mme Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09; M. Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09; Mme Peraldi, witness: Marie France Giattinai, Villecroze, 22.10.09.

<sup>74</sup> Translated from 'dévoué serviteur', the correspondence was dated the 30<sup>th</sup> of August 1941. Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W 33- municipalité.

<sup>75</sup> Translated from: 'Loyale collaboration et son entier dévouement'. This was expressed in an in a correspondence between the Police Spéciale and the departmental authority. The Police Spéciale was the name given to the Vichy authorities that investigated and kept check on all political authorities. Emile Morel stayed in power until 1944 after which he was replaced by Peyre Clément because of health reasons. Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W 33- municipalité

<sup>76</sup> Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W 33- municipalité.

<sup>77</sup> Paxton, *Vichy France*, p. xiii.

The impact of political change on the people of Aups is unclear but evidence suggests that its effect was minimal. While the dictated replacement of an elected official with a man of fragile health could have fostered opposition in Aups, there is no known popular resistance to the political changeover. Furthermore interviewees were unclear who had been the wartime mayor and ignored that there had been a changeover.<sup>78</sup> This implies that Aups' political upheaval may have increased the undercurrent of community tension and fear but did not radicalize the people or greatly affect their day to day lives.

While the political change over to Vichy appears to have caused minimal disruption to the lives of those in Aups and Villecroze, war engendered everyday changes for the average peasant living in these villages. Life became harder as food was increasingly taken from the Haute-Var and redistributed to the more industrial and strategically valuable areas, and food rations were introduced impoverishing people's diets.<sup>79</sup> Greater food shortages were reported in Aups compared to Villecroze. A police investigation in December 1940, for example, revealed how the people had complained of a lack of fatty foods and eggs, and in January 1944 the mayor of Aups made an appeal to the authorities for cheese and meat.<sup>80</sup> Despite the food shortages, interviewees from both Aups and Villecroze expressed that people could make do with what they had.<sup>81</sup> Maunier remembers that no one went without food and Mme Peralidi also repeatedly stated how there was enough to eat.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, M. Maunier, who was ten at the time and has lived in Villecroze his entire life, stated how villages remained self-sufficient during the war, 'the people had everything they needed [...] there was no reason to go anywhere else'.<sup>83</sup> Accounts suggest that food rations were loose and the people continued to exchange goods to meet their needs as they had before.<sup>84</sup> Indeed, living in the

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<sup>78</sup> Gerard Busquet, Aups, 23.09.09; Amic, Jean, Aups, 21.11.09.

<sup>79</sup> Anthony Beerbhom, Salernes, 20.11.09; Resistance museum, Musée Simon SEGAL; Egea, *Il y a 70 ans*, pp.18-9.

<sup>80</sup> 'Matière grasses' has been translated into fatty foods. Cheese and meat were reported to have been deficient in the village throughout the previous three weeks. No such appeals were found regarding Villecroze.

Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 33- municipalité.

<sup>81</sup> Mme Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09; Mme Peraldi, witness: Marie France Giattinai, Villecroze, 22.10.09; M. Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09; Anthony Beerbhom, Salernes, 20.11.09; Questionnaire: M. Bertaud.

<sup>82</sup> Mme Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09; Mme Peraldi, witness: Marie France Giattinai, Villecroze, 22.10.09.

<sup>83</sup> Translated from: 'les gens avaient tout dont ils avaient besoin [...] il n'y avait pas de raison d'aller autre part'. M. Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09.

<sup>84</sup> Mme Peraldi, witness: Marie France Giattinai, Villecroze, 22.10.09; Jean-Yves Cauty, Salernes, 01.03.10; Egea, *Il y a 70 ans*, pp.11, 16-7.

rural areas of southern France generally enabled a level of comfort and diminished the psychological repercussions often related to intense food insecurity.<sup>85</sup>

In terms of fighting the war affected the villages of Villecroze and Aups minimally. After the liberation questionnaires were sent to the political authority of every village to document the experience of war across France. These questionnaires provide a valuable overview and report how there was no fighting during the ‘invasion’ in 1940 and that occupation dates were: ‘non-applicable’.<sup>86</sup> The Var was not a major combat zone prior to the liberation. While it suffered from a few Italian aerial attacks on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of June 1941, these were not in close proximity to either Villecroze or Aups.<sup>87</sup> The Italian forces were the first external presence in the Var, only reaching significance towards the end of 1942 and remaining relatively undisruptive throughout the war.<sup>88</sup> They resided in Aups in November and December 1942, but there is little recorded interaction and no clashes are reported.<sup>89</sup> The people of Villecroze knew of the Italian presence in the region but they never settled within the commune and its people only came into contact with them on sporadic occasions.<sup>90</sup> Both villages experienced little concrete disruption from the Italian presence.

Furthermore with regard to German forces personal accounts and the official records report that Villecroze experienced limited interaction and that neither village faced any bombardments.<sup>91</sup> The archives also highlight how Villecroze did not suffer any substantial material damage throughout the war and that Germans also never resided in the commune. German presence only became significant in the Var once Italy capitulated in September 1943 and, as reported by Mme Peraldi who was born in Villecroze in 1925, they were only

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<sup>85</sup> Maignon, *Toulon*, p.81; Egea, *Il y a 70 ans*, pp.11, 16-9.

<sup>86</sup> The Italians declared war on the 10 of June 1940. Maignon, *Toulon*, p.12.; N/A was marked under this question on both questionnaires. Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 94.

<sup>87</sup> Maignon, *Toulon*, pp.12-6; Guillon, *Le Var*, p.9.

<sup>88</sup> Maignon, *Toulon*, p.75; Guillon, *Le Var*, p.22; Comité de Toulon de L'Association Nationale des Anciens Combattants De La Résistance, *Le Var dans la Guerre et la Résistance, 1939-1945* (Toulon, 2006), p.21.

<sup>89</sup> Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 94.

<sup>90</sup> This was evident from the interviews and questionnaires and the post-liberation investigations into the war. Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 94; Mme Peraldi, witness: Marie France Giattinai, Villecroze, 22.10.09; Mme. Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09; M. Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09

<sup>91</sup> Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 94.

seen in Villecroze in the lead-up to the liberation when checking the area for Maquis.<sup>92</sup> This contact was brief and appears to have occurred without commotion. Reports also state that while the Milice, a force created in 1943 to uphold the Vichy rule of law, lived in surrounding villages their presence in Villecroze was uncommon.<sup>93</sup> Villecroze had a very limited external presence suggesting that the people had relative physical and psychological freedom compared to more heavily occupied areas.

German forces were more present in Aups and are recorded to have resided in the commune in November and December, 1943. There are reports of Germans and Milice occupying farms and the surrounding chateaus for short lengths of time and there are rumours that local women slept with these men.<sup>94</sup> While conflicting and incomplete accounts prevent an exact detailing of events, it is clear that Aups had substantially more contact with external and Vichy forces compared to Villecroze. External presence was not continuous and there were few clashes but accounts make clear that village dynamics were altered and that people felt their freedoms threatened.<sup>95</sup> The different levels of external influence in Aups and Villecroze highlights the separate nature of each village's experience of the war.

The Resistance is heavily referred to within the historiography and must be addressed when looking at these villages' experience of war. In 1940-42 Resistance groups in this region often consisted of a mere two or three people.<sup>96</sup> While texts signed 'Légion Française De Gaulle' began to circulate within the region by November 1940 the numbers were small and there is no evidence to suggest that they ever reached Villecroze or Aups.<sup>97</sup> Clandestine publications were few, circulation was difficult and there was a limited possibility for their

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<sup>92</sup> Maignon, *Toulon*, p.73 ; Mme Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09; Mme Peraldi, witness: Marie France Giattinai, Villecroze, 22.10.09; Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 94.

<sup>93</sup> Mme Peraldi, witness: Marie France Giattinai, Villecroze, 22.10.09; Mme Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09; M. Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09; Anthony Beerbhom, Salernes, 20.11.09.

<sup>94</sup> Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 94; Gerard Busquet, Aups, 23.09.09.

<sup>95</sup> Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 94; Questionnaire: Sharon Essex, Salernes, 01.03.10; Anthony Beerbhom Salernes, 20.11.09; Jean-Yves Cauty, Salernes, 01.03.10; Gerard Busquet, Aups, 23.09.09; Questionnaires: Claret Eluane; M. Ciofi; M.Bertaud; Roux Jean-Louis; Simone Ciofi; Claret Eluane.

<sup>96</sup> Guillon traces its roots in the Var back to 1940 by looking at anti-Vichy graffiti that appeared in public places, including the college in Daguignan. He highlights the first clandestine publication that appeared in Toulon in October 1940, but this must not be overemphasised as there were only four copies. There are few men detailed to have been involved at the start and there was no Resistance force to speak of. Guillon, *Le Var*, pp.7-8, 11-14.

<sup>97</sup> Guillon, *Le Var*, pp.12-13.

production in the Haute-Var.<sup>98</sup> Furthermore German Propaganda dominated the radio and BBC broadcasts and Charles de Gaulle's messages from London were fiercely forbidden.<sup>99</sup> In the Var they were listened to predominantly by fervent members of the Resistance, who were few enough to be personally named within the historiography.<sup>100</sup> Moreover any sparks of Resistance activity, such as 'L'Humanité du Var', were quickly dismantled by the Vichy police.<sup>101</sup> The beginnings of Resistance in the Var consisted of small, sporadic and isolated actions which had little impact on the lives of those in Villecroze and Aups.

Megan Koreman's *The Expectation of Justice*, argues that people 'only slowly' turned to the Resistance at the end of 1942 'under the pressure of food shortages and the threat of forced labour'.<sup>102</sup> In the Var the Service du Travail Obligatoire (S.T.O.) and the Resistance were intertwined.<sup>103</sup> In Villecroze only four men are reported to have left for the S.T.O., only one evaded it and all later returned.<sup>104</sup> The S.T.O did not appear to have lasting impact on the interviewees from Villecroze and Mme Peraldi remembers with an air of relaxed indifference how her father left one winter.<sup>105</sup> This suggests that in Villecroze the temporary absence of men was seen as an inevitable part of war which did not significantly disrupt village life or foster resistance.

