

**CAMP DES MILLES: A MEMORIAL FOR TOMORROW**  
**Social Sciences for Civic Education and Culture**<sup>1</sup>

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*“The Camp des Milles must now become a place for education ... I am convinced that it will become  
an important, indeed very important place for the next centuries ...”*

*Elie Wiesel, 2006*

The purpose of the so-called project “Mémoire du Camp des Milles” (Remembering the Camp des Milles) is to save, maintain and open to the public the buildings of this World War Two French camp. Located between Aix-en-Provence and Marseille, this internment and deportation camp is the only French one still in good condition and bears visible traces from the past. This site is a remnant of a particularly painful and enlightening period of History. Therefore, it represents a significant part of the French national memory and of the European culture.

The project is the result of a long process of remembering the past with the goal of turning the site into a place for citizen education. A special emphasis will therefore be placed on that aspect. Indeed, the ambition of this project is to strengthen the visitor’s vigilance and sense of responsibility, especially that of young people, given the permanent threats posed by racism, anti-semitism, fundamentalism and totalitarianism.

When he invited me to this Congress, my friend György Széll unexpectedly asked me not to present a paper about labour sciences but in another field, about the project “Remembering Le Camp des Milles” which he was aware of. Indeed, he understood very well that deep links and common challenges exist between the two fields, especially when thinking about “Science, Education and Culture”, the topic of this international Congress. This is true on two aspects at least :

First, the common challenge is to get science outside its ivory towers, to build tools in order to provide citizens with relevant scientific results and methods. For instance, in the field of labour, György and myself worked together at national and European levels, in order to improve strong links between science and social actors, notably trade unions. In the project “Mémoire du Camp des Milles”, science will be systematically used to improve Education and Culture for citizens, especially young citizens. As usual in a memorial place, history will be used as a basis. But, it distinguishes itself from other such places inasmuch as it puts to use results from various social sciences in a multidisciplinary approach. This is supposed to provide keys of understanding the individual and social processes which may lead to mass violence and genocides ; and also those processes which may lead to resistance.

Secondly, saving democracy is a challenge at the core of both fields, in order to prevent political disasters or to improve working and living conditions ; democracy is also at stake when employment or social welfare are destabilised, leading to various kinds of fundamentalism and fascism. This will appear more clearly when looking at the history of the Camp des Milles and at the memorial, educational and cultural project which is now going on in its historical place.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was presented at the International Congress on “Science, Education and Culture”, Osnabrück, September 20-24, 2006

## **AN INTERNMENT AND DEPORTATION CAMP IN PROVENCE**

The Camp des Milles opened in September 1939 within a tile factory located between Aix-en-Provence and Marseille. It was in operation for a little over three years and was a transit place for more than 10,000 internees coming from 27 countries, in particular from Germany and Austria. Its history goes through several phases corresponding to the different categories of internees who stayed there : nationals from the Reich and Legionnaires, foreigners looking to emigrate, Jews caught in raids.

One can read, through these phases, the tragic evolution of the repression that targeted foreigners and Jews under the French “collaborationist” Vichy regime. This tragic evolution culminated in August and September 1942 with the deportation of more than 2,500 Jewish men, women and children and their extermination in the nazi Auschwitz-Birkenau camp after a short stop in the Drancy or Rivesaltes camps.

### **The first phase: a French internment camp (September 1939-June 1940)**

France’s declaration of war on Germany, on September 3, 1939, led to the internment of all Austrian and German nationals living in the South of France into “camps” under the jurisdiction of the French Army. “Les Milles” in particular was the main camp in South-Eastern France and was also in charge of managing other transit or labour camps (Alès, Manosque, Les Mées, etc.). These internees were considered “enemy subjects”, even though they were for the most part anti-nazis and Jews who had fled the German Reich as early as 1933 to seek asylum in France and in particular in that region.

Among them, one can find a rich world-renowned *intelligentsia* : literary figures (Lion Feuchtwanger, Fritz Brugel, William Herzog, Alfred Kantorowicz, Golo Mann son of Thomas Mann, etc.), scientists (Otto Meyerof, Nobel Prize winner ...), musicians and painters (Hans Bellmer, Max Ernst, Herman Henry Gowa, Erich Itor Kahn, Gustave Herlich better known as “Gus”, Max Lingner, Ferdinand Springer, Franz Meyer, etc.).

