

Resilience, Rescue, and Resistance
The History of the Loewy Family in Europe and United States

by

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ABSTRACT

Through the lens of a Jewish family in the early 20th century, histories of resilience, rescue, and resistance are shown. The Loewys were a Jewish family who migrated from Poland to Germany then France and ending up in the United States following World War II. In their travels they experienced many of which other Jewish experiences were, while also differentiating from the overall story. The family also experienced life as refugees and interns during the Holocaust. Arrested in Vichy following the Armistice between Germany and France, the Loewys were later granted their freedom which they used to help free others from the camp. One of the few stories of Jews rescuing Jews, the family began its life as resisters to the Vichy and German occupation. Participating in both passive and active resistance from 1940-1944, they witnessed the highs and lows of this new life. The end of the war saw the family make it to the United States beginning their next chapter as survivors of the Holocaust and the war. With the use of primary source material provided by the Loewys, along with scholarly work about the different periods, the story of the Loewys is one of resilience in the face of mounting adversity, rescuing of internes from camps, and resistance against an occupational force that furthers the research of the Jewish experience in the early 20th century.

DEDICATION

To my wife Emily who stayed up late with me. Helped me through the stressful research nights. And was always willing to make me coffee when I needed it most.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Within the context of Jewish migration from Central and Eastern Europe during the interwar years the Loewys act as an agent portraying the Jewish experience of this period. Themes of resilience in the face of persecution, the rescue of Holocaust interns, and resistance against occupation. By tracing their steps from Poland at the end of World War I to Germany and France in the interwar years, and under Vichy occupation, the Loewys provide an intimate insight into the life of Jews from different locations and periods. Relying upon the use of archival materials saved by the Loewys throughout their time in Europe and the United States, the history of this family serves as intricate insight to the depths a family will go to achieve survival and security.

Both mother and father, Berthe and Elias, were born in the Galicia region of the Austro-Hungarian Empire around the turn of the 19th century. Berthe and her family migrate to Frankfurt before 1900, while Elias did the same in 1918. The two married in 1919, having three children and once again migrating, this time to Alsace, France, in the mid-1920s. Motivations for migration are varied, including anti-Semitism, rising nationalism, and economic opportunities. To better understand these motivations, the literature on the region's populations and their views on its Jewish contingent is paramount. William Hagen's *Anti-Jewish Violence in Poland, 1914-1920*, provided the insight necessary to show the situation that Elias faced around the time he migrated. In Hagen's book, several instances of anti-Jewish violence, including pogroms in Krakow, the views of nationalistic parties, and the internal situation of everyday citizens lay out the background for a possible motivation for Elias to leave. Hagen goes into detail about

populations in Poland placed the blame on Jews, whether it was the way the war was going, Polish nationalism, or hunger strike. For the Loewys, other factors worked against them, notably because of their religious ideology. They were Orthodox Jews making a life for themselves in western Europe, which was known as a predominantly Reform community. The move to Alsace presented the family with a new beginning, where they found comfort and safety within a community, also working out its identity.

A diverse region of French, German, and Alsatians, the Loewys fit the mold of those finding their belonging. Alsace changed hands several times between Germany and France, creating its intrinsic identity. In comparison to both Germany and France, Alsace proved to be an outlier for Jewish security, presenting tolerance and openness to any denomination of the faith. Vicki Carron's *Between France and Germany: The Jews of Alsace-Lorraine, 1871-1918*, becomes the backbone for researching this phenomenon. Carron lays out how the region shifted from being under German control after the Franco-Prussian War to going back to French control after World War I with these experiences shaping the view of Alsatians towards Jews. Alsace provided advantages for the Loewys, giving them a chance at success, with Elias opening businesses and providing a life for his children he did not experience back in Galicia. Again, the Loewys act as agents, providing insight into how other Jews experienced life in Alsace, especially as immigrants. There is only one story but provides the necessary insight into how things were in Alsace. Despite this success, the interwar period was one wrought with uncertainty. The rise of nationalist and fascist governments in Europe threatened the security of many, including the Loewys.

Germany's, Italy's, and Japan's annexations and invasion set off the next World War upsetting any hope of continued success for the Loewys and many others like them. Germany's invasion of Poland in 1939 prompted Elias to do his part for his new country, joining the French civil defense. The joining of the civil defense creates another layer to the story, witnessing a family contributing to a new country in defiance to a belligerent. Elias joining the civil defense shows his attitude towards France and Germany. Though he was a German speaker, he claimed France as his home. His time in the civil defense was short-lived following the invasion of France in May of 1940. Their lives now turned upside down as they became refugees during the invasion. Again, acting as a navigator, the Loewys tell the story of refugee life during the invasion and after. He was witnessing the trials of surviving being caught between warring countries not just as Jews, but as civilians. Using Nicole Dombrowski's dissertation "Beyond the Battlefield: The French Civilian Exodus of May-June 1940," we can track the number of experiences of civilians during the civilian retreat. In ways, the Loewys mirror the experience of refugees with close calls from aerial bombardment, local infrastructure breaking down, and compassion from others in their situation. However, being Jewish adds another layer to their trials and push forth the theme of resilience once again. They had to survive not only the invasion but the occupation as Jews distance them from the general population. To continue to survive, the family makes their way to Vichy in June 1940 with the hopes of escaping German persecution.

The next chapter of the Loewys story takes us to the point of life in Vichy for Jews. The new government became an authoritarian government bent of righting the wrongs of the Dreyfus Affair while Aryanizing France. Under its control, Vichy began its

nationalization attempting to instill French pride back into a country they felt has lost its way. Almost from its inception, the Vichy government created laws to persecute foreign and Jewish populations. The use of Paula Hyman's *From Dreyfus to Vichy: The Remaking of French Jewry, 1906-1939*, Richard Weisberg's *Vichy Law and the Holocaust in France*, and Michael Curtis' *Verdict on Vichy: Power and Prejudice in the Vichy France Regime* portray the growth of an authoritarian government teetering between pleasing its new "ally" in Germany and keeping stability within its new borders. The actions taken by Vichy to persecute its Jewish populations are put on display through a series of laws known as the *Status de Juifs*. Actions to denounce its Jewish population, strip them of rights, and eventually intern them come from these new laws. The works noted earlier explain how these were so quickly enacted and put into action without resistance. With the Loewys now in Vichy, they become part of this new world.

In November 1940, the family was arrested and placed in an internment camp on the southern coast of France at Agde. This experience presents the next theme of the research, rescue. Elias creates a plan to find a way out for him and his family. Using his resources, he can gain the ear of a local official in Montpellier, a friend of his, who grants the family their freedom. Again, this is where the family's experience separates from the general story of life under Vichy internment. The family, along with the official, work to begin freeing others from the camp, in a total of 1500 in a few months span. Relying on the primary source material, the puzzle pieces come together for how this plan becomes successful. Freeing others from the camp was merely the first step of the rescue. With connections made in Montpellier, the family helped house, feed, and care for those that they rescued. Using local merchants, hospitals, and restaurants the family created a

situation that brought stability to those who needed it. Their actions further elevated the theme of rescue, as they prevented more arrests following the Montpellier roundups in 1942. The theme of resistance begins to take shape by this point as well. The family's underground network in Montpellier mirrored that of passive resistance against Vichy and Germany. It would be their first foray into the world of the French Resistance, where the sons would take charge by 1943.

The news the Loewys in Montpellier caught up to them, pushing the need to go into hiding outside of Montpellier. Their next stop was the Lozère Mountains, where the family was now known as the Heibergeres, Catholics from Alsace. By 1943, the two sons continued the actions of their father by joining the local resistance group in their city. Using Harry Kedward's *In Search of the Maquis: Rural Resistance in Southern France, 1942-1945*, we can see how the Loewy sons followed trends of what the Maquis were experiencing and accomplishing in Vichy. Their time with the resistance continued the last theme of this research, as the two contributed to both passive and active resistance. The active portion began taking shape in 1944 following the introduction of Allied strategic operatives entering the fight to prepare them for the coming invasion of southern France, experiencing their first combat the boy's witnesses the range of outcomes and emotions connected to warfare. From becoming officers in the resistance following successful campaigns to the burden of loss, the Loewys short foray into warfare once again displays the experience of localized resistance against occupiers. The last combat in 1944 led into a new chapter within the theme of resilience as liberation takes hold and new challenges approach.

Post-war life for the Loewys gives insight into the experience of not only Jews following the war, but displaced persons. While attempting to find their place again, the Loewys also work to help others regain what was lost. This network works in their favor as it had when they were in Montpellier in 1940-1942. Opportunities arise that allow the family entrance into the United States and become citizens of a country not known for its welcoming of foreigners. Their resilience and tenacity to overcome hurdles placed them in a situation to begin a new life in the United States, where once again, the family found success due in part to networks and determination.

The three themes presented in this research are on display through the experience of the Loewys. Resilience in the face of difficult odds wherever the family seemed to settle. The family's ability to overcome obstacles plays into the role of this theme, with triumph being their migration to the United States while finding success following World War II. Their release from the camp in Agde could have been the end of that chapter. However, the family chose to rescue others like them in a gamble that ultimately paid off. The rescue leads into the theme of resistance, where the family participated in passive and active resistance against Vichy and Germany. Through these three themes, the Loewys became actors in the experience of Jews during the early 20th century. They carry the narrative while adding an intimate view of what life was like while allowing for a broader overview of the world around them. This history begins at the end of the 19th century in the Austro-Hungarian Empire on the verge of collapse.

Migration and Interwar Experience

Within the context of Jewish migration from Central and Eastern Europe to Western Europe during the interwar years (1918-1939), the Lowey family's story illustrates not only common reasons for emigration, but also the slow integration into divergent societies. For Eastern Jewish migrants, or *Ostjuden*, experiences, and motivations for resettling ranged from economic opportunities, cultural and religious, notably Orthodoxy, connections, or an escape from anti-Semitism. Both Elias and Berthe were born in the Galicia region of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, later to become Poland after the First World War. Elias lived in the small town of Zegocina (Zeg-oh-ce-nah) just south east of Krakow while Berthe was born in Wisniowa lying just twenty-one miles northwest of Zegocina. Berthe's family immigrated to Frankfurt, Germany, around 1900 when she was just a few years old in search of new economic opportunities and to possibly escape rising anti-Semitism coming from the Polish majority of Galicia.¹ Elias' motivations are unclear, and we must lean on previous scholarship for motivations of migration. It is unknown when Elias arrived in Frankfurt, but probably sometime between 1917 and 1919. They were already in the city on June 2, 1919 when they got married.²

¹ Document, "Berthe's Memoirs," translated from German, [ca. 1970s], Box 02-10, Folder 2007.026.003.053 (Last Letters from Berthe Jeret), Loewy Family Collection, Arizona Jewish Historical Society, Phoenix, AZ and Friedman, Isaiah. "The Austro-Hungarian Government and Zionism: 1897-1918." *Jewish Social Studies* 27, no. 3 (1965): 152. Around the turn of the century, Jews attempted to gain a voice within the government of Austria-Hungary. Polish majorities in Galicia saw this as Zionists trying to gain the upper hand and push them out of power, leading to a campaign to discredit their attempts.

² Document, "Marriage Certificate," translated from German, [ca. 1919], Box 02-14, Folder 2007.026.003.036, Loewy Family Collection, Arizona Jewish Historical Society, Phoenix, AZ.

Cultural, economic, and religious motivations carry motivating factors as well for migration notably with Elias. Considering that both Elias and Berthe were German-and-Yiddish-speaking Orthodox Jews, we can reach the understanding that they fit within the mold of most Central and Eastern European Jews who practiced this denomination of Judaism. However, being that they were German speakers living as minorities, in both religious and cultural identities of southern Poland, created much of the friction witnessed following the First World War.³ Orthodox Jews saw more importance in carrying their religious identity as a priority over their national identity.⁴ Religious identity laid heavily on upbringings between Reform and Orthodox.⁵ Because of a series of factors; including laws, persecutions, and traditions that worked against them, Eastern European Jew were not afforded education, training, and jobs which led to migrations in search of employment that was available.⁶

Between 1867 and 1919 Galicia enjoyed provincial autonomy, with the latter period witnessing national cultural development. Despite this, Galicia experienced a poor economic situation. With a lack of industry, markets, a backwards agriculture industry,

³ Mendelsohn, Ezra. "The Interwar Jewish Homeland" in *How Was It Possible?: A Holocaust Reader*, ed Peter Hayes, UNP - Nebraska, 2015. 104-105

⁴ Marrus, Michael Robert, and Robert O. Paxton. *Vichy France and the Jews*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019. 32; Hyman, Paul. *From Dreyfus to Vichy: The Remaking of French Jewry, 1906-1939*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1979, 23, 36

⁵ Mendelsohn, Ezra. "The Interwar Jewish Homeland" in *How Was It Possible?: A Holocaust Reader*, edited by Peter Hayes, UNP - Nebraska, 2015, 109-113

⁶ Fischer, Klaus P. *Nazi Germany: A New History*. New York: Continuum, 2004. 27

along with a population too large to create profit led to this poor economic atmosphere.⁷ Contributing to the situation, a poor standard of living occurred in Galicia with the main staples of their diet consisting of rye bread, cabbage, and milk. It wasn't for a lack of industrial growth in the region; however, the agriculture industry being backwards created a situation that left emigration as one of the few options for prosperity. The agricultural situation consisted of excessive parcellation of land being divided up into small, uneconomic holdings that were unable to provide for the basic livelihoods for anyone on the lands.⁸ Around 60% of landowners held only five hectares, which left little leeway for poor crops or weather destroying yields. This along with only 7% of Galicia's manpower being employed in industry, plus a rapidly growing population left emigration as the only opportunity for not only Jews, but anyone in Galicia.⁹

Here we can reach a hypothesis to the reasoning behind Elias' migration away from his family in Poland to Germany. From our understanding, he had little to no formal training or education while presented minimal employment opportunities in Galicia. By inundating himself within the Jewish circles of Frankfurt and finding work in a metal recycling business either employed or owned by Berthe's father, another German-

⁷ J. Zubrzycki, "Emigration from Poland in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries." *Population Studies*, vol. 6, no. 3, 1953, 253.

⁸ Zubrzycki, "Emigration from Poland in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries." 254

⁹ Zubrzycki, "Emigration from Poland in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries." 256-257

speaking Eastern Europe Jew, he may have felt a sense of comfort.¹⁰ Lack of employment in Eastern Europe plays one part of the formula, however, it cannot be the only factor as to why Elias and others left Eastern Europe.

Elias in Poland

The end of World War I led to a rise in anti-Semitism throughout Europe. With the new Polish state, this would become the case as well. Long standing animosity from pre-war society, along with the rise of nationalism created a volatile situation for Jews. Tracing Elias' eventual path to Germany involves a deeper understanding of the situation he is escaping in Poland as well as the beginning of the theme of resilience for the family around the beginning of the twentieth century.