In Aups, while just one more joined the S.T.O. than Villecroze, it affected the village on a greater scale and twenty men evaded it by joining the Maquis or hiding in farms.<sup>106</sup> M. Busquet tells of how his grandparents helped these young men to hide in the forests surrounding Aups and created false identity cards. When the family's anti-Vichy activity was

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<sup>98</sup> Guillon, *Le Var*, pp.12-13; Maignon, *Toulon*, pp.45-6; Anthony Beerbhom Salernes, 20.11.09.

<sup>99</sup> Maignon, *Toulon*, pp.45-6 ; Anthony Beerbhom Salernes, 20.11.09.

<sup>100</sup> Maignon, *Toulon*, pp.45-6; C. Durandet, *Les Maquis De Provence*, (Paris, 1974), pp.135, 265.

<sup>101</sup> Guillon, *Le Var*, p.14.

<sup>102</sup> Cited from Koreman, *The Expectation*, p.3; Paxton, *Vichy France*, p. xiii, xxv.

<sup>103</sup> The S.T.O appealed to men from the age of twenty to forty-eight to go and work for the German war effort. The S.T.O. started as a voluntary service, but by 1942 the Vichy government imposed the S.T.O. on those born in specific years in order to meet German demands. Comité de Toulon de L'Association Nationale des Anciens Combattants De La Resistance, *Le Var*, p.51; Resistance museum, Musée Simon SEGAL; Amic, Jean, Aups, 21.11.09; Egea, *Il y a 70 ans*, pp.22-3.

<sup>104</sup> Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 94.

<sup>105</sup> Mme Peraldi, Witness: Marie France Giattinai, Villecroze, 22.10.09.

<sup>106</sup> Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 94; Amic, Jean, Aups, 21.11.09; Gerard Busquet, Aups, 23.09.09.

suspected the Milice searched the house and held them at gunpoint for twenty-four hours.<sup>107</sup> Such incidents, and the knowledge that there were those helping to hide people illegally, imply that the S.T.O. affected Aups' collective experience of war and community to a greater extent than Villecroze's. Furthermore 150 men are also reported to have travelled to the commune of Aups to hide from the S.T.O. whereas none are reported to have resided in the commune of Villecroze.<sup>108</sup> While the impact of these men on the village people must not be overemphasised, as there is no evidence to suggest that their presence was known, Aups' relationship to the S.T.O. fostered links to Resistance activity and would have increased tension within the community.

Two principal Maquis centres developed in the Haute-Var: Le Camp Vallier and Le Camp Robert. Both of which were at a considerable distance from Villecroze and Aups and the Camp Robert was only created in March 1944. Moreover there was no model or plan to work from and Resistance networks in the Haute-Var were badly informed and inexperienced.<sup>109</sup> The Var was one of the poorest areas of France and the Communist Var Rouge became the most prominent Resistance group. Yet Communist factions were particularly targeted by Vichy and the Communist Party and the Var Rouge were isolated, fractured and in disarray.<sup>110</sup> Four different Resistance groups are reported to have been linked to Aups and a fifth to Villecroze.<sup>111</sup> These different Resistance factions within and between neighbouring communes often did not see eye to eye and those from Gaullist and communist camps actively clashed.<sup>112</sup> The Resistance around Aups and Villecroze was

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<sup>107</sup> Gerard Busquet, Aups, 23.09.09.

<sup>108</sup> Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 94.

<sup>109</sup> The Camp Vallier was commanded by Gleb Siviring and Dominique. The Camp Robert was led by Robert Charvet, Henri Guillot and Martin Biagini. Most of those reported to have been in the Resistance in the Haute-Var were in their late teens and inexperienced. Firsthand accounts detailing the activity of the Maquis on a day to day level also highlight its limited organisation and power. Sivirine, *Le cahier rouge du maquis*, pp5-125; Documents provided by Claret Eluane, (Aups): the firsthand account of Constans Max and details of the events of the war; Maignon, *Toulon*, pp.144-5; Guillon, *Le Var*, pp. 7-8, 12-4; Egea, *Il y a 70 ans*, pp.58-9; Association des Mouvements Unis de la Résistance et des Maquis du Var, *La Résistance dans le Var, 1940-1944*, (Draguignan, 1983), pp.86-8.

<sup>110</sup> Guillon, *Le Var*, p.14; Anthony Beerbhom, Salernes, 20.11.09.

<sup>111</sup> Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 94.

<sup>112</sup> Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 94; Jean-Yves Cauty, Salernes, 01.03.10; Sharon Essex, Salernes, 01.03.10; Bertrand Pradel, Salernes, 21.09.09.

disorganised and in Villecroze there is no evidence that the reported Resistance group led to any activity that affected the village.<sup>113</sup>

There is an important distinction to be made between the people of Villecroze and Aups and the Maquis in the surrounding region. Despite numerous groups being reported there are only four individuals from Aups and one from Villecroze officially named to be Résistants within the archives, and Madame Peraldi remembers how the Maquis were not known to village people and came from further afield.<sup>114</sup> Indeed the Maquis in the Haute-Var often originated from Cannes, Toulon and other coastal cities.<sup>115</sup> Furthermore the Maquis were also often completely cut off from all other sections of society for years.<sup>116</sup> Rumours spread of villagers helping them with small amounts of food, but interviews suggest that these were rare sporadic occurrences and there were even implications that the Resistance was seen with scepticism by the people of the village.<sup>117</sup> Even within areas where the Maquis were more heavily present the people of the village would rarely know their movements and interaction was minimal.<sup>118</sup> Focussed questioning during interviews and questionnaires revealed how continuing one's life, inaction and discretion were favoured over action, and that the Maquis and the village people kept their distance from each other.<sup>119</sup> As stated by Jean-Yves people in the area 'said nothing, no one moved'.<sup>120</sup> The vast majority of those in both villages appear to conform to Paxton's view that the French public lived at a distance from the

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<sup>113</sup> The presence of the Resistance in Villecroze is, apart from its brief mention in the post-liberation official overview of war, absent from any document or source. Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 94

<sup>114</sup> The questionnaire sent out after the liberation regarding each communes experience of war were written by hand and the names of Resistance groups and those involved were difficult, sometimes impossible, to decipher. Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 94; Mme Peraldi, witness: Marie France Giattinai, Villecroze, 22.10.09.

<sup>115</sup> The commemoration statues in the surrounding region demonstrate how most of those involved in the Maquis came from further afield. Numerous commemoration statues, monuments and inscriptions were analysed, however only the ones specifically referred to are present in the appendix.

<sup>116</sup> German, *Les Chemins*, p. 53.

<sup>117</sup> In the Villecroze the butcher, Couven Ferdinand who lived in the Ferme de Relais outside the village is said to have once killed a cow in order to feed the Maquis leading to a police investigation which was resolved by supplying the police with meat. M. Maunier and Mme Maunier expressed clear scepticism towards the Maquis and there were also hints of this within other interviews. M. Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09; Mme Peraldi, witness: Marie France Giattinai, Villecroze, 22.10.09. Mme Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09.

<sup>118</sup> Paul-Claude Innocenzi was eight at the time of the war and lived in Oraison situated in a more heavily Maquis populated part of Provence. He recalls the silence and shock of the village people when the Maquis appeared in the village in July 1944. Durandet, *Les Maquis*, p.43-5.

<sup>119</sup> Jean-Yves Cauty, Salernes, 01.03.10; Anthony Beerbhom, Salernes, 20.11.09; Sharon Essex, Salernes, 01.03.10; Mme Peraldi, Witness: Marie France Giattinai, Villecroze, 22.10.09; Mme Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09.

<sup>120</sup> Translated from : 'ne disaient rien, personne n'a bougé'. Jean-Yves Cauty, Salernes, 01.03.10.

Resistance, were generally apathetic and that physical wellbeing was their primary concern.<sup>121</sup>

Villecroze was largely cut off from the war and the Resistance, and its principal single disturbance involved a statue of Marianne in the centre of the village. On Easter Monday 1943 someone wrote 'vive la republique' on the statue.<sup>122</sup> Doctor Le Proux, a known uniformed member of the Milice from Salernes, went armed to Villecroze with other Miliciens and Italian soldiers to take down the Marianne.<sup>123</sup> Their arrival caused people to congregate one of whom took back the statue after which the Miliciens left.<sup>124</sup> Interviewees who were alive at the time emphasised how it was a small revolt.<sup>125</sup> Subsequent correspondence between the local and central authorities illustrates how Doctor Le Proux's actions were condemned by his superiors and led to his suspension. Moreover the departmental authority expressed how good relations with villages were important and the departmental head of the Milice, M. Massot, wrote to the mayor of Villecroze expressing his regrets and excuses.<sup>126</sup> There was an active attempt to allow life to continue and villages, such as Villecroze, experienced minimal disturbance.

However the village of Aups experienced greater disruption from the surrounding Resistance activity. Being slightly further north, it was eight km closer to Resistance groups.<sup>127</sup> Survival, collecting provisions and staying hidden were the principle Resistance occupations and the larger more isolated commune of Aups with its secluded farms offered

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<sup>121</sup> Paxton, *Vichy France*, pp. xviii, xxv.

<sup>122</sup> During the war no hostages were ever taken, people killed by foreign forces or acts of sabotage against the Germans were carried out in Villecroze. Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 56.

<sup>123</sup> There was a core of Milice in Salernes. An order was passed by Vichy at the beginning of 1943 to remove all statues of the Marianne, the symbol of the republic. Mme Peraldi, witness: Marie France Giattinai, Villecroze, 22.10.09; M. Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09; Mme. Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09; Documents provided by Claret Eluane, (Aups): the firsthand account of Constans Max and details of the events of the war; Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 56.

<sup>124</sup> Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 56.

<sup>125</sup> M. Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09; Mme. Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09; Mme Peraldi, witness: Marie France Giattinai, Villecroze, 22.10.09.

<sup>126</sup> Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 56.

<sup>127</sup> Association des Movements Unis de la Resistance et des Maquis du Var, *La Resistance*, pp.86-8. See appendix 1.a. for the map of the region and the principle Resistance camps. The resistance networks referred to were largely situated in the area between Aups and the Verdon area.



greater potential for hiding.<sup>128</sup> Resistance activity was sporadic and there were no parachute landings or missions from London, but when the liberation was nearing there were a few incidents which directly involved the people of Aups.<sup>129</sup> On the 7<sup>th</sup> of June 1944, encouraged by the landings in Normandy, the Maquis attacked German vans outside Aups and shot a German soldier. On the same day a farm near the village was set on fire and two people from the village, suspected of associating with the Resistance, were stopped by the Milice.<sup>130</sup> On June 12<sup>th</sup> 1944 members of the Maquis left Camp Vallier to go to Hyres via Aups and were also stopped by the Milice along the road. One escaped, two were shot, and the other, named D. within the documents, was released in Marseille.<sup>131</sup> These incidents took place at some distance from the actual village but rumours spread and some of the men involved were known within the village.