### **The second phase: an internment and transit camp for the Vichy regime (June 1940-July 1942)**

Under the Vichy regime, that collaborated with the Nazis, the Camp quickly becomes overcrowded (3,500 internees by June 1940). This is when the episode of the “Train des Milles” takes place, made famous by Sébastien Grall’s 1995 movie. During this period, foreigners coming from camps in the Southwest of France are transferred to Les Milles, and in particular former members of the International Brigades from Spain as well as Jews from Central and Eastern Europe.

In November 1940, the Camp was placed under the authority of the Ministry of Home affairs. It became the only transit camp in France linked to re-emigration overseas, through regular or illegal transit processes, helped by individuals, organizations and local and international networks. It is during this period (1940-1941) that the internees painted the famous and large murals in the guards’ refectory, including a “Nations’ banquet” showing people from all origins eating together at the same table. What made also this Camp special was notably this large proportion of intellectuals and artists who never stopped maintaining an active cultural life in the Camp.

### **The third phase: The deportation towards Auschwitz via Drancy (August-September 1942)**

Since 1940 the French Vichy-government launched a “State anti-Semitism”. Two years later, after a crescendo of discriminatory measures, the French authorities organised the deportation of Jews from the non-occupied zone, even before the German occupation of this zone in November 1942.

Deportations from Les Milles towards Drancy and then Auschwitz are consistent with the “Final Solution” elaborated at the Nazi Wannsee Conference of January 20, 1942, and with the agreement of the Vichy French government to deliver to Germany 10,000 Jews from the non-occupied so-called “Free zone” in France.

On August 3, the camp is locked down: Jewish women and children from the region join the other internees before being deported. Jewish political refugees or those who had served in the French army are not spared. In total, more than 2,500 Jews -- men, women and children -- were sent by the Vichy government from the Camp des Milles to the death camp of Auschwitz by way of the Drancy camp or, later, by way of the Rivesaltes one. Some one hundred Jewish children were deported from Les Milles. Among them was one-year old Jean Krauss. *“Small children who were exhausted stumbled their way through the cold night, starving...; poor little things aged 5 or 6 carrying their bundles, falling asleep and rolling over with their baggage...”* (Reverend Henri Manen)

Some brave men and women were able to help them. Some became “Righteous among the Nations”. Such is the case for Reverend Henri Manen and for the warden Auguste Boyer. After September 1942, the camp remains a transit camp but slowly dwindles: its last prisoners leave its brick walls in December 1942, one month after the occupation of the “Free zone” by the German army.

### **A LONG PROCESS OF REMEMBERING THE PAST**

The project « Mémoire du Camp des Milles » is the outcome of a long march of souvenir, starting in 1941 with the reports of former inmates, and strengthened since 1984 through publication of academic studies. This movement was led for nearly 25 years by the organisations of former inmates, deportees and resisters and of the Jewish community, locally gathered within the ‘Association du Wagon-souvenir et du Site-Mémorial des Milles’, and by the CRIF (French Jewish umbrella organization) as well. This memorial process developed in several stages: the erection of a stele in 1985 and the inauguration in situ in 1990 of a «Chemin des Déportés» (Way of Deported). The installation in 1992 of the “Wagon-souvenir”, at the place where the deportees have been embarked ; at this occasion, a large-scale awareness and education event, called « Memory for tomorrow », brought together more than 36,000 persons. The identification in 1992 of each of the deportees of the Camp des Milles was made in a report by « Fils et Filles des Déportés juifs de France » (Sons and daughters of the Jewish deported from France), dedicated to the transfers of Jews of the Marseille region. The same year, the inauguration of a primary school in Les Milles in the name of Auguste Boyer, Righteous among the Nations, former camp guard. In 1993, the final statutory protection as a national “Historic Monument” of the room with the paintings left by the internees. The complete renewal in 2002 of the exhibition inside the “Wagon-souvenir” by the Memorial of the Shoah in Paris, and the same year the symbolic apposition of a first memorial plaque on the internment building itself, although still private property.

A « Common Declaration on the Project of Memorial of internment and deportation within the tile-factory of Les Milles » has been finally adopted on 26 March 2002 by the Mayor of Aix-en-Provence, the *Société Lafarge Couverture* (then owner of the place), the CRIF and the *Association du Wagon-Souvenir et du Site-Mémorial des Milles*; it planned namely the creation of a Steering Committee for the project « Mémoire du Camp des Milles », having as its mission to conduct the conceptual work and the realisation in situ of a Memorial of Internment of Deportation, within of an ensemble, including already the room with the paintings, the “Wagon-souvenir”, the stele and the Way of Deported.