The rebirth of the Polish state occurred amid controversy and uncertainty. These uncertainties could correlate with Elias Loewy's motivation to leave Poland for Germany in 1919. Budding up against two hostile nations, the new Soviet state and a beaten but still determined Germany, Polish independence was nothing inevitable in 1918. Poles found themselves divided among two major camps. One led by Józef Piłsudski, who viewed Poland as a multi-national state similar to the constructs of the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The other led by Roman Dmowski, a nationalist who sought to rid the country of minorities, notably Jews and Ukrainians, led the latter.¹¹ These

¹⁰ Document, "Nathan Jeret Letter," translated from German, [ca. 1969], Box 02-14, Folder 2007.026.003.036, Loewy Family Collection, Arizona Jewish Historical Society, Phoenix, AZ.

¹¹ Kapiszewski, Andrzej. "Controversial Reports on the Situation of Jews in Poland in the aftermath of World War I." *Studia Judaica* 7, no. 24 (2004), 258

camps fought bitterly in a series of conflicts with anti-Austrian and anti-Semitic ideologies arising through hunger and desperation along with multi-cultural infighting among the nationalities of Poland. Elias Loewy bore witness to this period, living in Żegocina (Zeg-oh-ce-nah), a small village east of Kraków in Galicia. Galicia came to be a microcosm of the situation in Poland during the early 20th century. To better understand the situation that Elias was up against and motivations for leaving the region, we must explore Galician culture, politics, and rising anti-Semitism before and during the First World War.

Jews found favorable conditions within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, enjoying equal rights, opportunities to go to universities, while finding suitable employment if available.¹² Before the war started, Kraków, Galicia's regional capital, was home to some 200,000 people, a quarter of whom were Jewish. Overall, Jews made up about 10 percent of the population in the region. Galician Jews embodied Eastern European identities: lower-middle-class, conspicuous among local merchants and industries while keeping a robust small village element. Orthodoxy was traditionally strong, with reform making little progress, as the region was one of the more significant enclaves of the belief.¹³ Infighting between the two majorities, Polish and Ukrainian, pulled the Jewish population by both sides. The pressure to choose an identity between these camps became less appealing over time, leading to the majority choosing Jewish Nationalism as the preferred

¹² Mendelsohn, Ezra. "The Jewries of Interwar Poland." *Hostages of Modernization*, 2, Austria - Hungary - Poland - Russia, (2011): 990

¹³ Mendelsohn, "The Jewries of Interwar Poland." 989

direction.¹⁴ The assassination of Austro-Hungarian Archduke Franz Ferdinand further sparked the drive for nationalism among Poles and Ukrainians. Warfare, hunger, and political frustrations among these groups because of the war placed Galicians Jews at the forefront, making them the preferred target and outlet.

When war broke out in Europe in 1914, messy alliances created a domino effect leading to engulfing Europe in war. The Austro-Hungarian Empire's declaration of war on Serbia brought Russia into the fray. Galicia being within the southeastern part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire became a major battleground during the early years of the war. Russian, Austrian, and German armies fought some of the bloodiest battles of the Eastern Front in this region, with Russians attempting to capture the region, barely being stopped outside Kraków, then laying siege to the Austrian fortress at Przemyśl (Pere-my-shl) for over one hundred days.¹⁵ Though being one of the largest continental empires on Europe, the Austro-Hungarian Empire was a mess politically and economically. Fighting in the east reinforced the struggles of the Habsburgs who were unable to feed, arm, or cloth their Army correctly.¹⁶ Equally, its citizens suffered similar fates.

By October 1916, the people of Galicia were starving, as shortages of food and coal strangled the region. Protests were becoming common as the hunger became too much. Anti-Austrian sentiment became too strong for the region's officials, as Polish

¹⁴ Mendelsohn, "The Jewries of Interwar Poland," 991

¹⁵ Rothenberg, Gunther E. *The Army of Francis Joseph*. (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1998), 185

¹⁶ Rothenberg, *The Army of Francis Joseph*. 190

nationalism filled the void.¹⁷ Along with this anti-Austrian fervor, anti-Semitism grew at an alarming rate. Revolutionary and nationalist posters and pamphlets began cropping up around the end of 1916, calling for Poles to answer the call of nationalism while ending enemies who attempted to hinder progress:

Who shall it be? The lords and the Jews! On Saturday at 9:00 PM, let us throw ourselves on them like lions, and on government offices, let us destroy everything, especially what is Mr. Neumann's. No grain for requisition! Let them go to the devil. Let us go after them because we are perishing, we are going to die! What will we eat if they take our grain? Let us not allow it. Let's beat them like dogs. Don't sell them anything. Let them work like the peasants. We start on Saturday night at nine with the lords. Kroskienko Nizne the Jews, Kroroscienko Wyzne the lords, Pan Neumann in Schodol, Glowienka the government offices.¹⁸

The hunger and frustration took over, and the people looked for an outlet. Rumors of Jews having an abundance of flour and bread, along with agreements with government officials, ran rampant. In December 1917, women-led hunger protests erupted in Kraków, with demonstrators trying to make their way to the Jewish Kazimierz district until police

¹⁷ William W Hagen, *Anti-Jewish Violence in Poland, 1914-1920*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 88-90

¹⁸ Sign. 22, No. 27857 (November 24, 1916). Galicia Jewish Museum. Propaganda Posters Collection. Kraków, Poland.

intervened.¹⁹ These are only a few examples of rising anti-Semitism during the early demonstrations. More violent and extreme incidents came as Austria-Hungary came to the peace conference in Brest-Litovsk.

Agreements from this peace conference further enflamed the anger that sparked Polish nationalism. In an attempt of secrecy, the Central Powers agreed to the borders of a new Ukrainian People's Republic, carving out of the former Russian state, including East Galicia.²⁰ Those at the conference were believing that this region could supply foodstuffs and war materials needed to continue the battles on the Western Front. With rumors reaching the starving masses of Galicia, protests began erupting with Polish pro-independence parties inciting violence against those who opposed them. As shown by a pamphlet handed out by pro-independence forces:

Countrymen! The hour has struck to revenge ourselves on our eternal Prussian enemy. Our children, wives, and mothers in their homes, our fathers, brothers, and husbands in the trenches suffer hunger, while our enemies carry off food from our land. Our enemies – the Austrian and Prussian governments – shamefully exploit and betray us. They partition Poland for the fourth time, refusing to admit Poles to the peace negotiations in Brest. That is a significant injury to us Poles, calling to God for vengeance. Let us act, let us expel from the land the enemy who grinds us down. Shame and eternal disgrace on those Poles who fraternize and mix with

¹⁹ Hagen, *Anti-Jewish Violence in Poland, 1914-1920*, 91

²⁰ Armstrong, John A. *Ukrainian Nationalism*. Littleton, CO: Ukrainian Academic Press, 1980, 18-19

them – they who scorn you, who laugh at you poor little Poles. Down with the scoundrels, oppressors of our nation. Act!²¹

Other pamphlets circulated depicting anti-Austrian cartoons. One such of the Polish eagle adorned with a stereotypical Jewish face; locks curled on both sides of the face, black clothing, yarmulkes, and facial features, in an attempt to mock Austro-Hungarian loyalists.²² Furthering the matter, leaders both in church and state called for the end of the use of German in public; No one should speak, read or write German, showing solidarity to the Polish language. Amongst the rage battering Galicia were Jews in the region attempting to continue with their lives without fear of retribution. Some Galician Jews showed solidarity with Poland by embracing their Polish nationality. It was not enough to prevent anti-Semitism from gaining strength in Galicia, depicting Jews as loyalists to the Austrian government, elites, and as a "foreign body and subservient to the central government" of Austria.²³ Additional hunger strikes and nationalist protests broke out in cities across Galicia, with announcements to target Jewish quarters in these cities. Claims circulated that Jews corrupted Austrian officialdom through bribery, thereby delegitimizing the Austrian government. Thought processes like this carried into one of Galicia's first pogroms taking place in Miłówka,

²¹ Sign. 22, No. 6199, (1917). Galicia Jewish Museum. Propaganda Posters Collection. Kraków, Poland.

²² Hagen, *Anti-Jewish Violence in Poland, 1914-1920*, 94

²³ Hagen, *Anti-Jewish Violence in Poland, 1914-1920*, 96

where Jewish business and homes came under attack as rocks, bricks, and anything of substance was thrown through windows and at people, leaving many unable to rebuild following the destruction.²⁴ Incidents like Miłówka become a foresight to what followed after the official signing of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty in March of 1918.

During the Spring of 1918, Kraków experienced its worst food rationing levels, creating astronomical bread and grain prices for those in the city. Rumors were beginning to fly about Jews buying grain from Ukrainians and Soviets, leading to women and children taking to the streets. On April 16, 1918, the masses made their way to the Jewish Kazimierz quarter in Kraków, attacking and destroying Jewish businesses. Citizens were not immune to these attacks with assaults occurring to anyone who looked remotely "Jewish." Clashes broke out between Polish citizens and Austrian officials, the latter attempting to prevent more attacks on Jewish quarters for fear of safety and life.²⁵ However, orders would not be followed by police in Kraków. Officers stood idly by as rioters crashed through the Jewish districts of Kraków. Rationalizing these attacks through thought processes including rightful seizure of foodstuffs and retaking property deserving to Polish nationals.²⁶ Similar to the rumors that circulated through Kraków ran through Wieliczka, a town northwest of Zegocina, experienced the same.²⁷

²⁴ Białożył S., "Jews in Miłówka – Remembrance", *Nad Sołą I Koszarawa* 2003

²⁵ Hagen, *Anti-Jewish Violence in Poland, 1914-1920*, 99

²⁶ Robert Blobaum, *Anti-semitism and Its Opponents in Modern Poland*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 85

²⁷ Hagen, *Anti-Jewish Violence in Poland, 1914-1920*, 102

There was a belief that Jews were living in abundance during a time of mass hunger and poverty. Riots broke out with crowds of people attacking Jewish businesses, robbing and plundering them under the auspice that they were deserving of what they stole from the Jews.²⁸ These anti-Semitic acts perpetrated by those who sought Polish nationalism, encouraged by hunger, motivated by fear and uncertainty, created a situation that made Jewish life in Galicia very dangerous. Hypothesizing that Elias understood what was going on around him and his family may not be friendly or welcoming to people of his faith. Speaking Yiddish and German, while considering himself Austrian, Elias was a target for nationalists caught up in the rush of independence.

The aftermath of World War I brought upon the Second Republic of Poland, with several factions fighting for control. Marshal Józef Piłsudski claimed legitimacy in Warsaw, and Roman Dmowski expressing the same in Paris.²⁹ By this point, with the Paris Peace Conference underway, Elias had left Galicia for Frankfurt am Main, Germany. Possibly not waiting around to see the results of the conference for fear of safety or seeking new economic opportunities amid the financial instability that was to arise from the Polish state in its infancy.

²⁸ Shmuel Spector and Geoffrey Wigoder. "Wieliczka" in *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Life before and during the Holocaust*. (New York: New York University Press, 2001). 43

²⁹ Margaret MacMillan, *Six Months That Changed the World: the Paris Peace Conference of 1919*, (New York: Random House, 2003), 208-210

A New Start in Germany

Life in Germany was not much more comfortable for both Elias and Berthe. The rift between *Ostjuden*, a term for Eastern European Jews, and German Jews went right through the young family. Berthe, having arrived in Germany as a child, saw herself as a fully assimilated German. Elias being Eastern Jewish or *Ostjude*, was more inclined to hold loyalties to his Jewish identity. However, Berthe's family was still Orthodox and originally from Galicia, making her an intermediary between newcomers like Elias and established Jews in Frankfurt. *Ostjuden* stood out among the populations they lived within, whether it be their appearance, language, or closer identity to religion rather than secular assimilationism.³⁰ In their home, the family continued its Orthodox traditions, including speaking Yiddish, going to synagogue on the sabbath, and celebration of High Holidays.³¹ Anti-Semitism continued to be a factor for migration motivations of Jews across Europe, and the interwar years saw a rise in this rhetoric, pitting scores of social and religious groups against one another.

The interwar years for Germany were nothing short of uncertain. By 1918, a nation who had not to experience democracy now had to learn what a Republic is after their Kaiser, Wilhelm II, abdicated the chair. With the help of prominent Jews, the Weimar Republic a democratically elected government, led the country hoping to

³⁰ Michael Robert Marrus and Robert O. Paxton. *Vichy France and the Jews* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019). 56

³¹ Louise Bobrow, "Oral History with Fred Loewy." Oral History conducted on April 29, 1996. Interview conducted by Louise Bobrow, University of Southern California Shoah Foundation. Los Angeles, CA.

represent the will of the people.³² Uncertainty and trepidation followed this new government from its beginning, as it was burdened by the Treaty of Versailles. Given a brief period to agree to the conditions of the Armistice, the newly created government signed the conditions of the Treaty. Instantly, doubt crept into the minds of Germans who witnessed large numbers of soldiers marching their way back, unable to understand how they might have lost the war with these numbers. In Versailles, Germany was shouldered with the total blame of the war, leading to war reparations that would be impossible to repay.³³ The country sought a scapegoat as anger, inflation, hunger, and anxiety overtook the populace as it had in Poland.

Anti-Jewish propaganda grew in the new Weimar Republic, with right-wing reactionary groups, or *Völkisch*, laying the blame on Jews for the war.³⁴ The oncoming economic downturn and hyperinflation that followed gave anti-Semitic groups an ally to place blame on Jews. Furthering matters were the murders of prominent Jews, including Rosa Luxemburg, Kurt Eisner, and Walther Rathenau, between 1919 and 1922.³⁵ The target laid on the back of the *Ostjuden*, labeled them as Marxists, Leninists, and Bolsheviks by newspapers and propaganda. Stated by *Deutsche Tageszeitung*:

³² Klaus Fischer, "Germany's Turmoil, 1918-1933" In *How Was It Possible?: A Holocaust Reader*, ed. Peter Hayes, (UNP - Nebraska, 2015), 153-155

³³ Fischer, "Germany's Turmoil, 1918-1933", 158

³⁴ Samuel Koehne, "Were the National Socialists a Völkisch Party? Paganism, Christianity, and the Nazi Christmas." *Central European History* 47, no. 4 (2014): 760–90.

³⁵ Stephanie Seul, "A Menace to Jews Seen If Hitler Wins": British and American Press Comment on German Antisemitism 1918-1933." *Jewish Historical Studies* 44 (2012): 76

With the expectation of Lenin, the leaders of Russian Bolshevism are Jewish, that the Bolshevik propaganda in Germany is conducted by Jews...The perennial objects of the Jews are revolution and internationalism. Jews have been behind the great revolutions of Europe, for the simple reason that revolution always increases Jewish influence. In contrast, a settled and aristocratic form of government opposing them. Internationalism is the natural vice of an outcast and homeless people.³⁶

It was this perception that furthered anti-Semitism in Germany; a fear of Eastern European Jews migrating to Germany, bringing with them revolution and Bolshevism. Jewish politicians became easy targets for this, with many being part of left-wing parties. Rosa Luxemburg, a German naturalized Jew from Poland, was a leftist politician who joined the Social Democratic Party and later the German Communist Party before her death. In January 1919, she and another prominent socialist were arrested following the failed Spartacist uprising. Their captors tortured and murdered them, dumping their bodies in the Berlin canals.³⁷ Though they became martyrs for the left, they embodied Eastern European Jewish identity, furthering propaganda against the *Ostjuden*. While

³⁶ "Through German Eyes: Kaiser's War Guilt," The Times, April 17, 1919, 11: Deutsche Tageszeitung was a German newspaper from 1894 to 1934 that shared strong anti-republic tendencies but closing following the Nazi's coming to power.