Incidents also took place within Aups and on July 22<sup>nd</sup> the garage Rouvier, situated within the village, was blown-up by German forces. Rosette Ciofi a young girl died in the ensuing cross-fire.<sup>132</sup> Men were also taken prisoner in Aups; although they all returned the accounts surrounding their imprisonment are conflicting. The historical literature, archives and oral history make it difficult to determine the number of prisoners or reasons for their arrest.<sup>133</sup> These events are not evidence of a powerful and organised Resistance, but they upset village life and suggest that rumours and fears were prevalent. The history of

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<sup>128</sup> Aups commune is bigger and still today is more secluded from other villages. It also has many more remote farms in proximity to the village. White sheets were reported to have been used on these farms to warn those in hiding if the Milice or Germans were around. Gerard Busquet, Aups, 23.09.09. See appendix. 1.a for a map of the area. The commune of Aups and Villecroze are highlighted and their difference in size and proximity to other villages visible.

<sup>129</sup> Documents provided by Claret Eluane, (Aups): the firsthand account of Constans Max and details of the events of the war; Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 94; Resistance Museum in Aups, Musée Simon SEGAL; Amic, Jean, Aups, 21.11.09.

<sup>130</sup> The Farm was owned by Angelin Morel and one of the men stopped was Authieu Adrien who had been using his hotel in Aups as a meeting point for members of the Maquis. Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 94. Association des Movements Unis de la Resistance et des Maquis du Var, *La Resistance*, pp.126-7. Resistance Museum in Aups, Musée Simon SEGAL; Amic, Jean, Aups, 21.11.09.

<sup>131</sup> Those present in the car were: Duchatel, Boue, Millet and D. For reasons unknown D. has been censored in the documents. Documents provided by Claret Eluane, (Aups): the firsthand account of Constans Max and details of the events of the war; Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 94; Resistance Museum in Aups, Musée Simon SEGAL; Amic, Jean, Aups, 21.11.09; See appendix 2.i for their commemoration statue.

<sup>132</sup> Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 94; Resistance Museum in Aups, Musée Simon SEGAL; Amic, Jean, Aups, 21.11.09.

<sup>133</sup> There were a couple of larger missions carried out in Provence which aided the allied war effort including grouping German soldiers on the plateau of Canjuers. However the Maquis of Aups were not involved and these regional efforts took place on the eve of the liberation and would only have become common knowledge after the war. Durandet, *Les Maquis*, pp.100, 208.

Villecroze and Aups demonstrates the diversity of wartime experiences, even between villages in neighbouring communes and of similar make-up.

Psychological changes were widely reported within the questionnaires and oral interviews as being one of the most significant impacts of the war.<sup>134</sup> Mme Peraldi recalls how a shadow passed over Villecroze and that while the dancing and festivities continued in fields they stopped within the village. This, she said, was not out of obligation but out of respect.<sup>135</sup> An atmosphere of mistrust pervaded the Var and was exacerbated by the presence, albeit sporadic, of external forces.<sup>136</sup> Even though the Var shares historic links with Italy and approximately one third of the families in the nearby small town of Salernes are reported to have been Italian at the time of the war, there was no solidarity between the Italian forces and the villages of Villecroze and Aups.<sup>137</sup> Indeed interviews demonstrate that an uncomfortable distrust towards Italians was common across both villages and that prejudice towards Italians and Germans continues today.<sup>138</sup> While foreign presence was limited in Aups and almost non-existent in Villecroze its psychological impact and the resentment and suspicion it fed, must not be undermined.

This lack of trust was not only directed at foreign forces. Mme Peraldi from Villecroze stated how it was difficult to know who to trust and how stories of betrayal were common. Mme Peraldi, along with M. and Mme Maunier, described how two American women living in the hills not far from Villecroze were feared of being informants and were killed.<sup>139</sup> There are also accounts of how the Maquis destroyed a church outside the Village because they

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<sup>134</sup> Questionnaire: Claret Eluane, M. Bertaud. Mme Peraldi, Witness: Marie France Giattinai, Villecroze, 22.10.09

<sup>135</sup> Mme Peraldi, witness: Marie France Giattinai, Villecroze, 22.10.09. Dancing was reported to have continued in the hills outside villages across the Var: Egea, *Il y a 70 ans*, pp.32-3.

<sup>136</sup> Egea, *Il y a 70 ans*, pp.18-9; Resistance museum, Musée Simon SEGAL.

<sup>137</sup> The Var has historic links with Italy and many Italians had previously migrated to the Var. The Italian influence can still be seen today. Guillon states that they were increasingly well tolerated owing in part to their ancestry and an interview with Bertrand Pradel, the head of a remembrance association in Salernes, stated that the Italians were greeted as cousins in the region. Guillon, *Le Var*, p.22; Bertrand Pradel, Salernes, 21.09.09; Anthony Beerbhom, Salernes, 20.11.09 ; M. Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09.

<sup>138</sup> Both Italians and Germans are still referred to with distaste in the region and one interviewee asserted that 'there is no one more racist than an Italian' translated from 'il n'y a pas plus raciste qu'un Italien'. Gerard Busquet, Aups, 23.09.09; Mme Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09; Anthony Beerbhom, Salernes, 20.11.09; Nathalie Jenkins, Salernes, 10.01.10; Sharon Essex, Salernes, 01.03.10; Durandet, *Les Maquis*, pp.130-4.

<sup>139</sup> Accounts of trickery are numerous. The two women were looking after orphans and were killed in an area of the forest called les Alumines near the village. Mme Peraldi, witness: Marie France Giattinai, Villecroze, 22.10.09; Mme Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09; M. Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09.

believed it was a front for spies, and how the lawyer M Ferraud and a seller of material in Salernes were killed by the Maquis.<sup>140</sup> The death of a group of young Résistants on the 27<sup>th</sup> of July 1944 at Bession 20 km from Aups was the most infamous account of treachery within the region.<sup>141</sup> There was violence coming from all sides and while the people of Villecroze and Aups were not directly involved in such ruses these events were common knowledge and bred fear and distrust amongst the people.<sup>142</sup>

A greater level of tension in Aups is suggested by the heavier external presence, physical disruption and stronger links to the Resistance. Analysis of the interviews also reveals stronger language, attitudes and emotions from those in Aups.<sup>143</sup> The interviewees from Villecroze were more relaxed and stated that there were fears but did not focus heavily on them or suggest that the psychological repercussions of war were overbearing. Whereas Claret Eluane, born in Aups in 1934, told of how he will never forget the ‘the fear [...] the anguish and insecurity [...] the suspicion’.<sup>144</sup> While levels of tension are difficult to measure evidence suggests that wartime fear and mistrust was present on a greater scale in Aups compared to Villecroze.

Analysis of Villecroze and Aups demonstrates the extent to which, ‘France had no common experience’ of WWII and was an ‘archipelago of detached local communities’.<sup>145</sup> War disrupted Aups to a greater extent but, as directed questioning revealed, life on the whole was allowed to continue much as normal on a day to day level for both villages.<sup>146</sup> The vast majority of the people were not directly involved in Resistance activity, the physical

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<sup>140</sup> M. Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09

<sup>141</sup> Association des Movements Unis de la Resistance et des Maquis du Var, *La Resistance*, pp.143-5; A.N.A.C.R., Bulletin No. 15/2003, 2004, *Soixantieme Anniversaire de la Tragedie du Bession*; A.N.A.C.R., Bulletin Semestriel Des Resistants et Amis, No.5, *Comite Du Bession*; Mme Peraldi, witness: Marie France Giattinai, Villecroze, 22.10.09; M. Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09; see appendix 2.j. for photos of the Bession memorial.

<sup>142</sup> Amic, Jean, Aups, 21.11.09; Jean-Yves Cauty, Salernes, 01.03.10; Mme Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09; M. Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09; Mme Peraldi, witness: Marie France Giattinai, Villecroze, 22.10.09; Questionnaire Simon Ciofi; Claret Eluane; M.Bertaud; Roux Jean-Louis;

<sup>143</sup> Questionnaire: Simon Ciofi; Claret Eluane; M.Bertaud; Roux Jean-Louis; Mme Peraldi, witness: Marie France Giattinai, Villecroze, 22.10.09; Mme Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09; Gerard Busquet, Aups, 23.09.09.

<sup>144</sup> Translated from ‘la peur [...] l’angoise-l’insecurite [...] méfiance’. Questionnaire: Claret Eluane.

<sup>145</sup> Koreman, *The Expectation*, p.2.

<sup>146</sup> This conforms to the school of thought that the experience of occupation was relatively benign and allowed the village people to continue with their lives, See Gildea for an outline of the four main schools of thought pertaining to the occupation and the Resistance. Gildea, *Marianne in Chains*, p.4.

impacts of war were limited and actual constraints were few. However one must be careful not to underestimate the psychological repercussions that war had on the people of both villages and the legacy that it left behind.

## **Chapter Three**

### **The Legacies of War, Myths and Memory**

With the end of the war came the question of how to make sense of what had happened, how to understand and explain the quiet collaboration, the atrocities and the sacrifices. This microhistory analyses this transition period and looks at how Villecroze and Aups remembered their past. The experience of war left two dominant legacies of varying strength for the people of these villages. On the one hand tension and community divisions solidified during the post-liberation period; on the other hand people developed a collective memory bearing little resemblance to the actual experience of war.

For Villecroze and Aups the liberation itself was relatively uneventful and both villages were officially liberated on the 17<sup>th</sup> of August 1944 by the Americans.<sup>147</sup> The term ‘liberation’ does not accurately reflect Villecroze’s and Aups’ experience and, as often is the case, the language surrounding the post-war period must be deconstructed and critically assessed.<sup>148</sup> There was no fighting and no residing foreign force in either village to be physically liberated from. In Aups, along with the Americans, the Maquis were declared official liberators, but it is unclear what purpose they served, if any.<sup>149</sup> In Villecroze M. and Mme Maunier remember cars driving through and the peaceful and uneventful nature of the transition; as they state with relative indifference, ‘life continued’.<sup>150</sup> Many remember a pleasant sense of freedom accompanying the liberation and both Mme Maunier and Mme Peraldi highlighted the return of customary pre-war dancing and festivities and a sense of solidarity.<sup>151</sup> However these memories hide the unsettling and divisive nature of the post-war period and its influence in shaping both history and future.