This was a key moment for the long-term project to preserve the Camp des Milles and to build a Memorial for citizen education and culture.

### **A FUTURE MEMORIAL FOR CIVIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE**

The project “Mémoire du Camp des Milles” is based on the exceptional cultural and historical heritage of the site. It is linked to the major human experience of mass deportation and genocide. In this respect the site deserves to become a European place for memory, culture and civic education, especially considering the fact that no other World War Two French internment camp has been dedicated to this purpose.

In today’s period, which is marked by the return of menaces on the living together and on the personal dignity, the future Memorial looks deeply rooted in an exceptionally strong historic reality, posing the same fundamental questions. Thought and conceived as a place for education and culture, it will then be a space for reflection, exploring universal questions through a unique history. Building on

the trauma of the Shoah<sup>2</sup>, citizen education is favoured in a path which mixes emotion, knowledge and problems.

All the elements of the content will come together in this civic approach: the historic exhibition, then the visit of the rooms of evocation, the “citizen reflection” section itself, passing through the other possibilities: the “Children Pavilion”, with a permanent national exhibition on deported children, temporary exhibitions, artistic performances, a resources centre, conferences and debates, the entirety of these facilities is intended to favour both the emotion and the reflection of the visitor.

Thus the primary role of the future Memorial is to provide sense, making accessible this approach to all types of public, from the pupil to the adult who knows well the period. The project is threefold:

- ◆ Restoration, preservation and opening to the public of the historical premises having been used for internment and the carrying out of deportation (15,000 m<sup>2</sup> of building and 60,000 m<sup>2</sup> of grounds). This concerns notably the tile factory which was the main internment building.
- ◆ Presentation of historical information on the internment and deportation camp, the people concerned and the historical background (regional, French and international).
- ◆ Contribution to the education and vigilance of the citizen using both the strength of the history of the site and the intellectual and artistic work accumulated since the end of the war. This is in order to reinforce the vigilance and the responsibility of visitors considering the permanence of the major ethical issues brought about by the Shoah and other mass crimes generated by World War Two and by totalitarianism in general.

Bearing in mind the topic of this Congress, I will focus now on this last “reflection dimension” provisionally called “memory for tomorrow”, and whose originality is based upon multidisciplinary results.

This part of the project follows immediately the visit of the historic places. Until then, the visitor found himself confronted with the knowledge of the past and its emotional weight. Afterwards, this “citizen section” is focused on stimulating the reflection of the visitor, especially of the young visitor. Indeed they are the ones liable to be facing challenges posed by those great ethical, political and social questions raised since the Shoah. The particular sensitivity commonly shared about this period of mass deportations can support *in situ* a universalistic reflection starting with the biggest trauma of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Indeed it seems that emotion on the past, historic information or rhetoric references to the so-called « lessons from history » are not or not anymore sufficient to recognize and to fight the return of the old demons of racism, anti-semitism and intolerance. Facing simple questions – how to recognize evil? when to react? how? who?-, a precise pedagogy, based on relevant social sciences, proves to be necessary at such a site, in the form of clearly presented elements of reflection, well-argued and stimulating questionings and not just simplistic affirmations.

This major perspective of the project constitutes one of its strong originalities, in regard to other memorial places of this period. Therefore, it is also one of its great intellectual, ethical and pedagogical difficulties on such a sensitive subject.

The steering committee has defined three different leads in this section for the visitor’s thinking to follow :

- on the appearance and spiral of intolerance, racisms and anti-semitism,
- on the turning of democracy into authoritarian regime,
- on the ordinary man or woman’s personal responsibility, as an actor or accomplice, passive or indifferent, but also as a possible resistant. In the frame of these orientations, an important interdisciplinary work is in progress to use relevant scientific results.

More concretely, this section will not be an academic exposé. Rooted in a strong site, well defined in space and time, the goal is to place the visitor’s reflection at the centre of the process, in

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<sup>2</sup> This word “Shoah” means catastrophe in Hebrew. It is nowadays generally preferred in France over the word “Holocaust”, which may have an ambiguous meaning possibly referring to a religious sacrifice.

order to stimulate a personal and intimate understanding and a positive reaction. This should happen through various pedagogical means : films, archives, interactive scenarios, role games ..., and through experimental stations where the visitor can involve himself in order to understand the personal processes which may lead from day-to-day situations and from ordinary hate to mass murders, but also from indifference to resistance. The ambition is to provide the visitors with elements showing his ability to make a difference as an individual and as a citizen.

