



MEMORIAL CIRCUIT IN THE LALANDE HIGH SCHOOL



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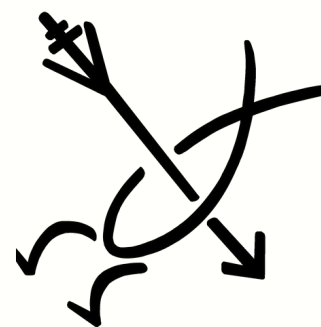
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Lycée Lalande



A1 – Presentation of the high school



On June 5th, 1944, members of the militia entered Jérôme Lalande High School during the final baccalaureate exams and conducted a violent roundup of students and staff. How can we explain this aggressive event?

We, the students of Seconde D, are here to tell the acts of resistance by our predecessors, that they modestly named "Little Ordinary Stories of Ordinary Students" (Histoires peu ordinaires de lycéens ordinaires).

Our high school was one of the most active in the French Resistance and is the only civilian school establishment in France to have been awarded the Resistance Medal. This is commemorated by the plaque on the school's facade. Indeed, students and staff members sacrificed themselves to liberate France from dictatorship and Nazi collaboration: 32 people were killed, and 20 people were deported. These losses were significant considering the demographics of the time: 70 to 80 students per year group, according to Paul Morin, a former Lalande student. It is important to understand that at the time, high schools were not free, meaning only individuals from affluent backgrounds could afford to enroll their children.

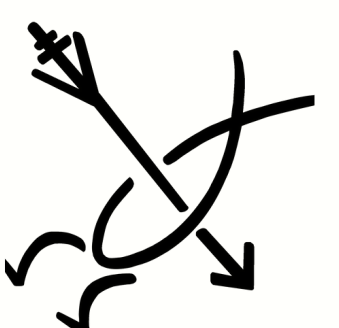
Also, the Vichy regime, hostile to the republican school system it deemed individualistic, closed the "Ecoles normales" that were charged with teacher training in 1941. Consequently, student-teachers, often from modest backgrounds, were transferred to high schools like Lalande. Paul Morin was one of them, and tells about it in his book I was twenty years old at Dachau. He joined Lalande High School with sixteen classmates. Since October 1940, the school has thus brought together students from more varied backgrounds.

[1 Little Ordinary Stories of Ordinary Students (Histoires peu ordinaires de lycéens ordinaires): a book of collective testimonies by former resistance students published in 1995]

Extra information 1: Timeline summarizing events in France between August 1939 and September 1940



Archives départementales de l'Ain, 5Fi53-528



A2 – Courtyard of honor: propaganda and censorship, 'National Revolution,' cult of the Marshal



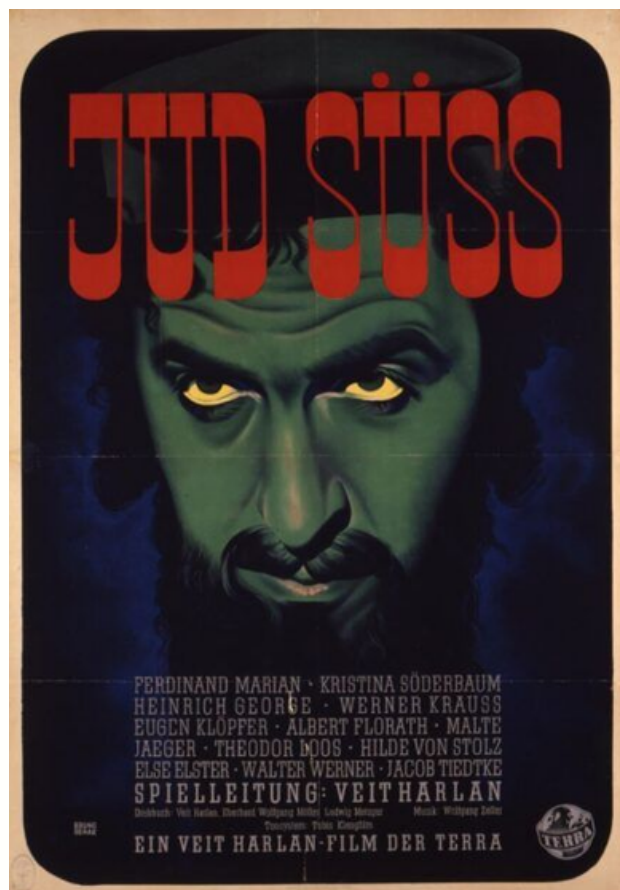
The courtyard of honor at Lalande has always been a place of commemoration and ceremony. In order to understand the heavy atmosphere that appears in France, here are some insights into the daily life of the students.