³⁷ Miles Bouton S., "And the Kaiser Abdicates." (New Haven: Yale university press; 1920), 23

internal strife's were putting pressure on the frail structure, international pressures continued to mount from the former Entente, slipping Germany further into confusion and economic depression.

Matters continued to compound for the Weimar Republic, finding it increasingly unable to pay back war reparations to the Allies. Pressured by notably France and Belgium, the Weimar government made requests for a reprieve, or a pause in payments, in hopes of rebuilding its economy to pay war reparations once again. France refused and looked to punish the Germans for this insubordination according to them. On January 11, 1923, a joint force of French and Belgian troops occupied the Ruhr Valley, Germany's industrial heart rich in minerals, with hopes to extract those materials as part of the repayment program. This incident further worsened massive inflation, as prices for food materials were reaching unheard of numbers where a loaf of bread cost over a billion German Marks.³⁸ This rise in prices allowed right-wing nationalists to place the blame on "Jewish profiteers."³⁹ Riots broke out in Berlin's more impoverished ghettos, notably Scheunenviertel, Berlin's Jewish quarters and home to primarily Eastern European Jews. Groups of hungry, angry, and unemployed Germans, armed with hatred that needed an avenue, ransacked the ghetto, and others like it in November 1923. Jewish businesses and homes were destroyed, along with men assaulted by the hateful crowds.⁴⁰ These two

³⁸ Fischer, "Germany's Turmoil, 1918-1933" 163-165

³⁹ Seul, "A Menace to Jews Seen If Hitler Wins": 90

⁴⁰ Stephanie Seul. "Transnational Press Discourse on German Antisemitism during the Weimar Republic: The Riots in Berlin's Scheunenviertel, 1923." Leo Beck Institute Yearbook 59 (2014), 92

heightened incidents happened in the period when Elias was away from his family in Palestine. Incidents like these occurring around Germany during the Weimar Republic may have furthered fears of the Loewys, and a possible motivator for emigrating. Frankfurt itself was no stranger to anti-Semitism and violence.

By the Early 20th century, Frankfurt had the second-largest Jewish population in Germany next to Berlin. By population, however, Frankfurt's Jewish population was around six percent of the total population. Frankfurt had become known as a center of intra-Jewish relations while becoming an important center for Jewish enlightenment in the 19th century. The city was also home to a significant Orthodox renaissance during this period.⁴¹ In part to several Jewish intellectuals, including Martin Buber, who taught at the University of Frankfurt, and Franz Rosenzweig, director of the *Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus* (Free Jewish Teaching Center), Frankfurt became a center for cultural and intellectual renewal for Jews during the Weimar Republic days. Within Frankfurt, Jews and Liberals worked cohesively to produce a political structure that benefitted both ends. Politicians created an atmosphere of safety for Jews, including assuring participation in intellectual and cultural freedoms. At the same time, Jews worked to create a situation that placed the Liberal parties in power not only in the local government but in the Reichstag as well. The later period of the Weimar Republic represented a marketed shift in ideologies, with Liberal parties becoming the target of issues facing Germany. With

⁴¹ Jan Palmowski, "Between Dependence and Influence: Jews and Liberalism in Frankfurt am Main, 1864-1933" in *Liberalism, Anti-Semitism and Democracy, Essays in Honour of Peter Pulzer*. ed. Henning Tewes and Jonathan Wright: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. 77, and Y. Alfasi. *Jewish Glimpses of Frankfurt*. Translated by Avraham Yaakov Finkel. New York: C.I.S. Publishers, 1993. 83-96

Jews closely aligned with the liberal parties, they too came into view, making it difficult for the political parties to protect Jews from anti-Semitism by the 1930s.⁴² Compounding matters was a Christian movement that targeted Jews in Frankfurt.

On New Year Even 1917, Lutheran Pastor Kübel gave a sermon stating that Jews were "unpatriotic war profiteers." This incident has been noted as a starting point for a movement that did not slow down. Despite being denounced by many groups in Frankfurt, including the Christian mayor of the city, Pastor Kübel continued his ideology and speeches. He later joined the anti-Semitic German National People's Party in the 1920s.⁴³ Having a self-proclaimed liberal-minded theologian joining with the anti-Semitic organizations represented an extraordinary shift within the city. By the 1920s, this movement had gained more traction. In 1923, Frankfurt offered a property that was near one of the significant churches in town, St. Catherine. When it became apparent that the majority of those buying up the land was Jewish, Lutheran pastors united in protest, stating that having Jews buy up property near a Christian site would upset the "denominational harmony" of the city. The incident set forth a public opinion that agreed with the Lutheran pastors, eventually pushing the Jewish buyers to back out of their deals. It became clear that the Lutheran leadership was becoming ever more nationalistic

⁴² Palmowski, "Between Dependence and Influence: Jews and Liberalism in Frankfurt am Main, 1864-1933" in *Liberalism, Anti-Semitism and Democracy*, ed. Henning Tewes and Jonathan Wright. 77-79

⁴³ Palmowski, "Between Dependence and Influence: Jews and Liberalism in Frankfurt am Main, 1864-1933" in *Liberalism, Anti-Semitism and Democracy*, ed. Henning Tewes and Jonathan Wright. 88-89

and anti-Semitic now that they reinforced by their actions. The following year brought even more crushing news to the security of Jews in Frankfurt.

The region's two openly anti-Semitic parties combined to create the *Wirtschaftspartei*, which gained a political majority over the two liberal parties. Also, in 1924 a *vöskich* gathering brought around 4,000 to protest Jewish activities and businesses in Frankfurt. The late 1920s continued this trend as isolated incidents of open anti-Semitism and violence occurred in public.⁴⁴ Those who politically had ties to Jews in the city were labeled *Judenpartei* hindering their ability to form coalitions and ostracizing those parties with long-standing relationships with Jews in Frankfurt. The pressure had become too much by the late 1920s for the liberal parties of the city, who eventually gave into anti-Semitism for the sake of survival.⁴⁵ While this political and cultural shift had been occurring, Berthe was alone with her young children as Elias was away in Palestine at a Kibbutz in 1923.⁴⁶

It is easy to imagine the fear that Berthe may have experienced; her husband is away while she cares for young children in a hostile country towards Jews. Protection may have been limited for her and the family. At the same time, the news might not have

⁴⁴ Palmowski, "Between Dependence and Influence: Jews and Liberalism in Frankfurt am Main, 1864-1933" in *Liberalism, Anti-Semitism and Democracy*, ed. Henning Tewes and Jonathan Wright 88-90

⁴⁵ Palmowski, "Between Dependence and Influence: Jews and Liberalism in Frankfurt am Main, 1864-1933" in *Liberalism, Anti-Semitism, and Democracy*, ed. Henning Tewes and Jonathan Wright. 92

⁴⁶ Ringelheim, "Oral History Interview with Fred Loewy," transcript of an oral history conducted 2005 by Joan Ringelheim, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Collection, Washington D.C. 2005, p. 2

reached Elias quickly while in Palestine. Setting up a kibbutz in the northern region of the country, isolated from large populations in an era where information traveled as fast as the modes would allow. There is doubt the area had the hardware for phones, radio or telegraph, and word of mouth or outdated newspapers or even letters from home would be the only source of information Elias received. The anxiety that may have gripped him being away from his family, unable to protect them or see them out of the country safely contributes to future motivations for any husband and father. Elias returned from his Kibbutz after some time away, intending to find a way to get his family out of Germany safely. Two years after his return, Elias and Berthe had their third child, Fred, in 1925.

France and Anti-Semitism

This year provided Elias with an opportunity outside of Germany as well. It is unknown how he met a gentleman, Camille Ernst, who ran a metal recycling business in Alsace, or more precisely Sélestat, France. However, Elias would leave ahead of his family in 1926 to work with Camille Ernst while building a foundation for his family to move to when the time was right. A year or two after Elias left, the family followed to Sélestat.⁴⁷ France in the 1920s was a country looking to fill the ranks voided by a war that took away a generation from them. When the Loewy's arrived in Alsace, the country was going through an identity crisis, caught between progressive ideologies of an open border and conservatives wanting to bring life back to the days of the monarch.

⁴⁷ Ringelheim, "Oral History Interview with Fred Loewy," transcript of an oral history conducted 2005 by Joan Ringelheim, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Collection, Washington D.C. 2005, p. 2

World War I saw France taking the brunt of the four-year conflict, losing an entire generation of working-age men.⁴⁸ Economic worries brought upon an era of anxiety for the future of the country. France's interwar years created an attractive condition, especially for war refugees and immigrants. A country that saw its workforce depleted following years of warfare needed bodies to fill those who could no longer work. The country looked toward other nations with larger populations with hopes of doing such. Having an almost open-door policy toward immigration allowed France to rebuild during these years, creating expanded industry and economic development for the nation.⁴⁹ France's open-door policy offered a motivational design for the Loewy family, who sought a way out of Germany in hopes of a safer and more accepting community. Instead, what the family witnessed was another nation with internal conflict dating back generations, with smoldering anti-Semitic and nationalistic ideologies not yet extinguished. The interwar years allowed for these embers to gain strength. To better understand where these beliefs came from, a brief exploration of France's anti-Semitic history is required.

In October of 1894, the son of a wealthy Alsatian Jewish family was sentenced to life in prison for treason. Accusations of selling military documents to Germany befell

⁴⁸ Michel Huber, *La Population De La France Pendant La Guerre Avec Un Appendice Sur Les Revenus Avant Et après La Guerre* (Paris, 1931), 421; Lays out the total number of French soldiers killed, died of wounds later, and missing in action. A total of 1,150,000; Hosch, William L. *World War I: People, Politics, and Power*. New York, NY: Britannica Educational Pub. in association with Rosen Educational Services, 2010. The reading provides the total number of wounded for France: 4,266,000.

⁴⁹ Timothy P Maga, "Closing the Door: The French Government and Refugee Policy, 1933-1939." *French Historical Studies* 12, no. 3 (1982): 425

Captain Alfred Dreyfus, an officer in the French Army. Tensions were high between these two nations, notably after the Franco-Prussian War in 1870.⁵⁰ What stood out about this case was not so much the accusations, but the surrounding societal issues that burgeoned around it. Later known as the Dreyfus Affair, issues arose with doubt creeping into the minds of a few intellectuals when examining the evidence. The main piece of evidence was a handwritten letter sent to the German military attaché claiming several documents that Dreyfus planned to hand over.⁵¹ What was lacking was a motive.

Dreyfus came from the bourgeoisie in France while serving as one of the few Jewish officers in the French Army, leading many to believe that he did not want to jeopardize his position within the General Staff. Being from Alsace, however, a hotly contested region between Germany and France that had returned to France only a few years before, drew cautious eyes his way. Revisiting the case later created divisions among the many classes of France. Militarists, nationalists, anti-Republicans, and anti-Semites squared off against republicans, Jews, and liberals, dividing themselves up among teams of anti-Dreyfusards and Dreyfusards.⁵² With evidence mounting against the original judgment, frictions grew between the two sides. With this heightened level of distrust, the two sides came to blows as several duels broke out among prominent members, while the Chamber of Deputies fell into chaos with fistfights breaking out. To

⁵⁰ Nancy L. Green, "The Dreyfus Affair and Ruling Class Cohesion." *Science & Society* 43, no. 1 (1979): 30

⁵¹ Marcel Thomas, *L'Affaire sans Dreyfus*. (Paris: A. Fayard Mayenne, Floch, 1961), 140

⁵² Datta, Venita. "The Dreyfus Affair and Anti-Semitism: Jewish Identity at "La Revue Blanche." *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques* 21, no. 1 (1995): 115.

quell the tension after a failed coup attempt by anti-Semitic forces, Dreyfus, again, put on military trial.⁵³ Again, the jury returned with a guilty verdict, but with two dissenting votes versus the unanimous vote from the first trial. Lowering his sentence from life to ten years, five of which Dreyfus served. While there was evidence that became refuted, the military did not admit to a mistake. The public opinion continued to push the government for Dreyfus' innocence. International pressure also began to weigh on France, including those calling for the boycott of the Paris Exhibition of 1900. The Republican government pardoned Dreyfus, followed by several years of court cases to reestablish Dreyfus' former spot in the military.⁵⁴

The Dreyfus Affair was not so much about united forces squaring off against one another. France was resting on an uneasy settlement among the ruling blocs, and the Affair gave an avenue for these groups to vent frustrations; monarchists pitted against Republicans and the clergy at odds with the Vatican and state. The Dreyfus Affair gave the nation an avenue to express its bent-up vexations through a valve. Each side was pitted against one another, however, never allying with one another. They each had their agenda and expressed that agenda through the language of the Affair. Dreyfus lost his agency, instead of embodying the political, cultural, and social ideologies of the groups that took a side during the Affair. This antagonism gave the anti-Semitic groups of France a voice as well, jumping into the fray to spread their ideas. Anti-Semitism arose as

⁵³ Guy Chapman, *The Dreyfus Case, a Reassessment* (London: Hart-Davis, 1955), 254-257

⁵⁴ Nancy L Green, "The Dreyfus Affair and Ruling Class Cohesion." *Science & Society* 43, no. 1 (1979): 31

a scapegoat, using actors like the Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards to portray their views. Anti-Semites gave fuel to the anti-Dreyfusards through their racist rhetoric, acting as a leadership group, primarily coming from intellectuals and disgraced politicians.⁵⁵ An idea that continued into the twentieth century with the influx of foreigners and war refugees coming to France. More importantly, the conditions and ideologies that came from the Affair further fueled the later government of Vichy who sought shared many commonalities with the anti-Dreyfusards.

France's open-door policy in the interwar period allowed the state to recover from the war years. Entries of working populations fitting themselves within the borders allowed modes of production to continue at wartime rates and provided France with the economic stability needed. By the late 1930s, the country witnessed over three million foreigners finding a haven in the uncertain interwar years.⁵⁶ The French census of 1930 showed that the country housed one of the largest immigrating populations compared to its native populations.⁵⁷ A stark contrast to other Western nations who still maintained lower levels of immigration.⁵⁸ Early in the 1920s, nationalist groups championed a

⁵⁵ Green, "The Dreyfus Affair and Ruling Class Cohesion," 37. Rise in anti-Semitism in France during this period followed a series of economic activities in which prices fell, and consolidation of enterprise rose. These factors threatened the "petite-bourgeoisie" of France, artisans, shopkeepers, and manufactures, finding leadership from work right-wing intellectuals, bureaucrats.