## **A PROJECT IN PROGRESS**

The Camp des Milles project benefits from some major assets:

- ◆ A unique site in France considering the level of preservation of the internment main building. Unique also because of the paintings and drawings left by the many artists interned there.
- ◆ A significant history that illustrates the policy of exclusion and repression of the Vichy government, the different stages that finally led to a genocide, and after the war the obstacles to the emergence of an accurate national memory.
- ◆ An original multi-disciplinary pedagogical approach towards civic education.
- ◆ The exceptional echo met by the history of this camp in France and abroad, expressed by all generations, by media and by scholars.
- ◆ A project located in a highly populated and touristic area (Provence and French Riviera).
- ◆ A site in the heart of a dense transport network (motorways, international airport, high-speed train stations (Aix en Provence and Marseilles)
- ◆ A potential for attracting more than 100,000 visitors per year if the required means are made available, according to a study conducted by the University of Avignon,.

In 2002, following the above Common Declaration, a Steering Committee was set up to lead the conception and the management of the project on the former camp. This committee is composed of public and private partners and of NGO's representatives : the national Government, regional and local authorities, the Foundation for the Memory of the Shoah, the Société Lafarge Couverture, the Representative Council of Jewish Institutions in France (CRIF), the Shoah Memorial, the NGOs "Wagon Souvenir et Site Memorial des Milles" and "Mémoire du Camp des Milles" elected by all partners to lead the project.

In late 2003, all the partners drew up an official long term Agreement on the objectives of the project. This document deals with the contents of the project and its progress, the site itself and its environment, the investment and running objectives and the future management structure.

An Academic Council guarantees the scientific reliability of the contents of the project.

After completion of a number of preliminary scientific and technical studies, the Steering Committee launched a European competition for the undertaking of the architect and museography contracts, which led to a ground beginning of the project in 2006 with the aim of a first and partial opening to the public end 2008.

## **MEMORY AS POINT OF REFERENCE : FROM A "REVERENTIAL MEMORY" TO A "REFERENTIAL HISTORY"**

### **The question of individual and collective points of reference is at the core of the citizen project**

The project "Memory of Camp des Milles" appears in a period marked by anomy and the destruction of many rules, values and "heteronymous" points of reference –social, political, historical, intellectual, moral, religious... This certainly leads some people to the autonomous development of personal guidelines, but others to the need of basic points of reference called of "proximity": elementary power relations, defensive identities, from the local community to ethnic, national or religious fundamentalism.

The experience of the camp des Milles can offer today some strong historic reference and "orientation" for those, who may be "dis-oriented". A memorial project *in situ* like this one has also the modern function to combat anomy, in valorising another concrete rooting into proximity: the

historical site itself and its history. The aim is basically to provide points of references, on the one side to respond to some visitors' needs for "heteronymous guidance" on the status of norms and laws in the State, on the role of the citizen, on the menaces against democracy, on the dangers of technology, on might and right, on everyone's capacity to say "no"... On the other side, in doing so, this will also contribute to nourish the visitor's autonomous reflection.

Today in France, as well as abroad, the identity conflicts are soaring, and men, women and children are again the deliberate target of all kind of fundamentalists. The incivilities are multiplying ; racism and anti-semitism threaten social peace again. It is difficult to remain untouched by the fact that Nazism and its totalitarianism, its complicities and its persecutions developed in a context of destabilisation of values, very similar to today's. Now as then, it is conducting many people in Europe and around the world towards strong identity points of reference, towards extreme "law and order" ideologies and the appeal to a strong leader.

Which better reference can we offer our youth but the history and the memory of this human cancer? And how to better implant these points of reference than right here, on the scene both of the crime, of the passivity but also of the courage? From this point of view, the site of Les Milles possesses an undeniable force of evocation. It was wished that the visitor's emotion should be complemented by an intellectual and reflective framework, offering him elements of stabilisation and strong values required for his civic culture.