From the time when students return to school in 1940, they are subjected to the propaganda of the Vichy regime. Each day, and then each week, they have to attend the raising of the flag in the school

courtyard of honor and sing a hymn in honor of Marshal Pétain, "Maréchal nous voilà". The headmaster, Mr. Maurer, a notorious Pétainist, often delivers speeches glorifying the National Revolution implemented by Pétain and illustrated by the new slogan "Work, Family, Country".

In every classroom, a portrait of the Marshal is hung. The headmaster regularly visits the classes to remind them of the regime's new directives. Additionally, he officially assigns a teacher to provide ideological education to the students for one hour per week. Antisemitic and anticommunist films are also screened, such as "Le Juif Süß" or "Français, vous avez la mémoire courte". In 1941, the regime imposes a list of rules for the students. Textbooks are censored, and Jewish students and teachers, or those considered disorderly, are expelled.

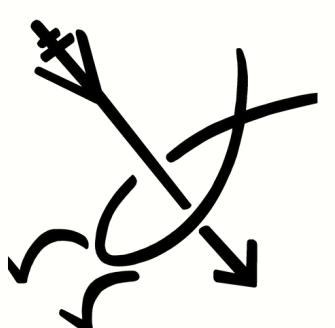
Raising of the colors at the Jeanne d'Arc school in 1941



Archives municipales de Bourg-en-Bresse, 33F12146



Lycée Lalande



A3 - classrooms: counter-propaganda by some students



The classrooms, where students spend the most important part of their days, are naturally the places where ideas are spread. Confronted with the propaganda from the Vichy regime that was disseminated by the head teacher Monsieur Maurer, students attempt to promote alternative ideas.

Flyers and posters circulate discreetly during lessons. Some students get portraits of General Charles de Gaulle, or pictures illustrating the Cross of Lorraine. A decisive meeting sparks the movement in the autumn of 1941. Marcel Thenon and Paul Morin, originally humble students, meet Paul Pioda, a salesman who also sells school books at the back of his shop on Rue du Gouvernement (now Rue Victor Basch), close to the high school. After several visits, they realize they share the same desire to continue the fight. The salesman then provides them with clandestine journals and photos of General Charles de Gaulle. Back at the high school, the students pass them on to trusted friends. This action caused a student, Paul Millet, to be expelled. This provoked an outcry, so that he was eventually reintegrated.

As for Roger Page, he expresses hostility to Vichy policies through his poems.

One night, during spring 1943, some students replace all the portraits of Marshal Pétain in the classrooms with those of General Charles de Gaulle.



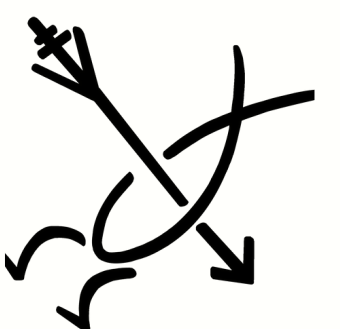
Roger PAGE



Marcel THENON



Paul PIODA



A4 - The schoolyard: a place of tension and resistance

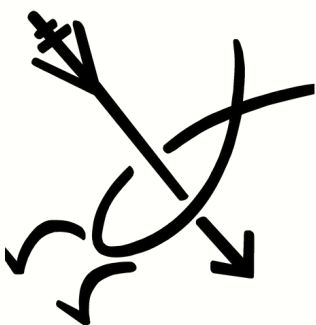


The schoolyard of Lalande High School witnesses acts of Resistance: leaflets, newspapers, and photographs of De Gaulle are secretly passed out to the students Marcel Thenon and Paul Morin by Paul Pioda. The newspapers distributed at the school are Libération, Combat, Franc-Tireur, and also Bir Hakeim (printed at the Michallat press near the school). They are also distributed in the town of Bourg-en-Bresse.