⁵⁶ Vicki Caron, "Prelude to Vichy: France and the Jewish Refugees in the Era of Appeasement." *Journal of Contemporary History* 20, no. 1 (1985): 157

⁵⁷ John Hope Simpson, *The Refugee Problem, Report of a Survey*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), 333

⁵⁸ Timothy P. Maga, "Closing the Door: The French Government and Refugee Policy, 1933-1939," 427.

closed-door policy, arguing that outside influences were polluting French culture.⁵⁹ By Spring 1933, French perception began to sour towards these immigrants and refugees. A shift in public perception and state needs following an economic depression that rocked France in 1933, leaving millions unemployed. Adding another layer to the fears is France's population stagnation.⁶⁰ Compounded with another exodus of refugees coming from Germany following the rise of the Nazi party, the situation was becoming difficult for France to handle.

The heightening fear of immigrants overtaking the French culture and ideals, replacing it with such from other countries began to boil over. Subversive groups like the anti-Dreyfusards began breaching the walls of the government, leaking ideas of nationalism and anti-Semitism into conversations and policies.⁶¹ Already fearful of a resurgent Germany, France's Prime Minister Édouard Daladier called for a commission to handle the large immigrant and refugee populations. Created in the same years as the economic crisis, the Interministerial Commission for German Refugees had hopes of finding solutions. During the early years of this committee, anti-Semitism was an issue the concerned the group. Aware of the fact that German Jews were up against unfriendly

⁵⁹ Vicki Caron, "Prelude to Vichy: France and the Jewish Refugees in the Era of Appeasement." 160

⁶⁰ Timothy P. Maga, "Closing the Door: The French Government and Refugee Policy, 1933-1939," 428 and Vicki Caron, "Prelude to Vichy: France and the Jewish Refugees in the Era of Appeasement." 173

⁶¹ Hyman, Paul. *From Dreyfus to Vichy: The Remaking of French Jewry, 1906-1939*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 25 and Maga, "Closing the Door: The French Government and Refugee Policy, 1933-1939," 429-430.

assets throughout France, talks of expulsion were on-going, however, no legislation ever transpired from these talks.⁶² What came of these talks was progress toward demands for assimilation of French culture and nationalism. Daladier's Interior Minister Camille Chautemps argued that refugees offered something that France needed, able bodies with talents that could support the defense of France. Instead of expelling them, France should continue to encourage them, bringing out more pride in their new homeland and rewarding their efforts becoming the accepted outcome of the commission.⁶³

These open-door policies, along with opportunities for immigrants and refugees to come to the aid of their new country, provide us with more insight into the understanding of how the Loewys continued their lives in Alsace in the interwar years. Elias returned from his Kibbutz in 1923 with the understanding that he saw the situation as it was growing in Germany toward Jews and immigrants. It is still unclear how he learned of employment opportunities, but we do know that in 1926 he left for Sélestat, France, to work once again at a recycling business. A year or two later, his family followed, this time with a third child in tow, newborn Manfred Loewy.⁶⁴ Being a male with the training needed to help rebuild the French economy, Elias most likely believed this was an

⁶² Second and Fourth Sessions of the Interministerial Commission for German Refugees, October 16, 1933, and November 13, 1933

⁶³ Eighth Session of the Interministerial Commission for German Refugees, October 27, 1934, MAE, Z-Europe 1930-40, Allemagne (Questions religieuses), No. 711.

⁶⁴ Joan Ringelheim, "Oral History Interview with Fred Loewy," transcript of an oral history conducted 2005 by Joan Ringelheim, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Collection, Washington D.C. 2005, p. 7 and Louise Bobrow, "Oral History with Fred Loewy." Oral History conducted on April 29, 1996. Interview conducted by Louise Bobrow, University of Southern California Shoah Foundation. Los Angeles, CA.

opportunity for him to call a place home. The Alsace region they immigrated to is another study in the understanding of the period as well for immigrant life. Though the country as a whole was grappling with a multitude of societal and political rifts based on the immigration flow, Alsace stood out as a region that provided new opportunities and acceptance while grappling with their own internal identity.

In the face of numerous accounts of adversity, the young Loewy family began its form as a reliant group. Living among nations that were growing ever hostile towards Jews and immigrants, they made their way across the European landscape and eventually to Alsace. Once again, they would be tested, this time during the invasion of France in 1940

CHAPTER 2

LIFE IN ALSACE AND THE DISRUPTION OF PEACE

With the Loweyes now in Alsace, things began to normalize for the family as they started to acclimate themselves within their new country. The Loewy's act as a guide through the tumultuous and challenging post-World War I period, they represented the same for those experiencing a new life in Alsace during the interwar period. The move to Alsace became a moment of normalization for the Loewy's, so too did the region return to France in the early 20th century. Following the end of World War I, the border regions of Alsace and Lorraine returned to the French, after being lost during the Franco-Prussian War of the 19th century.

The end of the Franco-Prussian War witnessed a socioeconomic change for the region. French elites opted to leave Alsace for France, while those who chose to stay in the new German territories held hope for reunification for France. These groups continued to support French politics and ideologies while continuing their children's education in French. Families stayed in contact with those in France while Jewish religious groups and institutions also continued to use French as their primary language.⁶⁵ This same trend continued during the interwar period following reunification in 1918. Though Alsatian Jews showed political attachment to France, they differed from French citizens on a couple of crucial issues. They viewed France as the custodians of their ability to live freely as a minority. Despite the anti-Semitic

⁶⁵ Vicky Caron. "Between France and Germany: The Jews of Alsace-Lorraine, 1871-1918," (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 178-179.

fervor that came from right-wing elements, or the anti-Dreyfusards, Alsations still held to the values that those who defended Dreyfus were the ones who argued for the values of French Jews.⁶⁶ They also had a more positive view of immigrants and Eastern European Jews compared to their French counterparts. Ultimately, they considered themselves politically French but culturally Alsatian.⁶⁷ Jewish culture within Alsace-Lorraine did not deviate much from the overall ideologies of the region. However, unlike in Paris or other metropolitan parts of the country, the Jews in Alsace-Lorraine often expressed and practiced Zionist beliefs. For those in Alsace and Lorraine, Zionism gave a sense of security, something to take away from any difficulties or hardships existing at any time.⁶⁸

Alsatian Jews saw themselves more aligned with Jewish nationalism. By being more Zionist than their co-religionist in Paris, they forged an identity that separated themselves from France. To Alsatian Jews, Zionism acted as a form of comfort. Coming from a culture of insecurities and unknown, caught between two warring nations, having something like Zionism to hold on to allow for growth and spiritual connectivity. This security gave many Jews the ability to participate in Jewish national political movements

⁶⁶ Vicky Caron. "Between France and Germany." 133. The first Zionist organization in Alsace began in 1899 founded by businessmen and medical professionals. Zionism didn't really take hold until after the First World War, another aspect from the chaos that followed the war.

⁶⁷ Ruth Schachter, "Our Little Country: National Identities of Alsatian Jewry Between the Two World Wars." Master's Thesis, University of Maryland, 2006

⁶⁸ Caron, "Between France and Germany," 133

and activities without the fear of repercussions.⁶⁹ However, Alsatian Jews did not want to separate themselves from the French state. By and large, they were extremely loyal to the France, especially during the interwar years. Being repressed by German restrictions, including higher taxes on Alsatian businesses, the promise of universal military service, along with an economic depression that followed the annexation of 1871, Jews especially were thrilled to be again part of the nation that had granted them emancipation.⁷⁰

For the Lowey's, this freedom to express their religious ideologies came at a relief. When arriving in Alsace, Elias found himself part of local Jewish Zionist organizations.⁷¹ For someone like Elias, who had been on the move the majority of his adult life, life in Alsace must have granted him the security in knowing he could practice his faith freely without much in the sense of prejudice and persecution. The other issue faced for the population was for those loyal to Germany after reunification.

Following the end of the war, the pro-German minority found themselves left out. Religious and community leaders felt compelled to return to a more open stance when it came to their pro-French sentiments—leaving many of the pro-German civilians out of

⁶⁹ Bas-Rhin Consistory Records, “Dernieres Nouvelles de Strasbourg” 24 May 1939, Reel 25, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

⁷⁰ Paula Hyman, “The Emancipation of the Jews of Alsace: Acculturation and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century.” New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2010 and Zosa Szajkowski, “The Growth of the Jewish Population of France.” *Jewish Social Studies* 8, no. 4 (October 1946). A large population of Jews left the region following the annexation in 1871. According to Szajkowski, 25 percent of the Jewish population left in 1871 and 33 percent in 1910.

⁷¹ Louise Bobrow, "Oral History with Fred Loewy." Oral History conducted on April 29, 1996. Interview conducted by Louise Bobrow, University of Southern California Shoah Foundation. Los Angeles, CA.

the conversation during the reunification years. This uncomfortable feeling and situation led to many immigrating to German in hopes of finding acceptance.⁷²

Further separations between Alsatian and Parisian Jews came from debates over the use of language. For Parisian or French Jews, the use of either French or Yiddish created tensions among the diverse groups. Eastern European Jews who were already immigrating to the French metropolitan cities were known to use Yiddish and failing to pick up on French. Leading to strife, as French Jews believed in assimilation with French culture.⁷³ Nearly the opposite was exact for Eastern European Jews in Alsace. This tension was absent from the region. Even after the war, Alsace remained a multilingual province. Alsatian society gave access to Eastern European Jews to use Yiddish freely, while Alsatians intermixed French, German and Alsatian (a mixture of French and German) in conversation and press. There was no ideology of language superiority as seen in France. For Alsatians, there may have been slight differences with what language was being used depending on the situation--whether that be at home or work, but there seemed not to be one dominant language.⁷⁴ An example of this comes from the Strasbourg Jewish newspaper *La Tribune Juive* which printed all three languages in their weekly publications.⁷⁵ Primary and secondary schools also taught lessons in French and

⁷² Marta Appel, unpublished memoir, Leo Baeck Institute, New York, 31

⁷³ Caron, "Between France and Germany." 153 and Timothy P. Maga, "Closing the Door: The French Government and Refugee Policy, 1933-1939," 423.

⁷⁴ Tomi Ungerer, *À la Guerre Comme À La Guerre: Dessins et souvenirs d'enfance* (Strasbourg: La Nuée Bleue, 1997) 27. Marta Appel, unpublished memoir, Leo Baeck Institute, New York, 7.

⁷⁵ Schachter, "Our Little Country." 35

German, although the transition from German to French pedagogy was not a smooth one. Literacy rates in the early interwar years dropped significantly but saw an equal rise in the 1930s when French pedagogy had enough time to work into the culture.⁷⁶ These regional ideologies and changes greatly benefitted the Jewish population that immigrated to the region.

The ability to freely use any of the three majority languages within the region further extended the comfort the Loewy's felt while living in Alsace. Elias and Berthe were predominantly Yiddish and German speakers. Where their kids learned the two languages, they sought to expand their vocabulary by adding French. Erna, Max, and Fred were placed in a number of schools during their time in Alsace, which taught its lessons in French. According to Fred, the family would read newspapers in both German and French, while also studying dictionaries in French. In time, the three children became proficient in French, something that would come in favor for them later on.⁷⁷

Jewish Cultural Identity and Alsace

Between 1918 and 1940, it is estimated that around 150,000 Jews arrived in France, with the majority coming from Eastern Europe.⁷⁸ *La Tribune Juive* printed a front-page

⁷⁶ Stephen L Harp, *Learning to Be Loyal: Primary Schooling as Nation-Building in Alsace and Lorraine, 1850-1940* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois Univ. Press, 1998). And Schachter, "Our Little Country." 37

⁷⁷ Joan Ringelheim, "Oral History Interview with Fred Loewy," transcript of an oral history conducted 2005 by Joan Ringelheim, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Collection, Washington D.C. 2005, 13-16

⁷⁸ Hyman, "From Dreyfus to Vichy: The Remaking of French Jewry, 1906-1939," 68

article in 1926 entitled “Light Comes from the East.” This article stated that Eastern European Jewish immigrants would not only embolden numbers of the French Jewish community, but they would act as a beacon of Jewish traditionalism that would diffuse into the community.⁷⁹ This cultural ideology endorsed Eastern European Jews to arrive in Alsace without the pressure to assimilate, unlike their co-religionists in Paris. There was no overall feeling that new arrivals were there to upset any balance. Instead, they were treated with hope, with the belief that their presence was to be positive because they carried with them Jewish tradition and faith.⁸⁰ Alsatian Jews did their part to help immigrants as well. They viewed assisting less fortunate co-religionists as a responsibility as both Jewish and French.⁸¹

Alsace provides a fascinating case study for the extent and limits of Jewish emancipation, assimilation, and cultural identity. While some Alsatians showed unwavering loyalty to the French state, Alsatian Jews sought to integrate conservative and traditional views into their culture. Compared to those in Paris, Alsatian Jews did not treat immigrants as a burden nor an obstacle. They did not feel the pressure to choose between the French state and their faith. Something that allowed a family like the Loewy’s a chance at a stable life.

⁷⁹ “La Lumière de l’Orient” - La Tribune Juive, 2 July 1926. 1

⁸⁰ Schachter, “Our Little Country.” 41

⁸¹ Bas-Rhin Consistory Records, Correspondence, 21 February 1927, Reel 42. This is corroborated by a 1927 Consistory's decision to assist international Jewish students at the University of Strasbourg financially.

As mentioned earlier, Elias sought a new opportunity for his family, and Alsace provided such. The prospect to open a new metal recycling plant with the Alsatian police officer Camille Ernst along with the acceptance of Alsatian Jews toward Eastern European immigrants became a dream scenario for the Elias.⁸² Being that he and his family were Orthodox the Loweyes may have experienced a greater sense of security and self. One thing is for sure, Elias enjoyed success in his new endeavors. The family experienced economic accomplishments allowing for a comfortable living in a spacious apartment along with educational opportunities the children enjoyed. The children were sent to Collège Koeberle while in Sélestat, the city's newest school. In his accounts, Fred explains that he experienced relentless bullying to the point that he found a way to avoid going to school. Though, he explains that it was not for being Jewish but rather because he was smaller than the other kids.⁸³ Why this seems like an important anecdote rests on the previous scholarship of Alsace during the interwar years backing up the claim that the region experienced fewer instances of anti-Semitism than what was witnessed in Paris or other interior cities.⁸⁴ While in Sélestat, Elias began traveling for business, where he had a driver. Again, attributing to the success they were experiencing in their new home. The

⁸² Document, "Page 1" (ca. 1947), translated from Yiddish, Box 02-15, Folder 2007.026.005.039 (Memoirs of Elias Lowey), Loewy Collection, Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archives, Phoenix, AZ. These were the memoirs written by Elias Lowey after the war, which gave a quick glimpse into his life in France.