So, the emotional or reverential history may become a referential history: the visitor is invited to overcome the distance which separates him from the past and to start a reflection on the present and the future based on the historic experience. If the duty to remember inspires the project, it includes, more than the necessary homage to the victims, the will to respond to their permanent call to prevent a recurrence of the horror. As already said, the reflective trail will then help understanding how humans get to become other human's targets, how a society transforms itself, how one becomes an executioner or an accomplice (through action or passivity), or on the contrary, how one can oppose the mechanisms of hate, how one resists... This part endeavours to help the visitor to conduct his own questioning and to obtain the historical and scientific knowledge, the keys for understanding, which he will take with him at the end of his visit. The duty to remember is therefore no longer conceived as an internal, silent and painful reflection, but as a form of active commitment on the visitor's part, so that the "never again!" overcomes the stage of proclamation or indignation to give way to a personal implication.

### **Singularity and universality of the Jewish history**

It may be argued that the persecution of the Jews is closely related to other histories of persecution. In Les Milles indeed, their deportation represents the tragic point of culmination of a series of multiple intolerances: against foreigners, against dissidents (which often were also Jews) and finally, against the Jews as Jews. This point, which addresses the tragic singularity of the fate of the Jews during the Second World War, is grounded in the view that one cannot envisage their history as a separate episode, disconnected from the other realities of the epoch.

Whoever is eager to understand the national and European history, and especially the fate of democracy, cannot avoid to ask himself such questions : isn't the fortune and misfortune of the Jews often a revealing indicator, so to speak a "barometer" of larger social phenomena? Isn't Jewish history, in the past as today, a point of heuristic entry into the common history ? How come the French culture of democracy has resulted in such a way that such a human tragedy could take place on a soil which until then had attracted the persecuted of the whole world? Which political and socio-cultural archaisms made this situation possible? Which factors could contribute to lower certain mental barriers, corrupting the civic dimension of the individual, emptying him of his moral dimension ?

One can easily see that anti-semitism can constitute a privileged observatory of the force and the stability of rules and values necessary for the good functioning of a democratic society. Therefore, these questions give anti-semitism a universal meaning and striking topicality.

The tragedy which took place in Les Milles is apparently not the final act of a communitarian tragedy. It questions humanity in its entity, because it hinges on common history and therefore menacing everybody. The victims have been by the way numerous and diverse, and suffered at different degrees : from the non-violent discrimination of women to the terror regime for everyone

through the persecution of democrats, trade-unionists, artists and intellectuals, free-masons, disabled, homosexuals, parias, and finally the genocide of Jews, Sinti and Roms.

Portraying the Shoah as a deadly battle between Jews and anti-semites of the Third Reich would be absurd. Firstly we have to posit the historical debate on the local as well as on the international levels and question the near as well as the remote history. Indeed, the very same mechanisms of intolerance and exclusion have been at work for thousands of years. The question is not fully grasped without questioning the human himself, his mental universe, his representations which condition his social behaviour and reactions to events of exceptional nature.

So, we have to adopt a multi-disciplinary approach, which draws on history, philosophy, sociology, psychology political science, law and economics in order to nourish more accurately the three above leads of reflection selected in the Camp des Milles project. And especially that of the responsibility of the citizen, whose behaviour and individual choices condition the drowning into a regime alienating human rights.

The history of the Jews from Les Milles is also the history of the renouncement of French citizens to the fundamental rights. It tells the encounter of dramatic circumstances (war, occupation, oppression) and the existence of a ground adequate for the appearance of this tragedy (xenophobia, racism, indifference, lack of lucidity or of courage ...).

However, history illustrates at the same time the possibility to resist barbarity : some men and women helped the interned Jews of Les Milles, and saved some of them from deportation. They testify of the force of human consciousness, even in the most terrible situations. As part of the Shoah trauma, the local drama in its very particularity undeniably carries a universal message. The deciphering of its content but also of the context in which it happened will bring a valuable contribution to stimulate civic vigilance.

The purpose is to nourish the seeds of responsibility and even the potential commitment of the individual, to encourage the living-together, and the reactions against discriminatory manifestations and the subtler expressions of racism. This is perhaps one of the most difficult aspects of the project: to point out the mental schemes most common, the expressions of ordinary hate, which are definitely not the most spectacular but by far the most commonplace. They are yet more dangerous, because rooted in people's minds.

## **CONCLUSION: THE UNIVERSALIST PARADIGM OF THE SHOAH**

The International Day which commemorates the souvenir of the Shoah victims and takes place each 27 January in the Camp des Milles as well as everywhere in the world, was decided by consensus by the United Nations. This consensus constitutes a triple message of the international community:

- the Shoah is a very special event of universal significance;
- the Shoah is a trauma unique in our civilisation;
- there is a profound meaning to maintain the memory and the lessons of this shock, because the risk is always present for the inhuman in man to take over the human.