In 1941, the first typewritten leaflets appear, which a student called Lucien Dupont witnesses.

Graffiti are quickly drawn on the walls, especially the V for victory with the Cross of Lorraine inside of it. Some of these inscriptions are still visible in the attics.

However, there remain Vichy sympathizers and antisemitic students. One day, three of them attack Cerf, a Jewish student. He is violently beaten in the face, but several students, including François-Yves Guillin, defend him.



A5 - The playground: resistance begins to get organized



Different actions are being carried out, but they remain isolated. In order to be more effective, high school students decide to organize themselves. At the instigation of Paul Pioda, Marcel Thenon, and Paul Morin, a group of six is formed at the end of 1941 with four trusted classmates. As these groups multiply, a group of thirty is established by 1942. By early 1943, two groups of thirty exist within the school.

In 1943, FUJ groups (United Youth Forces), a national synthesis of various youth resistance movements, are established at Lalande. They are supervised by Hugues Barange, the regional leader of the FUJ and a tutor at the school. The head supervisor, Pierre Schmidt, an Alsatian disguised under the pseudonym "Bourgeois," ensures the transportation of most newspapers and leaflets from Lyon. The students do not limit themselves to distributing materials within the school; they also take on the responsibility of distributing bundles of newspapers to their social circles during their weekly visits home to their families. Weapons and explosives are smuggled into the school.

Resistance medal awarded to Hugues Barange's mother in 1947

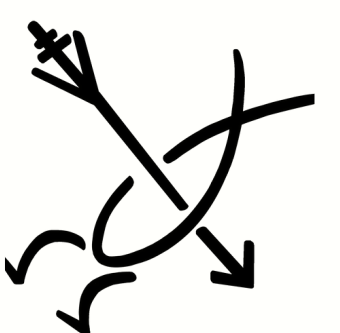


Hugues BARANGE

La Résistance dans l'Ain et Le Haut-Jura [DVD-ROM]. Paris (France). Histoire en mémoire 1939-1945. 2013



Lycée Lalande



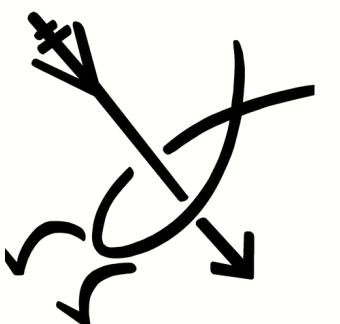
A6 - The cafeteria: a scene of rebellion



Here is the students' cafeteria. On several occasions, the students express their discontent with the Vichy regime's policies.

Due to shortages, rationing comes into effect in September 1940. Like everywhere else, the school struggles during the war with shortages of food, heating, and supplies: notebooks, books, paper, ink, pencils... In early 1943, the rations served in the cafeteria deteriorate significantly both in quantity and in quality. The students, frustrated by this situation, organize a riot. The headmaster tries in vain to calm their anger.

That same year, the cafeteria is also the site of a patriotic demonstration prohibited by the Vichy regime during the commemoration of the First World War dead. On November 11th, 1943, simple instructions are given to everyone. At the discreet whistle of Jean MARINET, a senior student and a resistance member, all the Lalande students rise and observe a minute of silence.

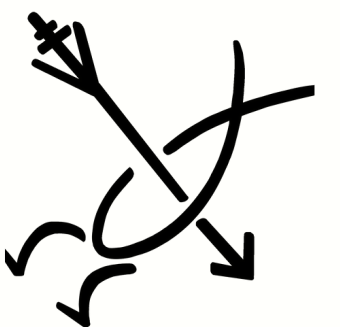


A7 - The sports field nicknamed the 'lawn': a daring gesture that could have gone wrong



Tuesday, March 16th, 1943, students from Lalande High School are having a physical education class on the pitch known as the "lawn." German soldiers, marching along Boulevard Paul Bert which adjoins their field, suddenly pass by singing a military song. Feeling provoked by the soldiers, some students throw rocks at them over the wall. Enraged, the Germans storm into the school and complain to the headmaster. All the students involved are immediately summoned to the main courtyard at noon. The headmaster demands that the perpetrators confess, under the threat of a general expulsion. Faced with the silence of all, the students remain standing for a long time without food or water.