⁸³ Joan Ringelheim, "Oral History Interview with Fred Loewy," transcript of an oral history conducted 2005 by Joan Ringelheim, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Collection, Washington D.C. 2005, p. 5-10

⁸⁴ Caron, "Between France and Germany," 133

story goes that one-night coming home, the driver fell asleep at the wheel, causing an accident that would have later repercussions for Elias. Following the accident, Elias received compensation, along with selling his business, the family moved to Strasbourg. While only there for a short period, Elias opened a radio business, which he took with him and the family to Colmar in 1932.⁸⁵

By the time they reached Colmar, the family had finally established themselves as part of the region. A successful radio business that accompanied an annual radio expo put on by Elias along with Berthe and Erna operating their garment shop, witnessed the Loewy's experiencing stability. Unlike the public school that Fred and Max went to in Sélestat, Elias put the two boys into a private Christian high school known as Lycée St-Jean, a sign of financial success.⁸⁶ However, this was a short-lived comfort, as things in Europe were beginning to shift with Mussolini and Hitler coming to power.

When the Lowey's left for France in 1925, they left behind family members in both Poland and Germany. Hitler's rise gave the Loewy's reason to keep track of events happening in Germany. ⁸⁷ Berthe's father and her ten siblings were still in Germany by 1933. Fred tells the story of one of his uncles who was killed during Kristallnacht. The uncle went into hiding and was exposed by one of his neighbors. Nazi members arrived and accused his uncle of attacking them with an ax. The report the Lowey's received was

⁸⁵ Joan Ringelheim, "Oral History Interview with Fred Loewy," 7,8 and Document, "Summary of Holocaust Survival (2)," Box 02-14, Folder 2007.026.003.012, Loewy Collection. Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archives. Phoenix, AZ

⁸⁶ Ringelheim, "Oral History Interview with Fred Loewy," 9

⁸⁷ Ringelheim, "Oral History Interview with Fred Loewy," 24

that he died of a heart attack, but his cousin described that he was beaten and shot. Another one of Fred's uncles, Willie Jeret, was arrested and sent to Ravensbrück, where he would pass in 1941. Another uncle, Meyer Jeret, was arrested and sent to Buchenwald, but was released when he and his family received visas to go to the United States.⁸⁸ Along with the Loewy's, France began its preparations for a war that was looking inevitable.

Build up to War

French policymakers began discussing how to proceed with civilian evacuations in 1936. Military and political leaders used the framework of World War I like the staging point to build this policy. French leaders believed they were to have another static war along the western front on the borders of the two countries. The state considered the northeastern regions well-defended due to the land that separated Germany and France, known as the Low Countries of Holland and Belgium, as well as the Ardennes Forest, widely considered impassable. France also strongly believed in their new strategy along the Maginot Line, a series of "impenetrable" obstacles along the border of Germany and France.⁸⁹ With that in mind, government and political leaders began discussing the evacuation of Alsace and Lorraine first, sending civilians out west into metropolitan areas. Besides Alsace's locale with the German border being a prominent spot, the region

⁸⁸ Ringleheim, "Oral History Interview with Fred Loewy," 14

⁸⁹ John Williams, *The Ides of May: The Defeat of France, May - June 1940*. (London: Constable, 1968), 34 & 38

held some of France's most rich mineral deposits as well as its steel industry.⁹⁰

Germany's annexation of Austria in 1938 sped up this process of preparation.

As strategies began to change southern and southwestern regions were added for consideration for evacuees. Fighting among local and national agencies held up these plans, however, as there was no consensus about the implications of a coming war with Germany.⁹¹ What France was failing to understand was the new form of mechanized warfare Germany was implementing. France continued to hold onto World War I strategies, relying on defensive, static warfare among infantry and outdated mechanical armaments. They employed a strategy of using their tanks and air force as infantry support rather than using them en masse like Germany.⁹² With invasion from Germany becoming even more realistic, local officials tasked with handling the evacuations began to let panic sink in. Details overlooked by the military and the national government, including infrastructure, food allocations, school overcrowding, and living arrangements, became burdensome for local officials.⁹³ Preparations began to shift responsibility to the *défense passive*, France's civil defense department, for the inevitability of war with Germany.

⁹⁰ Thomas E Griess, *Atlas for the Second World War: Europe and the Mediterranean*. (Garden City Park, NY: Square One Publishers, 2002), 10.

⁹¹ Nicole Dombrowski, "Beyond the Battlefield: The French Civilian Exodus of May-June 1940," unpublished Dissertation, New York University, 1995. 23. and Julian Jackson, *France: The Dark Years, 1940-1944*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 112

⁹² Williams. *The Ides of May*, 44

⁹³ Dombrowski, "Beyond the Battlefield," 49

The interwar years became a time of reflection for governments across Europe. The use of poison gas along with long-range bombers made it impervious to recruit former soldiers and men outside the fighting age to do their part in defending France. The nation introduced its first legislation for what became known as *défense passive*, the civil defense department. The framework had been decided for their responsibilities, preparing bomb shelters, warning of attacks, and handing out gas masks.⁹⁴ Further military advancements pushed the *défense passive* to continually change its tactics, including enforcement of blackouts and curfews, along with using searchlights to spot bombers at night. By 1935, the *défense passive* witnessed a turning point with Germany reintroducing conscription and the announcement of the Luftwaffe. Édouard Daladier, France's Prime Minister (from January – October 1933, January – February 1934, and 1938 – 1940) during the interwar period, introduced legislation that pushed France into a state of war preparedness, which equated a ramping up of France's civil defense activities and funding.⁹⁵ However, by 1938 France was finding it challenging to fill ranks within the *défense passive* as war was still an unpopular sentiment among the population.

The trauma left by The Great War still lingered, and another war with Germany was not something most wanted. Despite efforts to enthrall the populous, *défense passive* leaders performed exercises demonstrating what went into the role. False bombings

⁹⁴ Lindsey Dodd and Marc Wiggam. "Civil Defense as a Harbinger of War in France and Britain during the Interwar Period." *Royaume-Uni et Irlande* no. 4. (2011). 141-143

⁹⁵ Dodd, Wiggam. "Civil Defense as a Harbinger," 144. and Loi du 8 Avril 1935: "Relevative a l'Organisation des Mesures de Protection et Sauvegarde de la Population Civile"

followed by *défense passive* members extinguishing flames, performing evacuation procedures, teaching about blackouts, experiment with sirens, and the handling of a possible gas attack. Schools were required to teach preparedness with a series of brochures and booklets explaining what to do and where to go in case of an invasion. These efforts got people talking, sharing ideas and working in a cohesive stance.⁹⁶ However, it would be the invasion of Poland that became the turning point for recruitment, where fears of war equaled enthusiasm for the *défense passive*. Those not of fighting age began to sign up to do their part for the defense of France, including Elias.

Learning of the invasion of Poland, Elias signed up for France's *défense passive*. By 1939, Elias still had family living in Poland including three of his brothers, his sister, and his mother. Elias recruited Fred, being only 13 at the time, to join him in the cause. Following training, Elias took charge of a disinfection station at a local high school in the preparation of a possible gas attack.⁹⁷ Things stayed quiet for those in the *défense passive*, with minor harassments from German airplanes to cause panic, but no official action. Things became real on May 10, 1940, with Germany's invasion of the Low Countries.

⁹⁶ Dodd, Wiggam. "Civil Defense as a Harbinger" 143; Archives départementales du Nord, 27 Sept. 1938. "Mlle Lefebvre to Prefect of Nord."; Archives municipales et communautaires de Brest. 5 Mar. 1938. "La Dépêche de Brest et de l'Ouest." AMCB 18 Mar. 1938. "La Dépêche de Brest et de l'Ouest."; AMCB, 3 Nov. 1938, "Captain René Marie to Mayor of Brest." Archives Municipales de Boulogne-Billancourt, 3. Apr. 1939, "Prefect of Police to Police commissioner of Boulogne-Billancourt."

⁹⁷ Ringelheim, "Oral History Interview with Fred Loewy," 21-25 and Document "Summary of Holocaust Survival (2)." Box 02-14, Folder 2007.026.003.012. Fred Loewy Collection. Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archives. Phoenix, AZ, and Document "Summary of Holocaust Survival (3)." Box 02-14, Folder 2007.026.003.012. Fred Loewy Collection. Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archives. Phoenix, AZ

End of the Phony War

May 10, 1940, broke the false tranquility of the western front. German Luftwaffe fighter planes and bombers struck Rotterdam, Brussels, Antwerp, and Amsterdam. German motorized units and tanks swept through the Low Countries of Belgium, Holland, and Luxembourg with near relative ease, minus the stiff resistance given by the Belgian Army. The following day French cities were visited by these same bombers, sending shockwaves not only on the ground below but in the minds of the French people.⁹⁸ The Phony War was over as Germany was beginning its attack on France. Contrary to French High Command's beliefs, the German military chose not to go head-on with the Maginot Line along the French-German border. Instead, Germany introduced a change from the Schlieffen Plan, known as the Manstein Plan. Once through the Low Countries, German swept its armies north toward the English Channel. The speed and ferocity of the German military stunned the British Expeditionary Force and the much larger and better equipped French Army. France had failed to predict what type of war this time around would be—believing that a defensive war similar to the trench warfare of Verdun and Ypres, the French Army was completely caught off guard. Blitzkrieg was the next type of war to be fought. Maneuvers and coordination among the air force, armored divisions, and infantry acting in unison against fixed positions.⁹⁹ By May 28th, the British Expeditionary Force evacuated from Dunkirk, with the French Army acting as

⁹⁸ Nicole Dombrowski Risser, *France under Fire* (London: Cambridge Univ Press, 2015), 21-23 and Williams. *The Ides of May*, 32

⁹⁹ Williams. *The Ides of May*, 35-37

a shield. Pockets of French defenses began to crumble, as many became encircled and cut off from their main forces. French civilians were also retreating in haste, causing insurmountable transportation issues for French units attempting to quell the German onslaught.¹⁰⁰

When Germany broke through the French lines, evacuations began to become impossible for the French state to control. Lulled into a sense of security that Germany was invading in the northeast, people of Alsace felt they had more time to prepare for the Germans if they were to come. The realization that nothing stood between Alsace and the oncoming Germans created a sense of panic among civilians and a rush to leave the region. Accounts of the evacuation mention how roads became bogged down by masses of civilian refugees carrying more than was needed either in cars, horseback, carriages, and on their backs. French Army units attempting to stop the rush of Germans were slowed down by the civilians they were tasked with protecting. The two forces meeting each other made transportation nearly impossible, something that had been overlooked by the French High Command.¹⁰¹ Once the Germans broke through the French lines and crossed the Vosges Mountains, Elias knew that time had run out. Elias requested a transfer out of the *défense passive*, receiving an *ordre de mission* from the local commander. Being a member of the *défense passive*, Elias was given an *ordre de mission* which granted him and his family safe transportation after the majority of the civilian

¹⁰⁰ Dombrowski, Nicole. "Beyond the Battlefield: The French Civilian Exodus of May-June 1940," unpublished Dissertation, New York University, 1995, 49-51; and Williams. The Ides of May 48 & 54; Dombrowski. "France under Fire." 25.

¹⁰¹ Dombrowski, "Beyond the Battlefield," 147-149

population had already evacuated.¹⁰² The following morning the family arrived at the train station in Colmar to discover no more trains would be leaving.

What is described as a moment of desperation, military officials ordered the destruction of regional electrical systems, telephone communications, and restricted the flow of gas with the hopes of hindering Germany using France's infrastructure. In this haste, the train systems, too, were subject to restrictions. With Alsace being a target for the Wehrmacht, France ordered the cessation of trains leaving or entering the region. The claim was the safety of civilians and the state.¹⁰³ Coincidentally, it would become one of a series of challenges the Loewy's and others would face as war evacuees. The decision was made, they would continue the trek on foot, making their way south in hopes of reaching a train station still operating. Evacuating from battlefields as a civilian is a risk that needs detailed clarification. In the years of modern warfare, such as the First and Second World Wars, civilians were in the crossfire of warring nations. No longer were battles being fought on fields outside of major metropolitan cities, but now cities were becoming a target for nations at war.

¹⁰² Document, "Train Pass." (translated from French). Box 02-15, Folder 2007.026.005.006. Loewy Collection. Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archives. Phoenix, AZ. This document translates to say "To the agreement of 1 July 1939 concluded between the Minister of the Interior and the Société National de Chemins de fer Français, for the execution and regulation of transport for the evacuation, withdrawal, or removal of the civilian population, in periods of tension or in the event of mobilization."

¹⁰³ Dombrowski. "Beyond the Battlefield" 179; and Jackson, "*France: The Dark Years, 1940-1944*, 115

Evacuation possessed a series of paradoxical issues. The idea behind this process was for one's safety. However, in many cases, civilians were placing themselves in danger. Enemy aircraft could quickly strafe crowded roads of civilians, a skirmish could break out with evacuees caught in the middle, misfires of artillery, or munitions landing in large groups were all real possibilities. Young children and women were being exposed to the terrors of warfare, breaking the boundaries of the safety they felt at home, along with the promised security.¹⁰⁴ For the Loewy's, this experience paralleled these outcomes. As they made their way south, a Protestant Minister came across the family, offering the women a ride on his carriage, while the men continued on foot. Providing Berthe and Erna rest, the family was taken with the Minister until the family made contact with a retreating column of the French Army. Fred described the journey as overwhelming, as they bore witness to the carnage of warfare. Exploded petrol tanks, destroyed military machines, and abandoned civilian cars. Eventually, the family made it to the city of Roanne, where a train was waiting for them and other evacuees making the adjurons journey.¹⁰⁵

Trains were not immune to warfare, becoming crucial targets for enemy air forces. The railways used the cover of darkness to conduct their travels, though not always a foolproof plan. While they had their advantages, including covering vast distances in a shorter period compared to the road systems, the primary issue came from grouping

¹⁰⁴ Dombrowski "Beyond the Battlefield." 224

¹⁰⁵ Joan Ringelheim, "Oral History Interview with Fred Loewy," transcript of an oral history conducted 2005 by Joan Ringelheim, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Collection, Washington D.C. 2005, 28-30, and Document "Summary of Holocaust Survival (3)." Box 02-14, Folder 2007.026.003.012 (Narrative Documents). Fred Lowey Collection. Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archives. Phoenix, AZ.

masses who had nowhere to run in the event of an air attack. They relied heavily on the soldiers operating the train if there were any to begin with.¹⁰⁶ The Loewys were subjected to the anxieties of riding on a train during the war.

Along their journey, their train made several stops on its way to its final destination. Fred tells the story of an alarm wailing due to a possible air attack. Everyone on the train was instructed to get out and hide in cover. Fred states the family later found out that a possible Italian plane was flying overhead, and the soldiers on the train were not going to take chances.¹⁰⁷ Following the five-day ordeal, the family arrived in the coastal city of Bordeaux, where they were met with their next series of hurdles.