Through this International Day the community of nations finally recognizes the shock that the Shoah represents in our civilisation, the deep trauma of our people who believed in the linearity of progress. Even more, the General Assembly of the United Nations has established the mirror which the Shoah is lending us. It has recognized the very paradigm which the Shoah offers, a paradigm –after all- of humanity. This mirror is a tragic but efficient tool to understand it better in its cruelties and weaknesses, but also in its capacity to resist, in its force and its beauty. What is therefore proclaimed on this day is at the same time the historical singularity of the Shoah and the universality of the human mechanisms which it reveals and which civic reflections have to take into account.

The Shoah is definitely the result of a conjunction of permanent social mechanisms, of which quite a few are still at work today. It is also a specific and extreme horror perpetrated against the Jews, although in a system of attacks and menaces against all, different by their ideas or their bodies, their skin, their handicap or their beliefs, or quite simply being suspected in a totalitarian system which is suspicious of everybody. As we have seen, the historic stages of internment in the Camp des Milles illustrate well this idea: the spiral of persecutions has culminated there with the deportation and death

of more than 2,500 men, women and children, but in the beginning the internment concerned the foreigners and –later- the dissidents.

Without indulging in god-knows-what unhealthy French or German culpability, it is worth reminding ourselves that the Worst in Les Milles took place *before* the German occupation of the « Free Zone ». The point is indeed that if French, Germans and many others have taken part in the horror, this is because the menace is in the heart of every nation, perhaps in the heart of every human being.

The universal and topical character of the human lessons from the Shoah is illustrated by the support given to the Les Milles project, away from any indecent competition of memories, from organisations representing the Armenians and the Roms, other victims of genocides and bearers of the torch of the experience of evil.

Against this shocking and consensual background, the project “Memory of the Camp des Milles” ambitions to provide the visitor with concrete keys of understanding the following questions for today and tomorrow:

- How *it* happens ? e.g. from the insult in the school yard to the stones against buildings and then against people, from fear to aggressivity and violence, from blind belief to the rejection of the other, to incinerated books and to human beings massacred ?
- How everybody may easily remain passive, without necessarily being indifferent, of a passivity which such heavy consequences that doing nothing is letting do ?
- How democracies can die in the ballot boxes, or how they can refuse to believe the evil which has been announced as programmed genocide, still today ; we know it is too late very soon.
- How evil can hide itself in the daily life, how in these ordinary work places, how in this tile-factory, is preparing the launching of the extra-ordinary horror of Auschwitz?

The geographical situation of the Camp des Milles may help the representation and the understanding of this resistible spiral : the evocative force of the place and also its Provençal environment. The contrast is so strong between the sweetness of the surroundings, the banality of the tile factory and the tragic destiny of the place. The sun, the cicadas, the petanque players... but the guards and the soldiers, and railways linked to Auschwitz too.

This contrast will be for sure an encouragement to reflect on the idea that Auschwitz begins here. The tile factory of Les Milles, an ordinary factory at the end of the main street of an ordinary village, illustrates well the fact that around us, in everyday life, the extra-ordinary Auschwitz, final destination of the deportees from les Milles, started.

Discovering Auschwitz is discovering hell and knowing that man is responsible for it; however, it is often so that we have difficulties to make the link between this event – incredible as it was –and ourselves. The “ordinary” tile-factory of Les Milles and its familiar environment facilitate personal implication and favour a pedagogy of responsibility and of awareness.

The purpose is not only to show the mechanisms of barbarity but also to demonstrate how some were able to say ‘no’, efficiently, discreetly, daily, or more visibly within the organised resistance. How democracies managed to defend themselves, not yielding to the Munich weakness. How the spiral could be stopped. The Righteous of the Nations and all the resistants have shown that this was possible. Even the artists and intellectuals of the camp des Milles continued to resist by their thinking and their creativity, e.g. by their ironic paintings in the refectory of the guards.