One student eventually confesses. The headmaster decides to expel him permanently even before holding a disciplinary hearing. Fortunately, he was neither imprisoned nor deported, thanks to the intervention of the prefect who pleaded his case.



A8 - Lalande High School: a hub of recruitment for resistance actions in the Ain department



Several students extend their engagement beyond Bourg-en-Bresse. Marcel Rosette, a boarder, gathers leaflets and newspapers, which he distributes upon returning to his parents' house in Chavannes-sur-Suran. Since 1943, he has been receiving airdrops of weapons (machine guns, explosives).

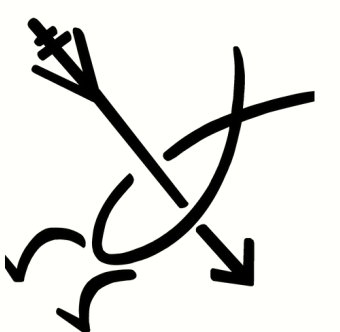
He also participates in his first sabotage in February 1943: they destroy an electricity pylon with dynamite on the Cize-Bozolon-Bourg line. He assists in establishing the second maquis of Ain on the Nivignes mountain above his village and leaves the FUJ (Young Resistance Fighters Army) to join the secret army of Chavannes.

From July to August 1943, he serves as the liaison agent for Captain Romans. On August 15th, he takes part in a second airdrop in Chavannes. At the beginning of 1944, he steals cars from the prefecture's garage to equip the Maquisards, followed by two airdrops, on March 3rd and April 9th.

Other students, such as Roger Page, who attends Lalande School from 1942 to 1943, flees from compulsory labor and joins the Maquis in 1943. With the Maquisards, Roger Page participates in a symbolic but impactful action: the November 11th, 1943 parade in the town of Oyonnax. This event greatly impresses the Allies upon hearing about it, motivating them to support the French Resistance. Arrested in February 1944, Roger Page is deported to Mauthausen where he dies on July 5th.

In 1943, Marcel Thenon and Paul Morin, responsible for FUJ, also partake in actions outside Bourg-en-Bresse, such as scouting for suitable airdrop locations in Ain.

Jean Marinnet and his friend Roger Guettet carry out various symbolic actions at Marinnet's home in Bellegarde, including participating in a banned demonstration on November 11th, 1943. On July 14th, 1943, and again on May 1st, 1944, they replace the French Combatants Legion flag with a flag bearing the "Cross of Lorraine", the symbol of the Resistance, near the war memorial under cover of night. Marinnet aids as an agent in delivering information to the Secret Army, carrying the "Green Plan" in his school bag to prepare for the Allied landings. He also smuggles explosives and detonators with Roge.



A9 - Teacher's room: some committed teachers



At Lalande High School, the students are not alone in their resistance. Reflecting the French population, the majority of the staff are rather passive and primarily seek survival. However, some oppose the Vichy regime's policies. Mr. Merle, Mr. Mandouze, and Mr. Audierne vigorously protest against the official propaganda imposed on students during mandatory screenings of anti-Semitic and anti-communist films. Following one of these acts of defiance, some are briefly arrested.

In class, Mr. Merle teaches his students the verses of Schiller:

"Wir wollen frei sein, wie die Väter waren
Eher dem Todt als in der Knechtschaft leben"

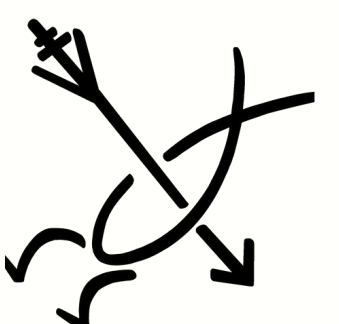
which means :

'We want to be free, like our fathers were
Better to die than to live in servitude'

Others actively join the Resistance, such as teachers Mr. Cochet, Mr. Barange, and the supervisor Mr. Schmidt. Thanks to Hugues Barange, they enable the organization of the Resistance. This national leader of the FUJ has recruited several students into his organization. Marcel Cochet, a sports teacher, soon becomes the leader of a 'sizaine' (a group of 6) and then of a 'trentaine' (a group of 30). As for Pierre Schmidt, he ensures the distribution of leaflets from Lyon throughout the town of Bourg-en-Bresse.