Bordeaux became one of the few exit ports for those seeking to leave France. For the Loewys it was an opportunity of safety. Amidst the chaos in Bordeaux, Elias made contact with someone within the port authority. Like Colmar, he was told to arrive early the next morning and a boat would arrive to take them out of the country. However, this would not be the case. The Loewy's arrived at the port early the following morning of June 22, 1940, to discover that no more boats would be leaving the port, as an armistice had been signed between France and Germany.¹⁰⁸ Following the end of hostilities,

¹⁰⁶ Dombrowski "Beyond the Battlefield," 252

¹⁰⁷ Document, "Summary of Holocaust Survival (4)." Box 02-14, Folder 2007.026.003.012. Fred Loewy Collection. Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archive. Phoenix, AZ

¹⁰⁸ Joan Ringelheim, "Oral History Interview with Fred Loewy," transcript of an oral history conducted 2005 by Joan Ringelheim, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Collection, Washington D.C. 2005, 35-36 and Document "Summary of Holocaust Survival (4)." Box 02-14, Folder 2007.026.003.012 (Narrative Documents). Fred Loewy Collection. Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archives. Phoenix, AZ.

announced by Marshall Pétain, confusion swept over the nation as reports made their way through bands of refugees and city squares. The reality of defeat sunk in and a halt of all evacuations was called on by the government. A decree by the government commanded that all French citizens stay home or stay off the roads as it was becoming a national security issue, and by stopping the disorganization, only then could France begin to bring back any semblance of normalcy.

Do not leave your home, your business, or your farm as that were to become the home that would be the building block for remaking a new France.¹⁰⁹

Preparations were being made already for the creation of a new French state, Vichy. Public announcements like this set the foundation for the ideology of the Vichy state. Evacuations were to cease, while restrictions were put in place restricting the movement of those attempting to flee. This order was not followed stringently, however. There were several cases in which officials ignored the order, as they were more concerned with the safety of their own families and communities who were still in the process of evacuating and under the fear of German invasion.¹¹⁰

Stories of evacuation were varied and showed how different each individual and family handled the invasion. Within the chaos, similar themes are discovered: The breakdown of daily routine, regular meals, shelter, and employment. This experience is

¹⁰⁹ Radio speech reprinted in *Le Petit Gaillard*. Tuesday, June 18, 1940. *Le Petit Gaillard* was a small weekly journal from the Swiss border city of Gaillard.

¹¹⁰ Dombrowski "Beyond the Battlefield," 256

no different for the Loewys. Elias may have felt that he finally settled somewhere he can enjoy the success of his business, as well as the security and safety of his family. No more were their long journeys across different countries in search of a foundation in which to build on. Now, May and June 1940 changes all of that for him. Once again, he is to pick up his family and make an immense journey to the western coast of France. This time under the fear of the loss of safety and security. Imagine a wave cresting over a wave break. Once enough water gets over, there is nothing to stop it, and it picks up what is in its path. Imagery like this helps explain the view of evacuees. The first groups arriving from northern regions making their way south and west, picking up more from the villages, towns, and cities they pass, making the wave larger while pushing itself up against a French Army rushing to get to the frontlines to stop the German advance.

On June 25, 1940, Marshal Pétain, the hero of the First World War, gave his radio broadcast from Bordeaux to announce the Armistice. This speech laid the foundation for the future of the French state and its people--promising order, security, and the French way of life. Vichy's new leaders wasted no time creating their promises of France's future.¹¹¹ On June 26, the Bank of France relocated to Bordeaux and began printing a new 100 francs bill. The front part was the head of a woman and the head of a child with the backdrop of Paris. On the back was the French countryside with the inscription "Labourage et pasturage sont les deux mamelles de la France," *Plowing and grazing are the two udders of France*. Words that were spoken by friend and minister of King Henry

¹¹¹ Pétain's speech printed in this newspaper, a political, agricultural, and industrial newspaper for announcements and topics of southern France. Operated from 1855 to 1944.

IV, Maximilien de Béthune, duke de Sully, when arriving to the throne in the sixteenth century.¹¹² Now, Pétain foresaw himself doing the same. If the debacle of May and June exposed the incompetence and breakdown of the Third Republic, Vichy intended to demonstrate the opposite.

The Loewys are once again put to the test. Resilience becomes the theme throughout the Loewys journey to Bordeaux, as they are pushed to their limits across battlefields in the face of hostile forces. Their demeanor of not allowing themselves to stop despite any obstacle in their way is a testament to their want to survive the outcome of this new war and would become the foundation for how the following years would be approached. Their ability to adapt quickly, while thinking fast in the moment proved paramount in this instance and later on.

The new Vichy state would claim the southeast coast of France, while the Armistice gave Germany the north as well as the western coast of France. Elias knew that he and his family were not safe in the German-occupied region. Again, with pass in hand, the Lowey's made another journey. This time to the city of Toulouse in the newly formed state of Vichy.

¹¹² Dombrowski "Beyond the Battlefield." 317. Maximilien was tasked with reorganizing the finances of France

CHAPTER 3

CAPTURE, RESCUE, AND PASSIVE RESISTANCE

The defeat of France left the country with a desire to find those responsible for the darkness that loomed over the state. In the wake of this defeat, the right-wing political elements of France took hold even more than they had in 1939. The disillusionment of the Popular Front before the official armistice gave rise to Marshal Philippe Pétain

and his close confidants within the French government. For them, it was almost immediately clear who was to blame for France's defeat: The Popular Front, socialists, communists, liberal professors, and Jews. Looming large was the argument nationalist groups in France had been making since the 1930s; letting in vast numbers of foreigners ruined the foundation of the French state, eroding its place within the world stage.

Whispers of the Dreyfus Affair grew louder with the beginning of Vichy. Those in power were looking to avenge the "wrongs" done to their proud state because of the Affair.¹¹³

Vichy was not born out of the Armistice. The seeds and foundation were being created in the background of dissenters of the government during of the 1930s.

Ahead of the German capture of Paris on June 14, Prime Minister Paul Reynaud and his government evacuated to the town of Tours and then Bordeaux on June 10.

Reynaud was facing internal strife with the threat of defeat approaching France. During the early stages of the invasion, Reynaud replaced his top commander, General Maurice Gamelin, with General Maxime Weygand with hopes of stopping the German onslaught.

¹¹³ Adam Rayski, Bédarida François, and William Sayers. *The Choice of the Jews under Vichy: Between Submission and Resistance*. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015), 11

By this point, nearly 6 million civilians were retreating or had retreated, adding to the chaos and uncertainty.¹¹⁴ On June 16, 1940 the pressure became too much as Paul Reynard resigned as Prime Minister and was replaced by French hero Marshal Philippe Pétain.

Pétain himself was a defeatist and pessimist. Having witnessed first-hand the horrors of the First World War, he carried a general mistrust for the Allies, notably Great Britain. Believing they would not put up enough of a resistance to carry on the war with France. Along with General Weygand, Pétain believed that there was no fight left in France in 1940, and Germany would easily conquer Britain in short order. Marshal Pétain sought an armistice with Germany, hoping to save the image and integrity of France by doing so.¹¹⁵ What differentiated France to those the Germans invaded beforehand was the requesting of an armistice. This gave Hitler the sense that he may have an ally in the future battle against Britain. Within the agreement, Germany allowed the French government to continue to operate on French soil, while keeping its empire and its naval fleet.¹¹⁶

The Armistice laid out the future of France. It was to be divided among several regions, with the north and western portions controlled by the German military. The southeastern coast fell under French authority. Alsace and Lorraine were placed under

¹¹⁴ Dombrowski “Beyond the Battlefield,” 315

¹¹⁵ Michael Curtis, *Verdict on Vichy: Power and Prejudice in the Vichy France Regime*. (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2015), 64

¹¹⁶ Curtis, *Verdict on Vichy*, 66 and Rayski, *The Choice of the Jews Under Vichy*, 15

control of Germany, where 70,000 people were expelled to the southern region, and 150,000 were conscripted into the German Army. The final region occupied was the southeastern border near the French-Italian border, which fell under Italian occupation.¹¹⁷ The new French government was given a choice of where they wanted their new capital. Initially Paris, Lyon, Toulouse, and Perpignan were all rejected. It would be the quiet spa town of Vichy to become the new capital. Being a vacation resort town, it was home to a number of France's elegant hotels, with enough for each member to be housed at one. Some members also had homes in Vichy, making the city the essential spot for the elites that were now in control of France.¹¹⁸

In June 1940, Marshal Pétain became acting Prime Minister, and appointed a close confidant, Peter Laval, as his deputy. Pétain and Laval, both believing that Britain was going to be defeated, held the idea that France needed a more authoritarian government to negotiate with Germany, while bringing back pride and unity to the French people.¹¹⁹ Early on they began maneuvering through the old government searching for those who thought ideologically similar to them. From there, Pétain and Laval began appointing those close to them to positions. This spelled the end of the old Republican system. Ultimately, the Republic would dissolve on July 10, 1940, when the National Assembly voted to give Pétain full executive and legislative powers. For good

¹¹⁷ Curtis, *Verdict on Vichy*, 65

¹¹⁸ Curtis, *Verdict on Vichy*, 68

¹¹⁹ Rayski, *The Choice of the Jews Under Vichy*, 32 and Richard H. Weisberg, *Vichy Law and the Holocaust in France* (New York, NY: Harwood Academic Publishers, 2013), 45

measure, the two chambers gave Pétain full authority to rewrite existing laws, which he and his government took full advantage of.¹²⁰

Following the Vichy Constitutional Acts 1 and 2 on July 10, 1940, the Vichy government officially took power over the new French state. With this new government, there would be no more elected officials, no separation of powers, no checks and balances, along with no President of the Republic. From July 1940 on it would be an authoritarian government with one key figure as the leader, Pétain. In theory, this would be like the old monarchy from the pre-Republic days, which Vichy sought to bring back.¹²¹ Almost immediately the Vichy government began its steps to restrict the lives of Jews in the Unoccupied Zone.

Establishing its first anti-Jewish measure on July 22, 1940, Vichy began reviewing its naturalization laws before the war. This was followed by the cessation of a series of laws protecting Jews, including a law prohibiting anti-Jewish propaganda. The biggest blow landed on October 3, with the first of the *Status de Juifs* or “Laws Concerning the Status of Jews.”¹²² The first laws excluded Jews from the press, commercial or industrial jobs, political positions, and the army. The speed at which these

¹²⁰ Curtis, *Verdict on Vichy* 72 and Weisberg, *Vichy Law and the Holocaust in France*, 52

¹²¹ Curtis, *Verdict on Vichy*, 74 and Weisberg, *Vichy Law and the Holocaust in France*, 55

¹²² Rayski, *The Choice of the Jews Under Vichy*, 12 and Weisberg, *Vichy Law and the Holocaust in France*, 53

laws had been created and enacted led many to believe this had been brewing in the background in the minds of politicians before the creation of Vichy.

Talks took place amongst a cabinet meeting on September 30th, laying the groundwork for these anti-Jewish laws. Very little disagreements occurred among those present and the laws had been written and signed by Vichy's first Justice Minister Raphaël Alibert. A known anti-Semite, Alibert pushed the law forth without haste, and congratulated them as the first step at bringing France back to the pre-Republic days.¹²³ One of the major portions of the law stated, "Every person descended from three grandparents of the Jewish race, or from two grandparents of the same race, if the spouse was also Jewish, would be considered a Jew."¹²⁴ Germany left Vichy to its own accord when it came to handling their own space. They believed that Vichy would manage their Jewish population in accordance to how they were, as evidence of the laws that were created. Officials held that Vichy would create a purely "French space" free of Jewish influence.¹²⁵ Furthering their want to rid the country of Jewish influence, the Vichy government enacted its second part of the *Status de Juifs* on October 4, beginning the internment of its foreign Jewish population.

¹²³ Weisberg, *Vichy Law and the Holocaust in France*, 38-39

¹²⁴ Rayski, *The Choice of the Jews Under Vichy*, 13

¹²⁵ Curtis, *Verdict on Vichy*. 80 and Weisberg, *Vichy Law and the Holocaust in France*, 57

The Loewys Enter Vichy

Within the confusion and uncertainty occurring during the early Armistice days, the Loewys were beginning their plan to get out of the occupied region. The same day they were told there would be no more boats leaving the coast the family began their trip to Toulouse. Receiving a pass from the command office of the 18th region, where Bordeaux resided, the family had their chance to escape occupied France on June 23, 1940.¹²⁶ Many others who were seeking to escape the German occupation fled to cities like Toulouse, Lyon, and Montpellier. The city was overwhelmed with thousands of people from Germany, Holland, Belgium, Spain and Luxembourg. While in the city, the Loewy's go to a hotel and ask for a room. They discover there are no more rooms, however, the owner of the hotel knows where the family can get mattresses and offers a room in his house. By this point, the family has no money or means to work as refugees. To help repay the family that took them in, Elias, Max, and Fred did work around the house and neighborhood. During their time in Toulouse, Elias attempted to gain passports for him and the family. When visiting the Polish consulate, he was met with rejection due to the fact he left before any official state of Poland existed. Instead, they offered Max a passport if he were to join the Polish army since he was 18 years old, which Elias denied.

¹²⁶ Document, "Provisional Pass." (translated from French). Box 02-15, Folder 2007.026.005.006. Loewy Collection. Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archives. Phoenix, AZ. This document, from the Commander of the 18th region Lieutenant General LaFont sates "Mr. Loewy Elias and his children are allowed to travel on the Bordeaux to Agde route by rail or any other public or private means of transport."

For the meantime, life continue for the Loewy's.¹²⁷ Trying in earnest to make the best of life in another new home, doing what other refugees like them were attempting. In the background, Vichy was building its next steps to further make the lives of refugee's hell, notably Jews.

Immediately following the October 3 law, Vichy enacted its internment laws on October 4. According to the law:

- I. Foreign nationals of the Jewish race may, from the promulgation date of the present law (Oct. 4), be interned in special camps by a decision of the prefect of the department of the residence
- II. A commission charged with the organization and administration of these camps shall be constituted within the Ministry of the Interior
- III. Foreign nationals of the Jewish race may at any time be assigned a forced residence by the prefect of the department in which they reside. ¹²⁸

Internment in France did not begin with Vichy. The end of the Spanish Civil War witnessed over 450,000 Spanish Republicans and refugees cross the French border including those from the International Brigade, volunteers who fought for the Republican side. Unable to handle the massive influx, France felt they had no other choice than to

¹²⁷ Joan Ringelheim, "Oral History Interview with Fred Loewy," transcript of an oral history conducted 2005 by Joan Ringelheim, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Collection, Washington D.C. 2005, 35-36 and Document "Summary of Holocaust Survival (4)." Box 02-14, Folder 2007.026.003.012 (Narrative Documents). Fred Lowey Collection. Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archives. Phoenix, AZ.