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<sup>147</sup> Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 56.

<sup>148</sup> Russo equally looks at language and advocates the value of analysing it for understanding the legacy of the past. Scullion, ‘Georges Perec’ pp.114-5.

<sup>149</sup> Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 94.

<sup>150</sup> Translated from: ‘la vie a continué’. M. Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09.

<sup>151</sup> Mme Peraldi, witness: Marie France Giattinai, Villecroze, 22.10.09; M. Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09; Mme. Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09.

With the liberation an unsettling climate of retribution swept France. Identifying justice contributed to shaping France's past and future, defining the moral code and creating an atmosphere of uncertainty and confusion.<sup>152</sup> By the time of liberation the thirst for personal retribution and recognition was already firmly anchored amongst the people and official committees were quickly set-up to prevent fragmented and 'mob' revenge from taking place.<sup>153</sup> These committees received an 'avalanche' of mail all demanding justice and ranging from lists of pro-Vichy forces to countless personal letters concerning neighbours and confused local matters.<sup>154</sup> However Villecroze was not actively involved in distributing justice. The village people were aware of how retribution was carried out in the surrounding region but remained at a safe distance from the controversies and chaos, and no demand was made to the Comité Départemental d'Épuration.<sup>155</sup> M. Maunier recalled how the Milice from Salernes fled and Mme Elaine Peraldi remembered how a man accused of killing the two American women was killed along with his wife in Saint-Antonin 60 km away.<sup>156</sup> Regional stories of retribution spread and have been incorporated into Villecroze's collective memory. Yet while there are gaps and mis-representations, which will be addressed in greater detail later, the past is not convoluted in secrecy and tensions. Interviewees from Villecroze were open and relaxed when discussing the war and members from all generations stated that the wartime lack of trust no longer existed today.<sup>157</sup> While the liberation period was unsettling, Villecroze's distance from war, and thus post-war justice, enabled a relatively calm popular transition into peacetime.

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<sup>152</sup> Justice takes different forms and is often divided into legal, social and honorary justice. While this analysis deals with all three, it does not address each one separately and specifically. Koreman, *The Expectation*, p.5,6.

<sup>153</sup> Résistants are recorded to have started judgement in some areas of France as early as 1942. On December 21<sup>st</sup> 1943 the Comité Français de Libération Nationale (CFLN) signed an order to condemn 'anti-national groups', encouraging the public to condemn anyone who fell within one of ten categories. In March 1944 the Conseil National de la Résistance (C.N.R.) called for justice and the punishment of traitors. I. Ousby, *Occupation, The Ordeal of France, 1940-1944*, (London, 1999), p.303; A.N.A.C.R., *Ceux qui ont fait la Résistance*, No. 2, Pp.239; Koreman, *The Expectation*, p.4.

<sup>154</sup> A.N.A.C.R. *Ceux qui ont fait la Résistance*, No. 2, p.243; Ousby, *Occupation*, p.304.

<sup>155</sup> The Comité Départemental d'Épuration were the official committees that were set up to control and deliberate justice. There was no mention of Villecroze in the post-liberation departmental trials and there is no evidence than any unofficial justice took place. Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var : 1W art. 56; 1 W art. 103.

<sup>156</sup> Mme Peraldi stated that it stuck so vividly in her memory because they had a daughter also named Elaine but she could not remember his name. Mme Peraldi, witness: Marie France Giattinai, Villecroze, 22.10.09; M. Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09.

<sup>157</sup> Questionnaire: Roux Jean-Louis ; M. Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09; Mme Peraldi, witness: Marie France Giattinai, Villecroze, 22.10.09; Mme Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09; Sebastien Ziegler, Villecroze, 21.12.09; Romain Yvorra, Villecroze, 21.12.09; Lucie Cauty, Salernes, 10.04.10; Ludovic Boutal, Salernes, 10.04.10; Simon Pau, Salernes, 10.04.10.

However Aups, with its more intense experience of war, experienced contention in the post-war period and people from the village featured in official post-war trials. Emile Morel was one in a long list of individuals from the Var mentioned in the departmental hearings for their sympathy to Vichy authority, and on the official archival lists of those tried after the liberation five were cited from Aups.<sup>158</sup> However there is no information on why they were tried or what happened to them. Furthermore their names did not appear in any other document, interview or secondary source. A M. Durupt, linked to Aups and tried and shot in Marseille at the liberation, is also mentioned within the Archives. While the place, initials and circumstantial evidence suggests that M. Durupt could be the M. D. who was involved in the interception of the Maquis in Aups on the 12th of June 1944, there is no concrete evidence to confirm this.<sup>159</sup> Aups was more heavily involved in the justice process but even within the archives and legal transcripts accounts are partial and thin. This has facilitated competing narratives, fostered speculation and blurred the past.

Furthermore the community of Aups requested to form a local ‘purification committee’ to take village control of deliberating justice.<sup>160</sup> As was often the case it was rejected by the Comité Départementale de Liberation.<sup>161</sup> Yet despite attempts to homogenize justice France had no tightly structured system and Aups participated in the public humiliation and ‘mutual savagery’ that was carried out.<sup>162</sup> Archives and an interview with M. Busquet alluded to violence and reveal how people fled from Aups and traitors were chased with chairs at the liberation.<sup>163</sup> Accounts also crop-up in personal memoirs of how groups linked to Aups plotted at the liberation to kill those who had not sufficiently resisted during the war.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1 W art. 103. Emile Morel was the mayor of Aups for most of the war. The names given of those tried and linked to Aups were Y.B. Bouvard, S.B. Bouvard, Jeannin Fernand, Tigrino Paul and Viessens Rose. Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1 W art. 109; 1 W art. 103.

<sup>159</sup> The events of the 12<sup>th</sup> of June 1944 were only partial within the documents and, as previously mentioned, there was a M. D. referred to that was present in the car but let free by the Milice in Marseille while the others were killed. It is possible that this M.D had sold the Maquis from the Camp Vallier to the Milice and as a result was killed after the liberation. Documents provided by Claret Eluane, (Aups): the firsthand account of Constans Max and details of the events of the war; Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 94.

<sup>160</sup> These committees were officially called: Comité d’Épuration. Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W 33- municipalité.

<sup>161</sup> Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W 33- municipalité.

<sup>162</sup> There were waves of public executions all over France and photos testify of how women were rounded-up and humiliated in the town of Brignoles 33 kilometres from Villecroze. Gildea, *Marianne in Chains*, p.4; Ousby, *Occupation*, p.304.

<sup>163</sup> Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W 33- municipalité; Gerard Busquet, Aups, 23.09.09.

<sup>164</sup> German, *Les Chemins*, pp. 51-2.

Justice was a fluid concept and unlike Villecroze in Aups the liberation period was dangerous and cultivated tensions and violence.

This suggests that disappointment with the Gaullist vision and pardoning was greater in Aups and led to lasting community feuds.<sup>165</sup> People interviewed stated how in Aups post-war justice remains political and that ‘rancour’ is strong.<sup>166</sup> This is demonstrated by the secrecy that surrounds the past and people’s guarded attitude towards it. Histories of revenge and justice were only briefly referred to and names and details were often purposefully withheld during interviews and blacked-out within documents.<sup>167</sup> Compared to Villecroze it was harder to find people willing to talk about their personal past and proportional to the number of questionnaires handed out fewer were returned; ‘People don’t like talking about it [...] the past is delicate’.<sup>168</sup> One interviewee in particular became quite agitated and suspicious at being questioned further demonstrating how past tensions remain.<sup>169</sup> Resentment is also explicitly expressed. Doctor Angelin German, who was involved in the Resistance around Aups, expresses in his memoirs anger and disgust at how individuals falsely claimed to have partaken in the Resistance.<sup>170</sup> Interviewees also spoke openly of regret that traitors had fled the village, a contemporary thirst for justice and lasting resentment that some had been honoured while others had not.<sup>171</sup> Village feuds and anger over the details of the war, retribution and the titles of ‘Résistant’ and ‘Collaborator’ are present today in Aups, and disputes remain strong enough within certain families to prevent members of the second generation from attending commemoration ceremonies.<sup>172</sup> Aups highlights the importance

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<sup>165</sup> This coincides with Koreman’s findings. Koreman, *The Expectation*, p.5-7.

<sup>166</sup> Translated from ‘rancoeurs’ and quoted from an interview with: Bertrand Pradel, Salernes, 21.09.09. Other interviews and questionnaires that referred to a similar sentiment were: Gerard Busquet, Aups, 23.09.09; Nathalie Jenkins, Salernes, 10.01.10; Stephen Clackson, Villecroze, 07.01.10; Susie Clackson, Villecroze, 07.01.10; Sharon Essex, Salernes, 01.03.10; Jean-Yves Cauty, Salernes, 01.03.10; Questionnaire: Claret Eluane.

<sup>167</sup> Information and names of those involved in the events of the 12<sup>th</sup> of June 1944 in Aups were withheld. Documents provided by Claret Eluane, (Aups): the firsthand account of Constans Max and details of the events of the war; Furthermore names were withheld during interviews. Gerard Busquet, Aups, 23.09.09.

<sup>168</sup> Approximately twenty questionnaires were handed out in Villecroze and forty in Aups. However only 6 returned from Aups and 4 from Villecroze. Quote taken from interview with: Sharon Essex, Salernes, 01.03.10.

<sup>169</sup> Gerard Busquet, Aups, 23.09.09.

<sup>170</sup> German, *Les Chemins*, p.75. The A.N.A.C.R. also publically condemns those that sold food ration cards to Jews to then take the title of Résistant and strongly argues that imposters have blackened the truth A.N.A.C.R. *Ceux qui ont fait la Résistance*, No. 2, Pp. 244,257.