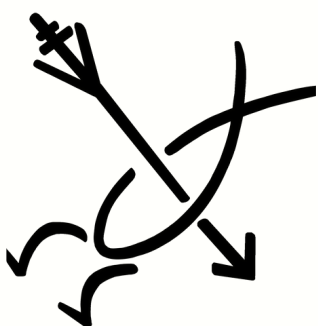
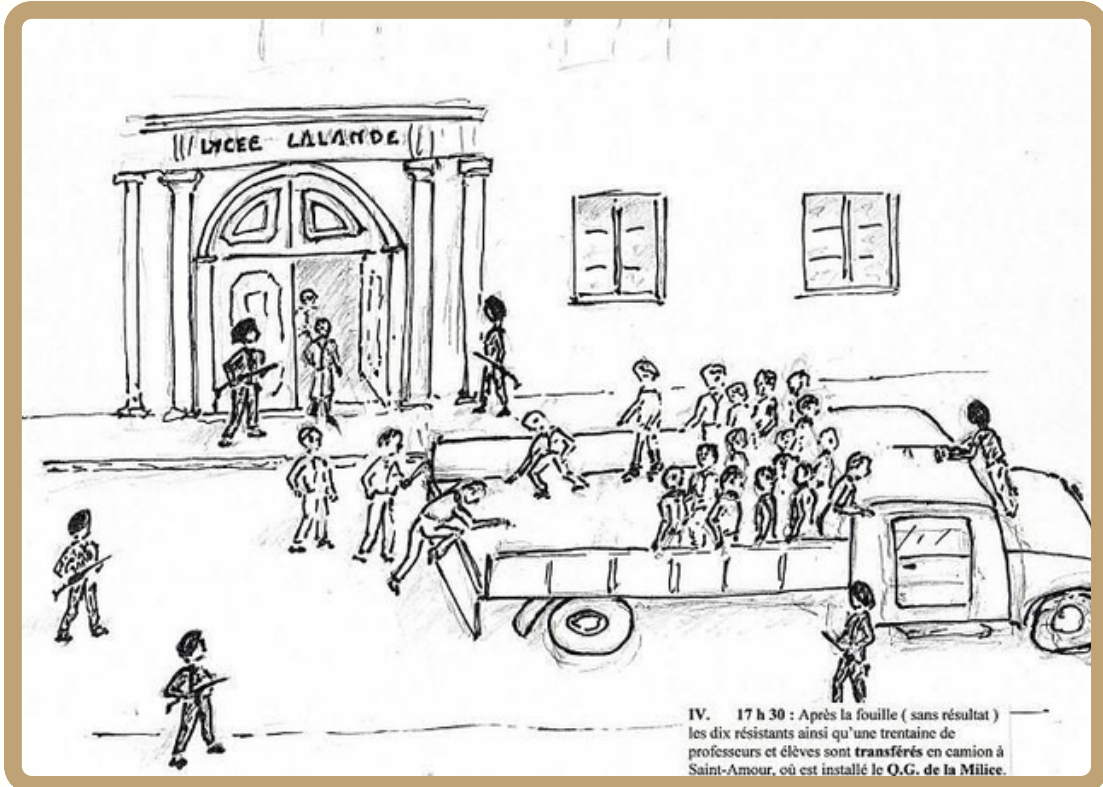