¹²⁸ Weisberg, *Vichy Law and the Holocaust in France*, 58. The law was published in the *Journal Officiel* on October 18, 1940.

intern the Spanish until a later date. These camps that were constructed became the foundation for the internment of Jews following the October 4 decree and the next chapter for the Loewys.¹²⁹

On the night of November 5, 1940, the Loewys were awoken by French police officers knocking on the door of their temporary home, placing them under arrest for violating Vichy laws. Startled and half awake, the family was taken from their home with no time to gather possessions. Thrown into a police wagon, the family witnessed others placed in the same vehicle as the night went on. All those arrested ended up in a temporary "refugee" camp known as Septfonds. The following evening, these refugees were placed into cattle cars and sent east to the city of Montpellier. Reminiscent of horrors told after the war, the cattle cars had no room to sit, no food or water, and no restrooms. Arriving in Montpellier, more prisoners were shoved into the cars, adding to the inhumane conditions.¹³⁰

Ultimately, the train reached its destination of the small French Mediterranean coastal city of Agde. As train doors slid open, indiscriminate yells lashed out from the mouths of French police officers and soldiers. Grabbed by their clothing and dragged down, treated like the cattle that should have come from those cars. Led through the streets of Agde, these people felt the cold stares of citizens reaching them like a soft breeze off the water brushing against their necks. At the edge of town stood towers,

¹²⁹ Curtis, *Verdict on Vichy*, 160

¹³⁰ Joan Ringelheim, "Oral History Interview with Fred Loewy", transcript of an oral history conducted 2005 by Joan Ringelheim, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Collection, Washington D.C. 2005, p. 40

guards standing at attention with rifles waiting, and barbed wire fences glistening from the sun's rays. The prisoners were welcomed to their new home of *Camp d'Internment Agde* where they were separated based on specific criteria; soldiers, women, and men.

November nights in southern France are not pleasant. The barracks that the Loweyes called home were a small wooden unpainted structure which left little in the way of comfort. Forced to sleep on a floor with straw, no blankets and only the clothes on their backs, forty to fifty people per barrack attempted to keep each other warm through the nights, pushing people to their physical limits. Fred, the youngest son, told the story of one of his barrack mates hitting that limit. The cold was extremely bitter, and the barracks had no fireplace or source of heat. The man grabbed one of the benches inside, broke it down, and started a fire. Camp officers caught the sight of a fire and broke into the barrack, dragging the man out, beat him mercifully, and throwing him into the camp jail for his insubordination.¹³¹ Stories explained by the Lowe's are only a small insight into what the camp was like, as other expanded upon what was also going on.

Internment, Rescue, and Passive Resistance

Agde was originally built to house refugees from the Spanish Civil war who came across the border in large numbers following Franco's victory. Built in March 1939, the construction took place near the coast on unused military land. It eventually housed over six thousand people, including the Spanish, later demobilized Czechoslovakians,

¹³¹ Joan Ringelheim, "Oral History interview with Fred Loewy", transcript of an oral history conducted 2005 by Joan Ringelheim, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Collection, Washington D.C. 2005, p. 48

Indochinese workers, and then Jews. Between October 1 and November 15, 1940, 1,845 people were interned there. That number rose to 4,700 by November 20 and 5,900 by November 30, 1940.¹³² According to eyewitness accounts, including Rabbi Henri Schilli who at the time was the secretary general of the Paris Consistory and later the director of the French Israeli Seminary, conditions in the camp were beyond human imagination.

According to Rabbi Schilli: Each internee had a layer of straw and a single blanket, with maybe a mattress or two in each barrack. Each barrack house up to 40 people. The men's barracks were not heated. Whereas the women's and children's barracks were heated until 6 p.m. Despite being heated, this was the wintertime on the French southern coast, which can dip into extremely cold temperatures at night. Food did not receive a glowing review either. While there was food available, typically it contained boiled broth or water with very little added to it. Fat and protein were severely lacking, and for those who were kosher, they had no other options, leaving many to just not eat what was available. Hygiene was an issue, with evidence of rodents making home within the barrack and in the sleeping areas as the straw made perfect living quarters for rats and mice. Water was a shortage as well, leaving many going days without a proper shower or bath. This left those who couldn't bathe attacked by fleas and lice. When arriving at the camp, families were separated amongst men, women, and children. Family separation created a depressed atmosphere within the camp, along with their liberties being stripped and the presence of confinement. Rabbi Schilli finished his assessment by saying:

¹³² Michaël Iancu. *Spoliations, déportations, résistance Des Juifs à Montpellier Et Dans l'Hérault: 1940-1944*. (Avignon: Barthélemy, 2000), 93-94

The enumeration of all these points explains rather eloquently the deplorable moral situation of the internees in Camp Agde and indicates the measures which should be taken to remedy it, which can be summarized as follows: A more liberal regime as it is conceived for an accommodation center and not for internment, and the elimination from the camp of all persons unfit to live there (the sick, the old, the children) and finally serious screening to put an end to internments by mistake.¹³³

Elias had seen enough; he was not ready to sit idly by and give up. Remembering a conversation from earlier, he knew that the camp commander was looking for a typist, someone to write daily reports, letters, and other written materials. Elias called on his only daughter, Erna, to get that job. It would give them a chance to get close to the commander, setting in motion the first part of Elias' plan to get out of the camp. Erna received the position, beginning the end of the Loewy's time in Camp Agde. The Loewys resilience began to take the next step, as they were ready to not sit by and watch helplessly. Waiting for others to make decisions for them was not within the families make-up.

In a short time, Erna was able to gain the respect of the camp commander, a French Captain with the last name Tassart. Elias asked Erna to request a pass to go to the city of Montpellier, which Tassart granted. What made this situation different was these

¹³³ Iancu, *Spoliations, déportations, résistance Des Juifs*, 95

camps in southern France predated the camps seen in Eastern Europe. Their intentions were internment until their eventual deportation to concentration camps. Vichy, though in collaboration with Germany, still operated under its laws.¹³⁴ Because of this difference, interned peoples were allowed more available access to obtain permissions to leave the camp, though still tricky in its own right. The commander knew that if the two were to escape, they would leave behind the two sons and Berthe.

Elias and Erna made their way to the Prefect of Montpellier, where Elias came in contact with a familiar face. Back in Alsace, Elias ran a metal recycling business with another associate, a man by the name of Camille Ernst. Standing before him stood Camille. A conversation followed, with Camille trying to understand why his old friend was now there. Within this conversation, Elias discovered that Ernst was the secretary-general of the prefecture, placing him second in command of the region. Camille was shocked to discover his friend along with his family were placed at Camp Agde. Using his position, Ernst granted the Loewys freedom, but that was not enough for the two men. Others deserved their freedom as well and the two worked together to create a plan to free others from the camp.¹³⁵

As soon as the Loewys were granted their freedom they began working tirelessly to free others within the camp. Ernst asked the family to continue living in Agde and help

¹³⁴ Hillel J. Kiveal, "Legality and Resistance in Vichy France: The Rescue of Jewish Children." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 124, no. 5 (October 10, 1980). 343

¹³⁵ Joan Ringelheim, "Oral History interview with Fred Loewy", transcript of an oral history conducted 2005 by Joan Ringelheim, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Collection, Washington D.C. 2005, p. 52

liberate others from the camp. Camille Ernst knew loopholes within the law with the major loophole being that to be granted freedom from internment camps, a family had to provide evidence to show they had the means to provide for themselves. Vichy was not in the business to provide for these foreigners, especially if they were Jewish. They wanted to avoid “taking care” for those who would affect their system. With the help of Ernst and Captain Tassart, the Loweyes were granted entrance into the camp acting as humanitarians.¹³⁶ That pass allowed the family to enter the camp between 8:00 AM and 7:00 PM. In that window, the kids shopped and gathered provisions for those in the camp including food, clothing, and medicine.¹³⁷ Using this permission to enter, the family also ran a money-laundering scheme with intentions to free others from the camp.

When the Loewys were released, Ernst requested that they continue living in Agde to help with freeing others from the camp. With the knowledge in hand of the loophole, the family began the process of liberation. The first wave of those rescued were ones of means, who could loan money for others. As part of the agreement to be rescued, the family would loan the Loewys enough to prove the next family would have the means. Using the concealment as humanitarians, the boys entered the camp, and give the next family the money. The cycle would continue for a couple of months. To make sure the bills weren't traced by officials, Erna and Berthe would go into Montpellier and “clean” the bills by exchanging them at local stores or banks. One by one, families were

¹³⁶ Document, “*Agde Interns' Camp*,” Box 02-15, Folder: 2007.026.005.006, Lowey Collection, Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archives, Phoenix, AZ

¹³⁷ Document, “Summary of Holocaust Survival (4),” Box 02-14, Folder 2007.026.003.012, Loewy Collection. Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archives. Phoenix, AZ

released from the camp and brought into the care of the Loewys and Ernst. From there, Elias and Erna brought those freed to Montpellier. With the help of Camille Ernst, along with Mr. Frederici, the Chief of the 5th Bureau de Etrangers, the rescued were able to obtain legal residency in Montpellier. In total, over a few months period between November 1940 and March 1941, they were able to free 1,500 internees and bring them safely to Montpellier. In March 1941, Vichy closed the camp in part due to the suspicion of the activities of the Loewys and Ernst. That is when Camille asked the family to return to Montpellier to help with the newly freed peoples.¹³⁸

For the next year, Elias, Ernst, Frederici and Jean-Baptiste Benedetti (prefect of Héault) worked to help those released from Agde. This process continued while gaining the help of the *Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants* or OSE, a Jewish organization serving displaced children find shelter and other necessities.¹³⁹ Working with the OSE, there was plans to place the children from the camp in vacation camps for their protection. Sadly however, one of these camps became victim of Lieutenant Klaus Barbie, also known as the “butcher of Lyon.” The situation seemed to be moving slowly, with high ranking officials of a prefecture working in unison for the safety of those rescued. For some, they were able to make their way through Spain and into Portugal. In total about 200 were

¹³⁸ Document, “Summary of Holocaust Survival (6),” Box 02-14, Folder 2007.026.003.012, Loewy Collection. Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archives. Phoenix, AZ

¹³⁹ *Activité Des Organisations Juives En France Sous L'occupation*. Paris: Centre de Documentation Juive Contemporaine, 1947. 130-132. The book is a collection of reports written by various Jewish organizations in France after the war about a series of welfare programs during World War II.

able to make it to safety outside of France.¹⁴⁰ When 1942 came around, word began to reach Vichy officials of the work happening in Hérault.

Between July and August 1942, the infamous raffles or razzes began, also known as the Montpellier round ups. The French police had lists of the names of Jews they were looking for, primarily targeting foreign Jews. To combat this, Elias organized places to hide people. This included hospitals, homes with residents, and abandoned homes. With the help of Jewish Boy Scouts, they were able to provide meals for those in hiding thanks to the help of local restaurants and citizens. Without Elias and his team's quick work, many more lives could have been in danger.¹⁴¹

The Vel' d'Hiv roundups took place on July 16, 1942 in Paris, followed by the round-ups in Vichy between July and August 1942. The big round-up took place on August 26, 1942 in the early morning conducted by police and gendarmerie. On September 1, 1942, Prefect Bédetti signed a report on the "round-up of foreign Jews" in which he gave the following explanation for the failure of the round-up on August 26:

The operation had been announced for some time by English radio, and everyone in the Jewish circles had been expecting it. In spite of the precautions taken by the

¹⁴⁰ Document, "Summary of Holocaust Survival (7)," Box 02-14, Folder 2007.026.003.012, Loewy Collection. Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archives. Phoenix, AZ and Joan Ringelheim, "Oral History interview with Fred Loewy", transcript of an oral history conducted 2005 by Joan Ringelheim, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Collection, Washington D.C.

¹⁴¹ Document, "Activities of the Resistance (1)," (translated from French), Box 02-10, Folder 2007.026.004.008. Loewy Collection. Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archives. Phoenix,

police, it was only partially successful, but no incidents occurred in the whole department. The operation, which involved many women and children, was not well received by the population.¹⁴²

The events of August 1942 were followed by the occupation of the southern zone by the Germans. The Wehrmacht entered Montpellier on November 12, causing most Jews in the Hérault department to seek refuge in other departments including Aveyron, Corrèze and Lozère. While other went into hiding under new alias, including the Loewys.

Elias was informed that he, along with Camille, Frederici, and Bénédetti were labeled enemies of the state by the Gestapo.¹⁴³ One of the operations Camille Ernst was conducting was providing some of the freed interns with false identifications with the help of the local Catholic church. The Loewys would be provided the same in 1942 as they would be known as the Heiberger, a Catholic family from Alsace.¹⁴⁴ Along with a name change, Camille suggested a change of scenery as well. Suggesting the family leave

¹⁴² Iancu. *Spoliations, déportations, résistance Des Juifs à Montpellier Et Dans l'Hérault: 1940-1944*, 97 and Archives départementales de l'Hérault Prefectural Reports from 26 August 1942

¹⁴³ Document. "Letter declaring Elias an Enemy of the State by the Gestapo." (translate from German). Box 02-15, Folder 2007.026.005.030. Loewy Collection. Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archives. Phoenix, AZ.

¹⁴⁴ Document, "Letter from Catholic Library." (translated from French). Box 02-15, Folder 2007.026.005.006. Loewy Collection. Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archives. Phoenix, AZ. This handwritten document from Juliette Ricome who verifies that they wrote false documents for the Loewy's before they left Montpellier.

for the Lozère region of France, as it would provide the cover the family needed to continue hiding from Vichy and Germany.

The year 1942 became another turning point for the Loewys. After surviving both the German invasion and the Vichy internment, the family had entrenched themselves within the French Resistance. Though not in a combat role, the actions of the Loewys disrupted the actions of Vichy through successfully freeing 1,500 from one of their camps, while protecting them in subsequent roundups. It was only a matter of time before officials caught up to them. Camp d'Agde was closed in March 1941, with the internees being sent to another transit camp, Rivesalt. Shortly after the Loewy's made their escape from Montpellier, Vichy police arrested Camille Ernst, Frederici and Bénédetti. Not much is known of what happened to Frederici or Bénédetti, however, neither returned home after the war. Camille Ernst was eventually sent to Dachau, only to return home a broken man. According to him, he barely survived the ordeal. For his actions he was later recognized as a Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem in 1971.¹⁴⁵ For the Loweyes, their next chapter would take them to the quiet mountain village of Saint-Germain-de-Calberte.

¹⁴⁵ "Camille Ernst." yadvashem.org. Yad Vashem.
<https://www.yadvashem.org/righteous/stories/ernst.html>.

CHAPTER 4

LIFE AS THE HEIBERGERS AND ACTIVE RESISTANCE.

By late 1942, the Loewys were once again on the run. This time from both German and Vichy officials. After a few days, the family arrived in the Lozère prefect within the mountainous village of Saint-Germain-de-Calberte. Upon arriving, local gendarmeries question the family, putting the family's new identity to the test; "Are you Jewish?" "No." "Catholic?" "Yes." Unfamiliar with the region they arrived in, the family soon discovered Catholics were not looked upon with gracious eyes.¹⁴⁶ Lozère was predominantly Protestant, with religious wars having been fought centuries before. Fred later discovered the area was friendly towards Jews while looking down on Catholics. Along with the long-standing tension, the region was also anti-Vichy, having a dissenting opinion about Marshal Pétain and his connections to the Catholic church.¹⁴⁷ Ernst made the call for the family to head to Saint-Germain. Having connections there, he knew the family would be safe.