<sup>171</sup> Resentment linked to honorary justice was highlighted in an interview with M. Busquet who still begrudges that M.Ciofi received a medal and his Grandfather did not. Similarly to Aups, Koreman found that in other communities of France, honorary justice and the politics of commemoration caused bitterness and disagreement. Koreman, *The Expectation*, p.6; Gerard Busquet, Aups, 23.09.09.

<sup>172</sup> Gerard Busquet, Aups, 23.09.09.



that justice be seen to be achieved in order to not perpetuate and intensify village hostilities. The absence and presence of conflicts today in Villecroze and Aups correlates to the intensity of each village's wartime and post-liberation experiences and Aups' greater disruption has led to a lasting legacy of confused family feuds and resentment.

The history of this period is difficult to untangle and to understand the lives of the villagers and the reality of the experience of war one must read between the lines and delicately pick apart conflicting historical frameworks. The story of Rosette Ciofi demonstrates the extent to which Aups' proximity to war and justice has mystified the past and created a plethora of unresolved tangled narratives.<sup>173</sup> Every account of her death differs. Dr German writes that she was a Résistant shot on her way home.<sup>174</sup> Documents provided by Caret Eluane declare that she was a messenger for the Maquis who died in an act of bravery and that she sung the French national anthem on her deathbed.<sup>175</sup> Archival documents state that she was shot while looking for cover and that as she died she uttered: 'the patriots will revenge me'.<sup>176</sup> M. Busquet refuted these patriotic narratives with bitterness stating that she was never a member of the Resistance and died because of unfortunate circumstances.<sup>177</sup> These competing accounts demonstrate how the past remains contested and alive for the people of Aups as well as the fragmented nature of their collective memory.

The remembrance associations and the local historiography further highlight and encourage the contemporary presence of post-war tensions in Aups. The A.N.A.C.R., which has a branch in Aups, defend that 'yes, purification was necessary, indispensable', that there was a need to 'clean' and 'disinfect' France and that 'mob justice' was often well-founded. They argue that news reporters have unjustly vilified 'purification' and that those who condemn it are 'naïve'.<sup>178</sup> These books line the shelves of the village bookshop and the one

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<sup>173</sup> Ian Ousby's extensive study into France's occupation and liberation also remarked on how this period is tangled in rumours and vengeance. Ousby, *Occupation*, pp.305-8.

<sup>174</sup> German, *Les Chemins*, p.67.

<sup>175</sup> Documents provided by Claret Eluane, (Aups): the firsthand account of Constans Max and details of the events of the war.

<sup>176</sup> Translated from: 'les patriotes me vengeront'. Draguignan Departmental archives 1W art. 94.

<sup>177</sup> Gerard Busquet, Aups, 23.09.09.

<sup>178</sup> The A.N.A.C.R. have numerous committees and branches across France. Translated from : 'oui, l'épuration était nécessaire, indispensable', 'nettoyage' and 'désinfecter notre pays'. A.N.A.C.R., *Ceux qui ont fait la*

room public library in Aups and have been frequently out on loan, illustrating that the views of the A.N.A.C.R. are at the very least known to the people of Aups.<sup>179</sup> However the slightly smaller Villecroze library contains no books on the Resistance or the local history of WWII. The difference between the two libraries is suggestive of how contentious the past is today within each village and the weight it plays in village dynamics. This is also further implied within the questionnaires, as those from Villecroze overwhelmingly stated that the war did not shape present community identity whereas in Aups the exact opposite was reported.<sup>180</sup> However these responses must be carefully analysed. As will be discussed in detail, the war has left lasting patriotic legacies and myths in Villecroze that do help shape its present community identity. The past remains intertwined with the present in both villages but the legacies of war in Villecroze are more subtle and the past has stabilised within the collective unconscious; wartime fears and tensions have on the whole subsided. Whereas in Aups the legacies of war are more contentious and unsettled leaving a visible climate of tension and playing a more substantial role in community dynamics and identity.

However memory, identity and community dynamics are not static and it is important to note the evolution in nature and intensity of personal animosities over time. In Aups personal animosities dating back to the forties remain mainly among the older generations. While hostility has sometimes increased down the generations, today only a few core families keep these feuds alive.<sup>181</sup> Core families remain at the centre of village life but the demographic make-up of Aups is gradually changing. The traditional families are slowly dying-out taking these tensions with them. Furthermore it is hard to measure the extent to which these tensions are reflective of the village population more generally and the influence of individual feuds on the collective mentality. While research highlights the existence of community tensions, not everyone is actively involved or feels animosity towards others.

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*Resistance*, No. 2., pp. 89, 239-42, 244, 249-50. See appendix 2.h. for the flag of the Aups branch of the A.N.A.C.R.

<sup>179</sup> There are approximately twenty books on the resistance within the Aups library, the majority of which have been out on loan once every two months. This is a considerable amount considering the village's small size.

<sup>180</sup> Those that stated that the war did not shape present identity in Villecroze within the interviews and questionnaires were: Lucie Cauty, Salernes, 10.04.10; Sebastien Ziegler, Villecroze, 21.12.09; Romain Yvorra, Villecroze, 21.12.09; Mme. Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09; M.Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09; Questionnaire: Roux Jean-Louis. Compared to those who stated that it was a part of Aups' contemporary identity: Gerard Busquet, Aups, 23.09.09; Bertrand Pradel, Salernes, 21.09.09; Simon Pau, Salernes, 10.04.10; Nathalie Jenkins, Salernes, 10.01.10.

<sup>181</sup> The interview with Gerard Busquet demonstrates how feuds have increased. He expressed shock and almost disbelief at his Grandfather's willingness to forgive and leave the past behind. Gerard Busquet, Aups, 23.09.09.

Indeed interviewees expressed annoyance at the continued presence of wartime disputes.<sup>182</sup> This demonstrates how the legacy of wartime tensions has evolved affecting individuals and the community in unforeseen ways. It also further suggests that these tensions are slowly abating. Community identity and memory are inherently complex concepts and caution must be taken to acknowledge the limitations of individual accounts.

This analysis now turns to the myths that have evolved out of the war and the liberation. It is natural for romanticised and simplistic historical accounts to dominate the popular consciousness and shape a comprehensible and neat history. Yet the formation, spread and impact of these narratives provide invaluable further insight into how the past and present co-exist. By identifying how historical discourses are created and by analysing their influence on contemporary community dynamics and identity, one can also reach a greater understanding of how myths, memory and history interact. Above community tensions in Aups, war and the unsettling atmosphere of post-war justice also fostered a seemingly contradictory legacy of unifying, patriotic and embellished narratives. In order for France to unite its people under a new national identity a certain version of the past had to be constructed. Communities, like people, are riddled with paradoxes and Charles de Gaulle's attempts to unite the French people behind a discourse of national pride can be seen, despite lasting tensions in Aups, to have been successful in both villages.

An assessment of the shift in popularity between political parties is illustrative of a popular change in loyalties. At the liberation orders were sent from the new departmental authority detailing who was in control until elections. In Aups Charles Hanne, the president of the Comité de Liberation, was put in charge of Aups Mairie.<sup>183</sup> In Villecroze the Mayor Coulomp remained in power until subsequent elections. The Communist Party had been targeted by the Vichy government during the war and as a result it gained political influence in the region post-liberation and M. Espitalier became mayor of Villecroze.<sup>184</sup> The Communist Party has since been criticised within the region for embellishing its role in the Resistance and brushing-over German sympathies prior to the breaking of the Nazi-Soviet

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<sup>182</sup> Jean-Yves Cauty, Salernes; Nathalie Jenkins, Salernes, 10.01.10; Sharon Essex, Salernes, 01.03.10.

<sup>183</sup> He took over until 1945 after which he was replaced by Elie Pourret who was then Mayor until 1947. Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W 33- municipalité.

<sup>184</sup> Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 56.

Pact.<sup>185</sup> Professing one's allegiance to the Resistance became essential for political parties and individual careers across France in the post-war period and M. Espitalier profited from the Communist Party's momentum.<sup>186</sup> This reflects how the liberation of France and the defeat of Nazi Germany caused a shift in the nation's identity and politics; whether the shift in allegiances at the local level reflects a change that individuals' had undergone throughout the war and a genuine allegiance to the ideology of the Resistance is much harder to discern.

Paxton demonstrates how at the liberation political speeches and defence trials created and spread false perceptions.<sup>187</sup> In Villecroze a local political committee of twelve was formed and according to the minutes of their first meeting all members had 'had roles of varying levels within the Resistance'.<sup>188</sup> However there is only evidence linking Matteucci Louis to the Resistance. Moreover M. Coulomp who had actively and amicably co-operated with Vichy was part of the committee.<sup>189</sup> The committee's first act was to assert loyalty to Charles de Gaulle and name the village square after him, further highlighting how post-war official documents and meetings must be approached with caution; they were an easy way for each village to re-define its wartime position.<sup>190</sup> Villecroze is testimony of how even small remote political authorities contributed to the distortion of history and memory by washing over the past and exaggerating previous commitment to the Resistance struggle.<sup>191</sup>

These political shifts at the national and local level and the history that they championed facilitated a psychological break from the past, a popular distancing from Vichy and a shift in loyalties and identity. At the liberation a flurry of individual claims to the Resistance struggle occurred across the region. First-hand accounts report how people falsely professed to be Résistants and how guns, hidden in graveyards throughout the war, resurfaced afterwards in order to legitimise their claims.<sup>192</sup> These popular declarations of allegiance

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<sup>185</sup> Maignon, *Toulon*, p.12; Marie-Helene Dumas, Salernes, 17.09.09.

<sup>186</sup> Scullion, 'Georges Perec', p.110; Hellman, 'Wounding Memories', p.472; Fishman, 'Review: The Power of Myth', pp.666-8; Bartov, 'Review: The Proof of Ignominy', pp.108-9, 128.

<sup>187</sup> Paxton, *Vichy France*, pp. xiv-xv.

<sup>188</sup> Translated from: 'prient une part plus ou moins grande dans la resistance'. Most were involved in politics pre-war and were politically left of centre. Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 56.

<sup>189</sup> Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 56.

<sup>190</sup> Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 56.

<sup>191</sup> This coincides with Paxton's findings. Paxton, *Vichy France*, pp. xiv-xv.