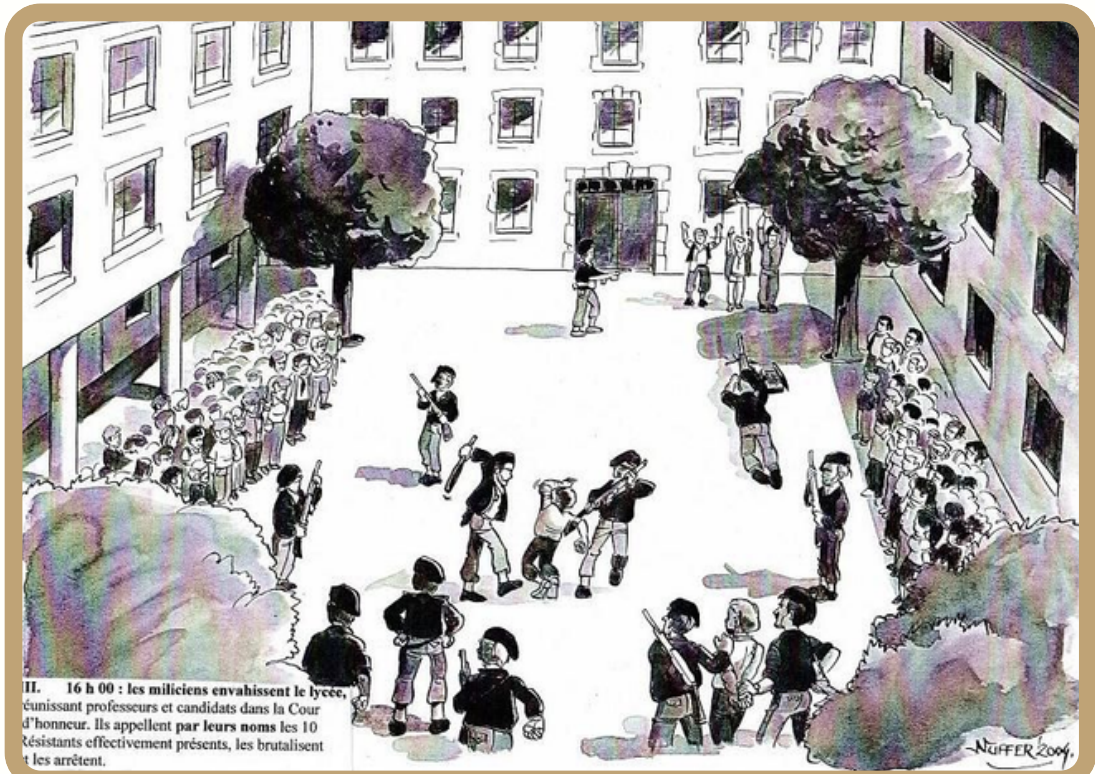
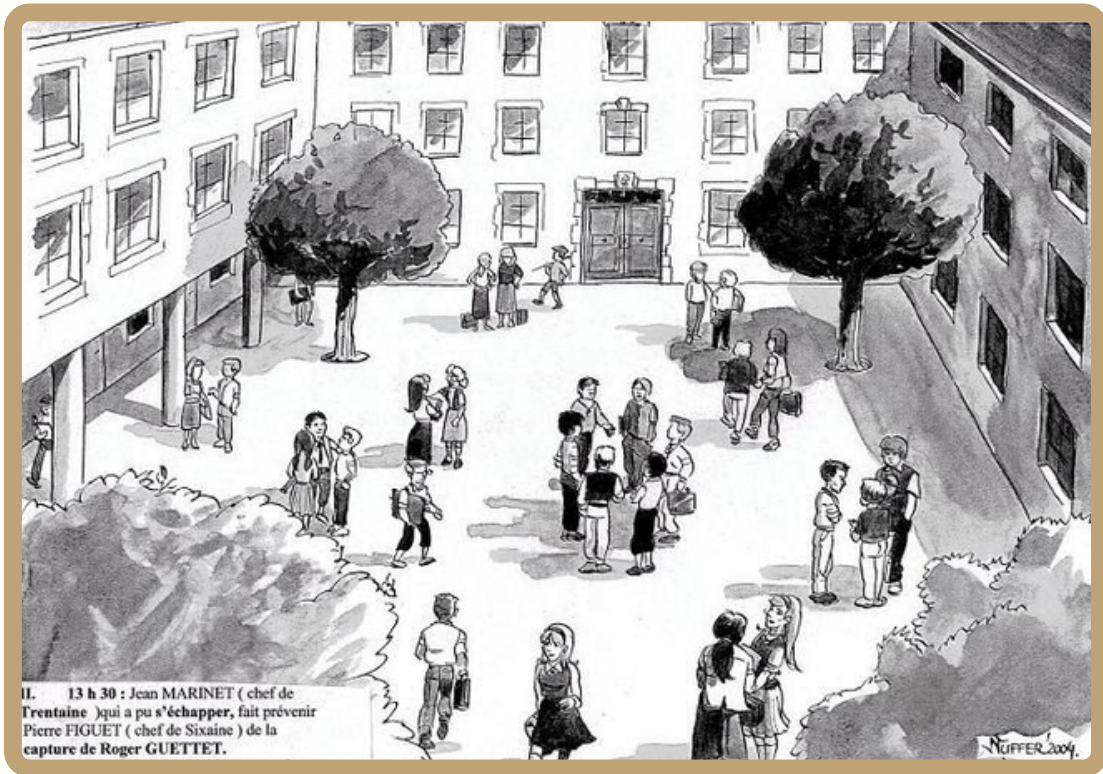
M. AUDIERNE