Ruth Freschel died this year. She was Provence’s last survivor from those interned in the Camp des Milles, deported later to Auschwitz. She was impatiently waiting for the realisation of the project of Mémorial in Les Milles, and she was very keen on its educational ambition, since she had dedicated her entire life to testifying in front of young people. Her passing-away is a difficult and significant moment for all those who respect really the deportees, not only those exterminated, but also those, too few, who could return, and most of whom want that the horror of the camps may help enlighten the path of the young generations. Like her, these deportees, back from the human hell,

disappear one after the other, due to their age, illness, sometimes destroyed by their memories, always anxious about the take over their efforts.

This loss of the survivors, the extreme suffering of the victims and the actuality of the dangers alike urges to pursue their educative action. In these very days, while the seeds of the Worst are still active and the lack of civic culture is aggravated, when the anti-semitic or racist violences in France remain six to ten times more numerous than ten years ago; while injustice, inequality and unemployment continue to destroy our society, while egotism has often replaced solidarity; and while a genocide in Darfur is passively accepted in spite of rhetoric efforts reminiscent of those served about the Jews in the '30s, when the extremists, the fanatics and the totalitarians seem altogether rejuvenated. More than ever, one must ponder on the moral capacity of man to channel his incredible technological power for better and not worse. The "technical performance" of the Shoah illustrates this challenge.

One is entitled to doubt the efficiency of memory or of the "lessons of history". But one is compelled— in face of this doubt — to do everything possible for man to learn from his past. Sure, this is a gamble. However, this is a gamble which the belief in mankind urges us to take. This is a challenge imposed by the responsibility towards the new generations, as well as by the respect owed to the victims.

The project *Mémoire du Camp des Milles* wants to contribute to take up this humanist challenge by prolonging the testimony of the deportees and carving into stone their significant history.

***"Should the echo of their voices weaken, we shall perish."***

*Paul Eluard*

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## APPENDIX: TESTIMONIES, PAST AND PRESENT

### Internment in the Camp des Milles

*“Heartbreaking separations. A tall and handsome young man, 17 or 18 years old, stands between his father and his mother whom he holds by the neck. He does not cry. But he leans in turn towards one and the other, rubbing his face against theirs slowly and softly with all the tenderness in the world. Not a word. The mother and father cry silently continuously. It goes on and on. No one talks. Finally, the bus takes off. From the oldest to the youngest, everyone breaks into tears. Not a shout, not a gesture. But tense faces that, in one instant, want to see for eternity.”* Testimony of Reverend Henri Manen, chaplain of the Camp, Righteous among the Nations.

*“In November 1941, I was transferred, at the same time as the virtuoso Meyerowitz, to Le Camp des Milles. Sanitations conditions were precarious: we were allocated only half a litre of water to wash up. There was not enough food. A shameless black market was rampant....Thanks to my almost daily attendance at mass, I was able to buy bread before returning, and that prevented me from starving to death.”* Testimony from Edwin Maria Landau.

*“The whole place was the strange kaleidoscope of the gathering of 2,000 people who feared for their life. Theatre...lectures (Max Ernst, Wachsmann)...Artists’ works were more or less stolen by the officers who in exchange would grant privileges.”* Testimony of Peter Lipman-Wulf.

*“Three months in Dachau in 1938... Les Milles. The ovens are not as cold as the dormitories (...) barbed wire in front of the tile factory(...) two soldiers on constant patrol. Strings instead of shoelaces (...) the latrine ditch is so narrow that while you hold on to the bar, you wind up soiling the pants of the men behind.”* Testimony of Rudolph Kollmann.

*“(Bunks) with a bag of straw (...) the food bears little resemblance to the famous French cuisine, bones without meat as appetizers and nothing after...”* Testimony of Frank A. Sanders.

*“Walter Hasenclever, the writer, killed himself next to me (at Les Milles).”* Testimony of Henry Joske.

### Deportations from Les Milles to Drancy, then to Auschwitz

*“Monday, August 10 : a terrible day... such gestures by these poor fathers who, before the final deportation, caress the face of a son or a daughter, as if to imprint them on the tips of their fingers ! Mothers screaming in despair and no one is able to hold back their tears... Certain women are able to remain remarkably distinguished-looking... The train wagons, black like hearses, are waiting on a storage track. Surrounded by armed guards, human beings innocent of any crime, because they are Jewish, are delivered to their torturers by my country, which had promised to give them asylum.”*

Notes from Raymond Raoul Lambert, General Director of the UGIF (General Organisation of Jews in France), murdered in deportation with his wife and his four children.

*“We were about ten girls and boys between the ages of 15 and 18, kept hidden by the OSE that evening on the roof of the camp until after the train left. We were also helped by some Sisters of N-D de Sion.”* Testimony from Dieta Gallet.