<sup>192</sup> Marie-Helene Dumas, Salernes, 17.09.09; M. Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09; Jean-Yves Cauty, Salernes, 01.03.10; Gerard Busquet, Aups; Mme. Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09.

proved to have had lasting impact. When specifically asked during interviews and questionnaires if the interviewee had been in the Resistance, people told of how a brother hid from the S.T.O. or a father was questioned by the Milice as if proof of their active role. If they were too young people referred to unrelated patriotic acts such as the Algerian war or being a local fireman.<sup>193</sup> There was unease at leaving room for doubt. Still today even those who were not alive at the time rush to prove their loyalty to the Resistance struggle and the French Republic. This suggests that the post-liberation period contributed to an undercurrent of defensive discomfort and strengthened a national patriotic identity that reached across the generations and to the remote villages of Provence.

Patriotic pride in Villecroze and Aups was aided by the perception each village developed of their history. Soon after the liberation Aups received, along with other communes in the Var, the Croix de la Guerre from the minister of defence for its position in the Resistance.<sup>194</sup> The Croix de la Guerre is considered a great honour and occupies a highly prominent place in the museum.<sup>195</sup> The village's actual role was relatively minor and this official and permanent appraisal has facilitated an amplified memory of the people's involvement. Individuals across the generations referred to the heroic and crucial role of their village in the war and generally expressed great pride in attending commemoration ceremonies.<sup>196</sup> This further implies that glamorised versions of both Villecroze's and Aups' history have proved useful for anchoring patriotic post-war narratives firmly within the collective memory, culture and identity.

The embellishment of each village's role in the war has also been enabled by incorporating regional history into the village memory and elevating specific events and individuals to mythic proportions.<sup>197</sup> Visitors that passed through Villecroze to then later be

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<sup>193</sup> Questionnaire: Roux Jean-Louis; M. Bertaud; Claret Eluane; M.B. Ciofi.

<sup>194</sup> Draguignan, Archives départementales du Var: 1W art. 94; Documents provided by Claret Eluane, (Aups): the firsthand account of Constans Max and details of the events of the war.

<sup>195</sup> Resistance museum, Musée Simon SEGAL.

<sup>196</sup> Mme. Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09; Sebastien Ziegler, Villecroze, 21.12.09; Stephen Clackson, Villecroze, 07.01.10; Susie Clackson, Villecroze, 07.01.10; Simon Pau, Salernes, 10.04.10; Jean Amic, Aups, 21.11.09; Questionnaires: Claret Eluane; M. B. Ciofi; M.Bertaud; Roux Jean-Louis; Simone Ciofi; Claret Eluane.

<sup>197</sup> Lucie Aubrac's memoirs on her experience within the Resistance in a separate region demonstrates how the 'mundane quality of heroism' has been transformed over time into legend. Fishman, 'Review: The Power of Myth', p.671; For specific examples related to Aups and Villecroze see: *Resistance Var*, Tri-monthly newsletter, Editions No. 3 December 1991 and No.33 June 1999; Comité de Toulon de L'Association Nationale des

stopped 100 km further on and die in deportation are seen as Villecroze's tragic loss and take a prominent position within the retelling of the past.<sup>198</sup> In questionnaires and interviews in Aups, when asked specifically about their village's experience, people constantly referred to those tortured in Toulon and the Resistance activity that took place in the hills well beyond the village.<sup>199</sup> Village collective memory has adopted external experiences exaggerating the impact that war had on the village and facilitating pride in their past.

Moreover Villecroze has also focused its collective memory of the war on the circumstantial death of Roger Maurice who was shot eight days after the liberation by a panicked stray German soldier.<sup>200</sup> While he died after the war and had taken no part in Resistance activity, his prominent commemoration inscription carries the Resistance symbol and elevates him to the status of a patriotic hero who died in the fight for France.<sup>201</sup> The incident involving the Marianne has also been inflated within Villecroze's collective memory and its inscription elevates the small incident to a revolt involving the whole village.<sup>202</sup> The historical pamphlets, Resistance newsletters and commemoration ceremonies herald the 'revolt' as a 'unique event' unparalleled in French history.<sup>203</sup> Equally in Aups, the events of July 22 1944 and the death of Rossette Ciofi have reached legendary status. Her feminine youth has made her an ideal focus and she has been incorporated into village culture as a hero of the Resistance. She holds a prominent place within the museum, has streets named after her and is commemorated in the centre of the village.<sup>204</sup> These events and individuals are referred to by the majority of interviewees across the generations with pride, attachment and emotion.<sup>205</sup> Ciofi and Maurice's place in history demonstrates on one level how death has

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Anciens Combattants De La Resistance, *Le Var dans la Guerre*, p.51; Association des Movements Unis de la Resistance et des Maquis du Var, *La Resistance*.

<sup>198</sup> A family that passed through Villecroze were stopped at Thorame Haute and died in deportation. Thorame Haute is over 100 kilometers from Villecroze. There was no link or communication between the two during the war. The unknown fate of the Touati family who passed through Villecroze during the war has also been integrated in the history of the village. Documents provided by Claret Eluane, (Aups): the firsthand account of Constans Max and details of the events of the war.

<sup>199</sup> Questionnaire: Claret Eluane; Gerard Busquet, Aups, 23.09.09.

<sup>200</sup> The light of his cigarette indicated his presence in a field at night leading to a panicked stray German soldier to shoot him. M. Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09.

<sup>201</sup> See appendix 2.b.

<sup>202</sup> See appendix 2.a.

<sup>203</sup> Documents provided by Claret Eluane, (Aups): the firsthand account of Constans Max and details of the events of the war; *Resistance Var*, Tri-monthly newsletter, Editions No. 33 June 1999.

<sup>204</sup> See appendix 2.d,e,f.

<sup>205</sup> Bertrand Pradel, Salernes, 21.09.09; Sebastien Ziegler, Villecroze, 21.12.09; Stephen Clackson, Villecroze, 07.01.10; Susie Clackson, Villecroze, 07.01.10; Simon Pau, Salernes, 10.04.10; Jean Amic, Aups, 21.11.09; Questionnaire: Claret Eluane; M. Ciofi; M.Bertaud; Roux Jean-Louis; Simone Ciofi; Claret Eluane.

lasting effect on small communities; on the other it shows how individuals have become symbolic of the entire village and promote an idealised vision of rural Resistance, distorting the collective memory. The commemoration of the dead has gone beyond simple remembrance and has contributed to a ‘well-functioning myth’ that promotes a proud and active village history and collective identity.<sup>206</sup>

The resistance has also been an instrumental focal point for the development of myths and commemoration. As seen, the local Resistance was disorganised with limited resources and success, yet since the liberation the Maquis have been elevated to the status of a fully fledged and indispensable army. That the Resistance was poorly documented, the people of the Var semi-literate and papers often destroyed in the name of security proved to be useful after the war as it provided a blank slate on which history could be written.<sup>207</sup> Public statues and monuments, like the ones mentioned above, are unavoidable and influential representations of the past and have proved instrumental in the creation and dissemination of Resistance myths. They use the power of symbols, appeal to emotions over reason and by nature simplify history. In Draguignan there is a poignant soviet-like statue of a heroic powerful Resistance man with superhuman strength breaking through chains.<sup>208</sup> It is in a prominent position on a main road and facing a school. While it is similar to the drawings of Résistants it in no way resembles the photographs taken of the French Maquis during and after the war.<sup>209</sup> The overt message of this statue is representative of the hundreds of commemoration statues and ‘lieux de mémoire’ placed on roundabouts, in front of schools and in village squares in the surrounding region.<sup>210</sup> They keep a strong sense of history alive and promote a collective heroic narrative of resistance. Blanket commemoration and myths have swept the region, hiding the diversity of wartime experience and facilitating a regional unity.

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<sup>206</sup> The term ‘well-functioning myth’ was in used in reference to the creation of memory in post-apartheid South Africa. Norval, ‘Truth and Reconciliation’, p.513; Documents provided by Claret Eluane, (Aups): the firsthand account of Constans Max and details of the events of the war.

<sup>207</sup> Mme. Maunier, Villecroze, 18.09.09; Sharon Essex, Salernes, 01.03.10; Anthony Beerbhom, Salernes, 20.11.09; Durandet, *Les Maquis*, p.35.

<sup>208</sup> The statue was chosen by public vote during an olive festival held in June 1958, receiving ninety percent of the votes. The other option was a more humble depiction of resistance and included deportees. Not surprisingly the public chose to remember the past through a discourse of national pride. The statue cost the equivalent of 1,200 Euros and was funded by the Mairie and national remembrance associations who also helped choose the statue. German, *Les Chemins*, p. 146; see appendix 2.k.

<sup>209</sup> The A.N.A.C.R. suggested artists helped fund and expressed their agreement and support for the chosen statue. German, *Les Chemins*, pp.146, 154, 167; See: Durandet, *Les Maquis*, pp. 185-187, 266 for photos of Résistants and pp.137, 265 for the drawings.

<sup>210</sup> ‘lieux de mémoires’ refers to ‘sites of memory’ such as commemoration statues and museums. Throughout the Var these ‘lieux de mémoires’ are heavily present and in public places. German, *Les Chemins*, p.146.

Associations and local historiography, along with the ‘lieux de mémoires’, are vectors of memory and history. They help define the relationship between the past, memory and the present and have also contributed to shaping and disseminating the myth of a powerful and omnipresent Resistance, as well as a simplistic ‘good versus evil’ historical narrative. The link between London and the Maquis is often exaggerated and the Resistance in this region has been equalled to 22 operational American divisions.<sup>211</sup> The literature often analyses Resistance in isolation and leaves largely unaddressed the wider events that led to the liberation of France as well as the impact of pro-Vichy inscriptions and propaganda.<sup>212</sup> In an interview, the head of local association: *Mémoires de Provence en 39/45* denied the existence of French Milice in Salernes and doctor Le Proux, pushing a more united patriotic vision of the French and local history.<sup>213</sup> Unfortunately pro-Vichy mentalities and the fate of those targeted by Vichy and Nazi Germany are largely absent from the archives and few people are prepared to speak frankly about it.<sup>214</sup> Furthermore the A.N.A.C.R’s *Ceux qui ont Fait la Résistance Vous Parlent*, highlight how the Resistance has become synonymous with the lofty ideals of the French republic and how the past has been reduced to a black and white narrative.<sup>215</sup> Within local historiography, publications and newsletters there is a clean divide between the hateful ‘un-French’ Vichy government, and the heroic, honest French people.<sup>216</sup> Heroic songs of the Resistance are compiled and accounts tell of how cowardly Germans ran in the face of danger while the heroic French said “Non!” and stood up to the enemy.<sup>217</sup> This

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<sup>211</sup> Durandet, *Les Maquis*, p.11; A.N.A.C.R., *Ceux qui ont fait la Résistance*, No. 1, Pp.217-9; Bertrand Pradel, Salernes, 21.09.09; Durandet, *Les Maquis*, pp.15-27, 86-99.