A10 - The courtyard of Lalande: the roundup on June 5, 1944 (see drawings by Pierre Figuet)



It is here, at the beginning of the afternoon on June 5, 1944, that an event of rare violence within a school occurs, while students are taking their final exams. The atmosphere is particularly tense, with gunshots occasionally ringing out in the street. Suddenly, pounding on the entrance door, militiamen burst in, shouting insults. Under the leadership of their chief, Dagostini, they force all the students out of the classrooms, into the rain. The students are terrified. Among the names on Dagostini's arrest list are those of 42 students and 13 teachers. The list was provided to him by an infiltrated student militiaman named DELLANAY. The students listed are beaten, then forced into militia trucks at the entrance of the high school before being taken to St Amour, the militia headquarters. Ultimately, only ten students and the supervisor, M. Schmidt, are interrogated and tortured for their involvement in the resistance. M. Schmidt is released, but the ten students are then taken back to Bourg to the "Hotel de l'Europe", where they are locked up in the cellars for fifteen days before being deported. Only one of them manages to escape during the journey to the camps.



A11 - The continuation and intensification of the students' involvement after the roundup of June 5th, 1944



Following various waves of arrests and deportations, some high school students and staff members continue their engagement by participating in the liberation of the Ain department.

Students persist in their resistance activities within the Maquis, FFI units (Interior French Forces), and the FUJ (United Forces of Youth), notably in the 5th Company and Claude's Group, established in 1943 with the task of aiding in the escape of prisoners and providing cover for those unyielding to the forced labor service (STO).

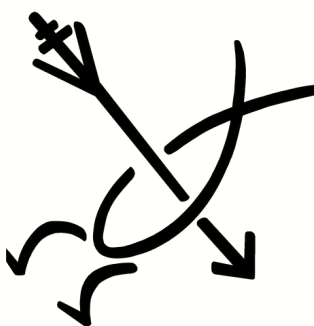
Other high schools engage in sabotage missions targeting communication routes alongside the FUJ. They also fight alongside American advance units in battles such as those of Valbonne and Meximieux. At the same time, additional students from Lalande High School participate in other resistance operations. They also join the Maquis of Ain, where they suffer heavy losses.

Despite its small size, Lalande High School contributed significantly to the Resistance effort. Thirty-two students were killed or executed, and around twenty of them were deported. Several individuals were decorated for their bravery, and the school was awarded the Resistance Medal by decree on October 3rd, 1946. The Resistance Medal was conferred upon the school in recognition of the numerous sacrifices made by students and staff members.

Presentation of the Resistance medal in 1947



La Résistance dans l'Ain et Le Haut-Jura [DVD-ROM]. Paris (France). Histoire en mémoire 1939-1945. 2013



And a big thank you to our teachers who have worked tirelessly since September, putting in countless hours, day and night, to support our 10th-grade class (2023-24) to the completion of this project.