*“1939 Dachau, Antibes... Les Milles... deportation after being stripped of our belongings by the Reserve Mobile Guards [Gardes Mobiles de Réserve]...The trip lasted eight to ten days across Germany, a real torture (...) When we arrived in Upper Silesia, three had died. Auschwitz...Gross-Rosen, forty-five months in the camp.”* Testimony of Oscar Lustig.

*“I was only 13...We were arrested in the train by the militia and taken to the Camp des Milles where there was already a large crowd...We were sleeping on straw mats on the floor. The beams of the room were covered with bed bugs that attacked us at night... One day, my father, accompanied by a militia man, came to kiss me for the last time...I think illness prevented my parents’ escape by way of a tunnel.”* Testimony of Félicie Awerbuch.

*“Arrested at the Saint-Charles train station on August 26, 1942, two policemen on bicycles...Miserable fare, filth, flees, bedbugs (...) pilfering of food... our American visas are destroyed. Deportees loaded up while beaten with rifle butts (...) Saved thanks to a telegram from a son enrolled in the Legion.”* Professor Simon (Yad Vashem).

### **Deported children from Les Milles**

At the beginning of July 1942, the head of the French government, Pierre Laval, proposed to the Germans that when Jewish families are evacuated from the non-occupied zone, children under the age of 16 be taken as well. What he proposed, in fact, was the deportation of whole families, young and old, from the so-called “free zone” regardless of age.

On September 2, 1942, fifty-four children were transferred from the Camp des Milles to Drancy. These children would then be deported to Auschwitz in two convoys. Altogether, about one hundred children would be deported from Les Milles.

*“What was particularly painful to watch was the sight of small children. For very strict orders were issued at the last minute, such as the fact that above the age of 2, all children were required to leave with their parents. Very small children, stumbling from exhaustion in the night and the cold, crying out of hunger...; poor little fellows of 5 or 6 trying bravely to carry a load as big as they were, then slumping down asleep and rolling on the ground with their bags, shivering from the dew of the night ; young mothers and fathers crying silently and endlessly as they realized their helplessness at the suffering of their children, and then the order was given to leave the courtyard and go to the train”.* Testimony from Reverend Henri Manen, Chaplain of the Camp, Righteous among the Nations, Convoy of September 2, 1942.

### **Righteous among the Nations in Les Milles.**

*“[Auguste Boyer] brought us down through the shaft of an abandoned freight elevator. He slid down a rope, carrying on his back one after the other me, my young brother and my sister. As he was carrying my sister, he fell and his leg was slightly hurt; at that point, he had to give up carrying my mother down. Since the bottom of the shaft had no exit, he left alone to look for a heavy hammer to break down the wall from the outside. All this was happening in the middle of the night, in total silence punctuated by hammer blows.(...) He made us climb over the barbed wire surrounding the camp and told us to hide on the side of the road. A little while later, he took us to his house. He put us up at his house.”* Testimony of Marcel Neiger

*“For the moment, I was allowed to stay. It was the most terrible monstrous day of my life (...). I owe Pastor Manen my life more than to anyone else ...”* Willy Wolfradt, art historian (August 12, 1942)

*“On August 26, 1942, at 5 o’clock in the morning, several policemen barge in (...). A young Polish refugee threw herself out the window...The protestant Pastor (Manen), vouching for the authenticity of my baptism certificate, has obtained from the camp authorities that my name be taken off the list of persons to be deported (...) That morning, the yard was empty, the train was still there (...) we were ordered to come down. A man dressed in black, wearing boots, who looked curiously like a SS...I believe the Chief of Police of Marseille (...) holding a sort of riding- whip that he used to point to certain women (...) I managed to escape.”* Testimony from Elisabeth Steinitz, refugee in Marseille.

N.B. The above testimonies were quoted in André Fontaine's book (see bibliography)

**What pupils say today**

*"We must keep on collecting information and feed our memory to be aware of the evil contained in man so as to learn how to control it."* Fo

*"This visit was very moving; it will remain engraved in my mind for long and has changed my vision of the world."* Lea

*"The route from the camp to the carriage made a great impression on me because we walked on the old tracks of the deportees, men and women and children".* Sebastien

*"This historical site must be kept up to tell the story of the horror of these camps, hoping it will never happen again".* Hajira, Sophie, Emilie