<sup>212</sup> Durandet, *Les Maquis*, p.35; Guillon, *Le Var*, P.14; *Resistance Var*, Tri-monthly newsletter, Editions No. 1 January-February 1991 – No. 41 June 2001; Comité de Toulon de L’Association Nationale des Anciens Combattants De La Résistance, *Le Var dans la Guerre*, p.63-40; Association des Mouvements Unis de la Résistance et des Maquis du Var, *La Résistance*; Anthony Beerbhom, Salernes, 20.11.09.

<sup>213</sup> Bertrand Pradel, Salernes, 21.09.09.

<sup>214</sup> As Paxton has demonstrated the history of French Jews has been overlooked and the reality of how so many were deported and stories only started to come out in the 1970s. The plight of Jews in the region is hardly ever mentioned and to write their history requires much more research. Paxton, *Vichy France*, p. xxvii.

<sup>215</sup> A.N.A.C.R., *Ceux qui ont fait la Résistance*, No. 2, P.6.

<sup>216</sup> A.N.A.C.R., *Ceux qui ont fait la Résistance*, No. 1, pp.9-10; A.N.A.C.R., Bulletin No. 16/2004, *Soixantieme Anniversaire de la Liberation, 1944-2004*; Durandet, *Les Maquis*, pp.35-6; *Resistance Var*, Tri-monthly newsletter, Editions No. 1 January-February 1991 – No. 41 June 2001; Comité de Toulon de L’Association Nationale des Anciens Combattants De La Résistance, *Le Var dans la Guerre*; Resistance museum, Musée Simon SEGAL.

<sup>217</sup> The account of how a woman, accused of sleeping with a German soldier was not punished by the resistance but officially tried, is used as ‘sufficient’ proof that the Resistance was pure and just. A.N.A.C.R. *Ceux qui ont fait la Résistance*, No. 1, pp.217-9; A.N.A.C.R., Bulletin No. 16/2004, *Soixantieme Anniversaire de la Liberation, 1944-2004*; Durandet, *Les Maquis*, pp.35-6; *Resistance Var*, Tri-monthly newsletter, Editions No. 1 January-February 1991 – No. 41 June 2001.



‘good versus evil’ narrative has facilitated national pride and the purging of French responsibility as blame is placed on a purposefully undefined and ‘un-French’ ‘them’.

The ground-breaking work of historians and the popular reassessment of French history that took place in France in the 1970s have not destabilised these myths in the region but have engendered a backlash in the local historiography and commemoration. Durandet’s one-sided ode to the Maquis, published in 1974, asserts how the power, influence and organisation of the Resistance in Provence have been forgotten and Guillon argues that France’s history has been ‘neglected’ by narratives of responsibility and Paxtonian thinking.<sup>218</sup> In the 1980s and 1990s the A.N.A.C.R. and the Association des Movements Unis de la Resistance et des Maquis du Var published numerous reappraisals of France at war, reasserting French ideals and nationalist pride.<sup>219</sup> Numerous new associations, newsletters and publications all perpetuating these myths were also set-up, and in 1991 *Resistance Var* began its tri-monthly publication stating that the Resistance had been undervalued and that its honour needed to be reinstated.<sup>220</sup> Each publication embellishes history, targets local pride and details the frequent commemoration ceremonies.

Seemingly unaffected by the reassessment of the past, post-war myths and their dissemination remain strong within the communities of Aups and Villecroze. The museum in Aups which fortifies these myths is heavily visited by both locals and tourists.<sup>221</sup> Patriotic films are shown free to village children, glorified presentations are given in schools, legendary stories and patriotic songs are learnt by rote and parents are sent letters to assure that their children attend commemoration ceremonies.<sup>222</sup> Moreover vast amounts of time and

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<sup>218</sup> Translated from ‘négligée’ and quoted from: Guillon, *Le Var*, p.7; Durandet, *Les Maquis*, p.35.

<sup>219</sup> In 1992 the A.N.A.C.R. published a collection of Résistants’ accounts. As stated by Robert Vollet the secrétaire general of the A.N.A.C.R., it was written as a defence and reappraisal of France. A.N.A.C.R., *Ceux qui ont fait la Resistance*, No. 1, Pp.5-7; Durandet, *Les Maquis*, p.11; Association des Movements Unis de la Resistance et des Maquis du Var, *La Resistance*, pp.5, 6; Bertrand Pradel, Salernes, 21.09.09.

<sup>220</sup> A.N.A.C.R., Bulletin No. 15/2003, 2004, *Soixantieme Anniversaire de la Tragedie du Bession*; A.N.A.C.R., Bulletin No. 16/2004, *Soixantieme Anniversaire de la Liberation, 1944-2004*; A.N.A.C.R., Bulletin Semestriel Des Résistants et Amis, No.5, *Comite Du Bession. Resistance Var*, Tri-monthly newsletter, Editions No. 1 January-February 1991 – No. 41 June 2001.

<sup>221</sup> The resistance museum was created in 1984-5. Jean Amic, Aups, 21.11.09; Resistance museum, Musée Simon SEGAL. Documents provided by Jean Amic, manager of the museum in Aups, which are given out in schools in the surrounding area.

<sup>222</sup> Simon Pau, Salernes, 10.04.10; Jean Amic, Aups, 21.11.09; Sharon Essex, Salernes, 01.03.10; ; Lucie Cauty, Salernes, 10.04.10.

money are spent by associations and the local political authorities on elaborate re-enactments.<sup>223</sup> Interviews across generations further demonstrate the contemporary strength of this local culture within the village collective identity. Interviewees of the second and third generation, while unable to refer to any factual base, depicted a powerful and pervasive Resistance and an active public, neglecting the dark side of the Resistance and wartime lynching of suspected collaborators. Bertrand Pradel, for example, refers to the Resistance as ‘magical’ and Salernes as a little ‘Stalingrad’.<sup>224</sup> The idea that for some villages little changed and that life went on as usual still does not sit comfortably within the historiography or the popular culture. Distorted narratives pervade the contemporary identity of both Villecroze and Aups, facilitating unity and strong patriotic pride across the generations. Action and heroism have overshadowed the reality and complexity of wartime pressures and motives, demonstrating the power that these vectors of history have over popular perceptions.<sup>225</sup> The histories of the majority of the village people, the diversity of experiences and the nuances of public opinion have been ignored. ‘Truth’ in History is fragile and as time passes the untold history of these villages, with all its nuances and uncomfortable truths, is becoming increasingly unobtainable.

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<sup>223</sup> Stephen Clackson, Villecroze, 07.01.10; German, *Les Chemins*, pp. 146-9.

<sup>224</sup> Bertrand Pradel, Salernes, 21.09.09; Sebastien Ziegler, Villecroze, 21.12.09; Stephen Clackson, Villecroze, 07.01.10; Susie Clackson, Villecroze, 07.01.10; Simon Pau, Salernes, 10.04.10; Jean Amic, Aups, 21.11.09; Questionnaire: Claret Eluane; M. Ciofi; M.Bertaud; Roux Jean-Louis; Simone Ciofi; Claret Eluane.

<sup>225</sup> This mirrors Paxton’s findings for France more generally. Paxton, *Vichy France*, p.xviii.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Conclusion**

The villages of Villecroze and Aups were both largely detached from WWII. They were removed from the centres of resistance and were geographically isolated. Largely as a result of this, everyday life continued more or less as normal. However their difference in size and each village's precise geographical position meant that war was present to a greater extent in Aups and that life was more disrupted in terms of external presence, interaction with the resistance and material and human loss. This had long-lasting repercussions on their community, marked by the continued presence of war related feuds in Aups. Evidence suggests that people in Villecroze were less connected to the war, this is mirrored in the stable position that the war has taken within Villecroze's collective memory and the lack of contemporary wartime tensions. Indeed, as this paper has shown each village's separate experience of war influenced their present community dynamics.

This analysis of the post-liberation period has also highlighted how competing historical narratives co-exist and interact. Aups' closer proximity to war meant that the Gaullist vision of a France united in resistance inadvertently perpetuated the divided history it was trying to hide, fuelling local resentment.<sup>226</sup> Although people in Aups did and do not consider justice to have been achieved, they have nonetheless adopted the post-war myths. This paper has thus revealed a paradox: whilst Aups' memory and identity are united in patriotic pride and the myths of the Resistance they are also fragmented by family feuds and wartime tensions. It has further shown that while there is evidence that community feuds are fading, patriotic historical frameworks have proved remarkably resilient to the passing of time.

During the liberation period Charles De Gaulle's 'resistentialist myth [...] shaped French national identity and politics' and entrenched a false collective memory that reached down to the remote rural villages of Villecroze and Aups. Through oral history and a

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<sup>226</sup> Koreman, *The Expectation*, p.4.

discussion of the vectors of history this paper has demonstrated how these post-war myths have been anchored into the community memory and identity of Villecroze and Aups. Both villages incorporated distant accounts into their own collective memory and have mythologized specific events and individuals, justifying the impression of a village heavily involved in war and joined in resistance. Physical 'lieux de mémoire', the prevalence of associations and local historiography have proved instrumental in keeping these myths alive, and academic and popular opposition to them have paradoxically reinforced their strength. 'A well-functioning foundational myth' spread in both Villecroze and Aups and legitimised 'the post-transitional balance of forces'.<sup>227</sup> An analysis of 'lieux de mémoires', local historiography, associations and contemporary popular opinions has shown that while the experiences of war differed greatly, they have both been deeply affected by similar myths and commemoration processes. Simplified historical narratives of collective involvement in the Resistance have enabled national and local pride within these two villages and fostered united and functional communities. Paxton found that myths were alive in France in 2001 when he released his Morningside edition of *Vichy France* and this research has found that in 2010 myths remain as strong as ever in Villecroze and Aups.<sup>228</sup>

The oral history used for this paper enabled it to reach beyond dominant historical frameworks, deconstruct post-liberation myths and discover what life was like on a day to day level. It also highlighted the limitations of this research. It drew attention to how the outsider perspective inhibited an in-depth knowledge of intimate community dynamics and rumours, making it difficult to document the detailed events of the post-liberation period. The interviewees often expressed hostility and suspicion and withheld information. The continuing tensions in Aups made trust on behalf of the interviewee particularly hard to gain and this research reminded the Aristotelian saying that the more you know the more you know you don't know. This paper has reached only the edges of historical controversy in Aups and in order to further uncover the hidden aspects of its past it would be necessary to conduct further interviews and revisit interviewees. As those that experienced the war become fewer there is a genuine worry that histories will remain unwritten and the need for further research is now.

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<sup>227</sup> Norval, 'Truth and Reconciliation', p.513.

<sup>228</sup> Paxton, *Vichy France*, p. xxviii.

This dissertation set out to gain a greater historical understanding of how the past and present interact and to unveil some of the unwritten history of Villecroze and Aups. The research revealed the surprising extent to which competing narratives, created by the intertwining legacies of war, blurred the history of Villecroze and especially Aups. Indeed, ‘the difficulties involved in reconstructing the history of that [French] fractured society are reflected in the competing narratives of the period’.<sup>229</sup> The reconstruction of their past requires one to continually read against the grain and interweave a wide range of sources to cross reference every given account and establish its factual reliability. In order to gain a greater understanding of the past it was also essential to evaluate the pervasive means by which myths have spread and become anchored into the popular culture and identity. This paper has demonstrated the importance of understanding a community’s collective memory and dominant myths and in doing so it has unveiled the organic and living nature of the past. It has not, however, legitimised Napoleon’s claim that History is ‘but a fable agreed upon’ or Emerson’s assertion that there is ‘no history; only biography’.<sup>230</sup> On the contrary, the presence of fables and the distortion of history through personal attachment demonstrate the importance of the historical discipline to challenge assumptions, break-down myths, investigate the past and discover truths.

This analysis of Villecroze and Aups during WWII demonstrates the benefit of small scale research for a more accurate understanding of social history. It highlights how popular experiences of the past cannot be simplified into nations or even regions. However, this microhistory also highlighted the extent to which even small communities are complex and internally diverse and how the writing of history must generalise to an extent and edit out certain details in order to create a coherent narrative. Indeed, conducting this research reminded the depth, complexity and limitations of the historical discipline. Although historians’ work can be accurate and invaluable, human errors are always present and the past is complex to the extent that it is unobtainable in its entirety. Associations and local historians have contributed to shaping a distorted history of Villecroze and Aups, demonstrating that historians are indeed ‘carriers’ of memory and highlighting the

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<sup>229</sup> O. Bartov, ‘Review’, p.107.

<sup>230</sup> Emerson quoted from and Napoleon cited in: Emerson, Ralph Waldo, ‘History’ in *The Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Vol II, Essays (London, 1899), p.10.

responsibility that comes with power.<sup>231</sup> No history alone can be fully comprehensive and the understanding of the past and the legitimacy of History as a discipline relies on a dynamic dialogue between historians. Such a dialogue is largely absent from the history of Villecroze and Aups and it is hoped that the analysis of their experiences and legacies of war will not stop here.

Word count: 12,155

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<sup>231</sup> Russo referred to historians as ‘carriers’ of memory and emphasised both their power and responsibility. Temkin, ‘Avec un certain malaise’, p. 294-5.

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<sup>232</sup> Commemoration statues and monuments in Aups, Villecroze and Draguignan have been also visited and photos taken. Examples and analysis will be integrated into the dissertation.

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<sup>233</sup> The museum has been visited. Photos were taken of the displays and copies of the documents that they use when giving presentations to local schools were taken.



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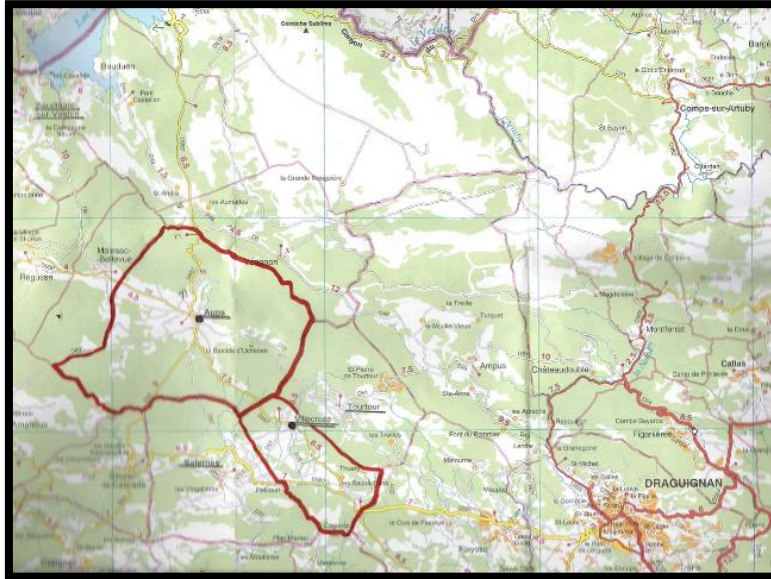
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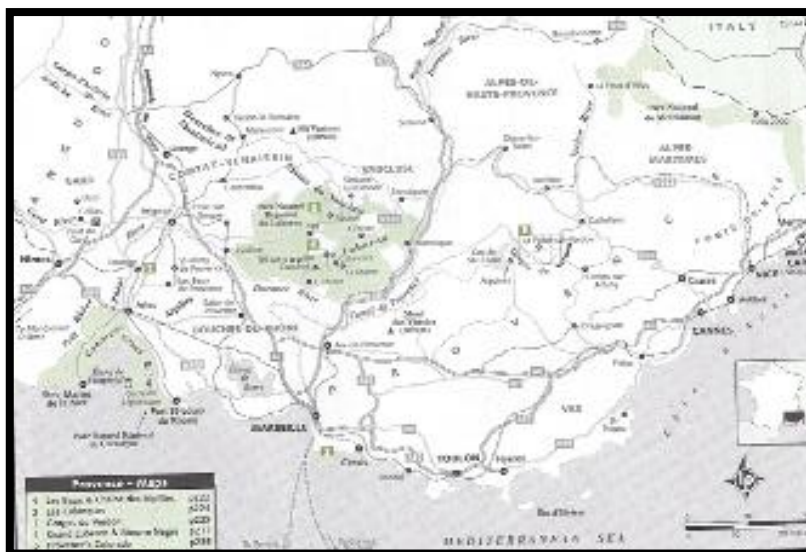
## Appendix 1. Maps

### Appendix 1. a. Map of the Haute-Var

The communes of Villecroze and Aups are outlined in Red



### Appendix 1.b. Map of Provence



## **Appendix 2: Photographs of commemoration in and around Villecroze and Aups.**

Many more photos of commemoration sites were taken and analysed. However only those specifically mentioned within the dissertation have been included within the appendix.

### Appendix: 2.a

The statue of the Marianne in the centre of Villecroze village and a close-up of the inscription:



Appendix 2.b.

The inscription honouring the death of Roger Maurice at the entrance of Villecroze Village:  
(There are often flowers placed in either side and the symbol visible on the photo is the mark of the resistance.)



Appendix 2. c.

Monument in the centre of Aups square commemorating the resistance and the war:



Appendix 2.d.

Monument in the centre of Aups square commemorating the resistance, the war and Rosette Ciofi: (it is situated opposite the one above)



Appendix 2.e.

Street named after Rosette Ciofi in the center of Aups village:



Appendix 2.f

Photo taken inside the museum in Aups of a display commemorating the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July and the death of Rosette Ciofi:



Appendix 2. g

Resistant identity cards from the surrounding region have been collected and displayed within the Museum:





Appendix 2.h.

Flag within the museum commemorating the A.N.A.C.R. branch in Aups:



Appendix 2.i.

Monument on the Road out of Aups honouring the Ernest Millet and Francois Duchatel who were shot by the Milice on their way to Hyres on the June 12<sup>th</sup> 1944:



Appendix 2. j.

Commemoration monuments at Bession



Appendix 2. k.

Resistance statue in Drauguignan



### **Appendix 3: Questionnaire**

A copy of the questionnaire (translated into English) sent to sixty individuals all living within the villages of Villecroze or Aups. In the version sent out ample gaps were left in between each question.

43 Chemin de Picaillou

Salernes, 83690

0494606398

Sophie\_rigglette@hotmail.com

Dear Sir/Madame,

My Parents live in Salernes and I am in the process of writing a dissertation of the history of the region for the University of Bristol in England. I am researching everyday life during the Second World War in Villecroze and Aups as well as how it has been commemorated and the evolution of memory.

I am writing to you to ask if I could ask a few questions on your impressions and memories of this period. I am as interested in the evolution of memory as in the experience. Therefore if you are far too young to have lived through the war your impressions are still very important for my research and I am very grateful for all remarks.

Attached is a list of questions, of which not all will apply to you. There is also a consent form to authorise me to use your contribution in my research. The list of questions is quite long; please answer those that you want. Equally please feel free to add anything that you would like that the questions do not cover. There is a stamped addressed envelope where you can send your responses

Thank you very much for your time it is extremely helpful and much appreciated.

Kind regards and best wishes for 2010.

Sophie Rigg

### History Questionnaire

Were you born in the region?

If not in what year did you arrive and at what age?

What are your impressions of the Second World War?

What do you see as being the principal events in your village over the course of the war even if you did not live through it?

Were you or your family part of the Resistance ?

At school were you taught on this period and what are your impressions on what you learnt?

How would you define a Résistant?

How would you define a Collaborator?

Have you taken part in commemoration associations? If yes/no why?

Have you participated in local annual commemoration events? If yes/no why?

Do you feel that your village's experience of war has had an impact on contemporary community identity?

Do you think it is important to fight against forgetting? What is the best way to prevent it?

If you had to teach the history of your village over this period to a primary school what would be your focus?

Even if you did not live through the war do you think that your community was divided during this period?

Do you think that these divisions are still present today?

If there is anything that you would like to add or elaborate on please feel free.

Thank you again for your time, it is much appreciated.