Within Saint-Germain was a hotel by the name of Hotel Martin. The owner, a gentleman named Mr. Jacobowsky, housed several refugees from different prefects. By the time the Loewys reached Saint-Germain, he had already ran out of rooms, but

¹⁴⁶ Joan Ringelheim, "Oral History Interview with Fred Loewy," transcript of an oral history conducted 2005 by Joan Ringelheim, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Collection, Washington D.C. 2005, p. 77-78 and Document, "The Loewy Family Resistance in France (3)" Box 02-14, Folder 2007.026.003.012, Loewy Collection. Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archives. Phoenix, AZ, and Document, "Fred's Letter to Serge Molostoff (7)" Box 02-11, Folder 2007.026.001.092. Loewy Collection. Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archives. Phoenix, AZ.

¹⁴⁷ Nicholas Atkin, "The Challenge to Laïcité: Church, State and Schools in Vichy France, 1940–1944." *The Historical Journal* 35, no. 1 (1992): 154

knowing they were coming he set them up in the annex of the hotel. When they settled, their next contact introduced themselves. Known as Mademoiselle Metge, she took it upon herself to help the family become "Catholics." Taking them to service, teaching them the sacraments and communion, and how to act Catholic. Mademoiselle Metge bought the family some time, helping them slowly integrate themselves into their new community.¹⁴⁸ However, being a new family arriving in an uncertain time, especially in a small village, people noticed and became weary. Employment was hard to come by for them as well. Fred and Elias found work as woodcutters, working long hours with very little pay. While Max found employment with a farm, he experienced the same as Fred and Elias. Max tended to all aspects of the farm including upkeep, landscaping, and cattle care. Erna worked as a domestic for the local Catholic Pastor and his family, but only earned food and no pay.¹⁴⁹ These new employments helped the family slowly become part of the village, hiding out as a Catholic refugee family, mostly keeping to themselves while trying their best not to draw attention to themselves. Despite their efforts, Vichy and Germany were collaborating on a new order that would upset their peace.

¹⁴⁸ Document, "The Loewy Family Resistance in France (3)." Box 02-11, Folder 2007.026.001.092. Loewy Collection. Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archives. Phoenix, AZ and Document, "Fred's Letter to Serge Molostoff (8)" Box 02-11, Folder 2007.026.001.092. Loewy Collection. Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archives. Phoenix, AZ.

¹⁴⁹ Ringelheim, "Oral History Interview with Fred Loewy," 81 and Document, "The Loewy Family Resistance in France (5)." Box 02-11, Folder 2007.026.001.092. Loewy Collection. Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archives. Phoenix, AZ.

Germany's occupation of Vichy in 1942 accelerated many programs that had been in the works between the two countries. By September, Germany began putting pressure on Vichy for laborers to fill in ranks lost for the war effort. Early 1943 Vichy enacted the *Service du Travail Obligatoire* or STO. Any able-bodied man between the ages of 18 and 50 was subject to mandatory labor for the German war effort. The initial goal was to send an immediate 250,000 workers to Germany by mid-March.¹⁵⁰ With Max now 19 years old, he was within the age range for mandatory labor. When Vichy enacted the STO, Elias and Erna made their way to the city of Florac, the sub-prefecture of Lozère. The two attempted to talk to the deputy prefect in charge of sending Max away, hoping to get a deferment. When it was looking unlikely, Erna blurted out that they were Jewish, and sending Max would most likely cause him to be arrested. Following a tense moment, the official told Erna he was glad she told him the truth and would find a way to prevent his departure. A few weeks later, the deputy director arrived in St-Germain to conduct a census for the STO. When finding Erna, he told her he found a way around. Since they were Alsatians, according to their false identifications, they were exempt from compulsory work as well as working for the Organization Todt.¹⁵¹ With having two sons

¹⁵⁰ Harry R. Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis: Rural Resistance in Southern France, 1942-1944*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2011, 19

¹⁵¹ Document. "Letter to Max from Commisarait General." (translated from French). Loewy Collection. Box 02-10, Folder 2007.026.004.008. Arizona Jewish Historical Society. Phoenix, AZ. Letter from a Mr. Morneau, which states, "For exemption from German or Todt, the Service du Travail Obligatoire showing proof of being Alsatian in accordance with the instruction." And Document. "Fred's Letter to Serge Molostoff." Lowey Collection. Box 02-10. Folder 2007.026.001.092. Arizona Jewish Historical Society. Phoenix, AZ

around the age of compulsory work, people around the village started to become unsure of their new neighbors. In the Spring of 1943, French police came to the Loewy's house during the middle of the day. At the time, only Erna and Berthe were home, and the inspectors did not push the issue too much. However, they were warned that the inspectors were on the alert for suspicious peoples in the village. With a letter in hand for Max, they were satisfied and went on their way.¹⁵² Things returned to some peacefulness for the Loewys following this incident; however, it became clear that they were to keep an even lower profile.

Joining the Resistance

Life in St-Germain continued to be extremely difficult for the family. Working long hours while making little money, there were plenty of hungry nights. Stories of weight loss from each family member carried the connotation of the times. Again, evidence to this family's resilience to continue to survive against odds stacked against them. By 1943, the war was shifting slowly toward the Allies they were making gains in North Africa, Italy, and the Soviet Union. German occupation in France was still stringent, and resistance fighters were doing their best to make life miserable for the occupiers. In April of that year, the Loewy's lives once again got flipped over. Now firmly under German occupation and direct collaboration from Vichy, the pressure was being placed heavily on citizens to perform their duties for the state. Reports of dissidents

¹⁵² Ringelheim, "Oral History Interview with Fred Loewy," and Document. "Fred's Letter to Serge Molostoff (12)." Loewy Collection. Box 02-11. Folder 2007.026.001.092. Arizona Jewish Historical Society. Phoenix, AZ.

reached area officials resulting in a visit from a *Feldgendarmerie* patrol (German military police). As the group patrolled the streets searching for those causing the problems, they came under fire from an invisible enemy. A short firefight led to the death of four Germans. Emerging from their concealed position was a small number of resistance fighters who claimed their prize of German weapons and provisions.¹⁵³ More *Feldgendarmerie* arrived later that night, knocking on the door of the Loewy's home. After forcing their way in, the unit began interrogating the family. Questioning them if they were members of the resistance, terrorists, or knew who was responsible. Others searched the home looking for anything out of the ordinary. Again, their false identifications were put to the test, each with the last name Heiberger, Catholics from Alsace. Within the tense moment, Fred caught a glimpse of one officer searching in a cupboard under the stairs. Within the cupboard, under a leather pouch, were the identification cards of the Loewy's, Jews from Alsace. For reasons unknown, the officer did not search too closely. Without any proof, the men left the Loewys to be.¹⁵⁴ Between the poor economic conditions and the constant fear of being discovered, the two Loewy boys felt it was their responsibility to take back some control. On the outskirts of town, in

¹⁵³ Ringelheim, "Oral History Interview with Fred Loewy," 92 and Document. "Fred's Letter to Serge Molostoff (13)." Loewy Collection. Box 02-11. Folder 2007.026.001.092. Arizona Jewish Historical Society. Phoenix, AZ.

¹⁵⁴ Ringelheim, "Oral History Interview with Fred Loewy," 93-95 and Document. "Fred's Letter to Serge Molostoff (14)." Loewy Collection. Box 02-11. Folder 2007.026.001.092. Arizona Jewish Historical Society. Phoenix, AZ, and Document. "Max Loewy I.D. Card (Forged)." Loewy Collection. Box 02-15, Folder 2007.026.005.027. Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archive. Phoenix, AZ, and Archive Folder. "Copies of Forged I.D. Cards." Loewy Collection. Box 02-15, Folder 2007.026.005.028. Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archive. Phoenix, AZ

the forest, resided a former camp for the Chantiers de Jeunesse, or children's camp.¹⁵⁵ The camp housed the local resistance group, known as the Maquis de Saint-Germain-de-Calberte. By May 1943, the Loewy boys were now official part of the Maquis.

From its onset, small groups throughout Vichy began to push against the STO and collaboration with Germany, beginning the early stages of passive resistance to the Vichy and German governments. Those who refused service were threatened with immediate transit to Germany, setting the image that the STO was a punishment and not part of national pride or duty to country.¹⁵⁶ Lozère became an early hotbed for defiance to the STO as officials and the police in the prefect witnessed several runaways who made life difficult for Vichy. While attempting to capture those called to work, local officials ran into an unwelcoming community not willing to collaborate to help find those on the run. Reports returned to the prefecture and Laval about the unpopularity of the order within the small rural regions of France, with Lozère being a central focal point.¹⁵⁷ The first months of refusal to the STO became the beginnings of the Maquis also including other groups on the run: anti-fascists, immigrant workers, Spaniards, and Jews. From these groups came a new aggressive and combative spirit willing to take on any occupiers. The romantic view of rural resistance was born. Phrases like *Prendre le maquis, le maquis,* and *la maquisards* became synonymous to those in rural regions of France. Deriving

¹⁵⁵ Document. "Fred's Letter to Serge Molostoff (12)," Loewy Collection. Box 02-11. Folder 2007.026.001.092. Loewy Collection, Arizona Jewish Historical Society. Phoenix, AZ and Ringelheim, "Oral History Interview with Fred Loewy," 96

¹⁵⁶ Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis*, 20

¹⁵⁷ Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis*, 25

from the Corsican and Italian language, maquis translates to woods or scrubland, which suited the resistors perfectly. They would use the land to their advantage. Mountainous regions lush with brush or forest, ideal for concealment, allowing ample opportunity for continued escape from officials attempting to place them in forced labor.¹⁵⁸

Escape and refuge were to remain two of the permanent characteristics of the Maquis in 1943. The theme of escape from Vichy detention, from prison camps, or the STO, perpetuates within the Maquis in strategies of retreat and policies of dispersion. The language of flight might theoretically appear negative, but for the Maquis, the policy equated a new sense of duty. Throughout the summer and autumn 1943, the nature of many Maquis bases was governed by circumstances created by Vichy's hunt for them than anything resembling military logistics.¹⁵⁹ Early on for the Maquis, citizens and laborers within villages were against the actions of the resistors. Not for loyalty to Vichy, but for fear of attracting the attention of officials. There was a delicate balance naturally created by these villages and towns. Like many other agricultural or mining communities, certain levels of daily work and collection had to meet goals. If that is upset, it draws attention to those keeping track of daily reserves, notably Vichy officials. Trust had to be built by the Maquis. For some, they were not part of these villages or towns. They were outsiders, sometimes of different nationalities, or from the Occupied Zone. They relied on the efforts of locals to keep them safe and concealed. If they did anything to upset those they were protecting, there was a distinct possibility they would be exposed.

¹⁵⁸ Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis*. 29

¹⁵⁹ Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis*. 45

By 1943, the Maquis were starting to gain the affection of locals. Tighter restrictions by Vichy and the occupation by Germany pushed the majority to their side. Now, the task was not just about survival, but about active resistance and protection of the regions.¹⁶⁰ The period in which the Maquis were unstable was when two vital discoveries were made: the importance of keeping a group together by tactical mobility and the need for a sensitive mixture of dependence on the local community and self-reliance. Encountering differences from one village to another, the Maquis adjusted its life not only to the varying rigor of the hunt but also the shifts and variations in the local response. By the end of the year, few Maquis groups had any excuse for underestimating the ruse, guile, and instinct for self-preservation on which the hunted depended.¹⁶¹

Using the theory presented by Werner Rings and furthered by Michael Marrus, the Loewy boys and Maquis participated in “offensive resistance”. This included combat and the “carrying on of military operations, usually by unconventional means either underground or in partisan formations.” The majority of offensive resistance did not include soldering but involved more of the idea of surviving underground, with instances of engaging in armed resistance toward differing forces. Combat was rare for these groups on the grounds of an uneven playing field along with the fear of reprisals.¹⁶² For

¹⁶⁰ Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis*, 40-42

¹⁶¹ Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis*, 47

¹⁶² Michael R. Marrus, “Jewish Leadership and the Holocaust: The Case of France.” *The Victims of the Holocaust, Volume 2*, (Jan. 1995), 100-101

the Maquis and the Loewys, those differing forces were the occupying Germans and Vichy government.

While Vichy may not have been considered an occupation force, their collaboration with Germany pushed those who joined into the category of a resistor. In June 1942, Pierre Laval announced that French citizens should volunteer to help with the German war effort with their labor, in return for French Prisoners of War. Over time, as meeting quotas failed, Vichy began hunting down men used for labor. Within the free zone men went into hiding, banding together to survive became the simple beginning of the Maquis. Their early objective was not to liberate their country from occupiers but to resist being sent to Germany to work. By 1943, when numbers had not been met, Vichy stepped up their hunt. Unfortunately for Vichy and Germany, the hills and mountains of southern France made it easy for the Maquis to go into hiding and survive.

It became a numbers game, with Vichy being forced with the decision to either wreck its economy by draining entire villages of people or continue searching for those requested for labor. Local police used informants and bribes with the hopes of getting information on the whereabouts. The "hearts and minds" campaign was working for the Maquis, however, and citizens began either not speaking to Vichy officials, or providing false information as their way of passive resistance. The end of 1943 witnessed frustrations boiling over on the side of the Germans. Within the agreement of the STO were stipulations that French police, or gendarmeries, were to take charge of rounding up working men. When it became evident that was not the case, with many units refusing to participate or working with resistance groups, Germany began to respond. The foundation of which Vichy had created with good faith toward Germany was beginning

to crack. Reports of German police and military units firing on and killing Gendarmerie poured out. Now that Germany was beginning to attack French citizens, many Maquis refused to sit back. They now had their opportunity to garner more support while gaining numbers in their ranks. These attacks became rallying cries for the Maquis, with the idea of active resistance becoming realistic. Joining the Maquis no longer meant running and hiding from the STO, but now pushing back against the Germans who were attacking their fellow countrymen:

So, you want to escape to the Maquis? Well, you may think the Maquis is just a hide-out, the ideal place where you can happily wait until the end of it all, a real easy life. Think again! Going to the Maquis means a solemn commitment to the Resistance army.... it is sleeping rough, going hungry, and submitting to iron discipline.¹⁶³

By the end of 1943, it was becoming evident that Vichy was losing its grip. Resistance activities across the country were ever-increasing, demoralizing the gendarmerie and volunteer police forces. Along with increasing German intervention, demoralized Vichy officials did what they believed best; they stepped aside. This does not include all of those serving Vichy, with the milice and militarized wing of Vichy holding strong. Knowing they were playing a losing battle of retention, made way for

¹⁶³ Archives du Nîmes tract quoted in a report on the Maquis of the Corps Francs de Liberation Nîmes, 1944, and Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis*, 60

German officials and the Groupes Mobiles de Réserves (GMR) to combat the numerous resistance groups in the unoccupied zone.

1943 witnessed the victory at Stalingrad and the Allied landing at Sicily and Anzio. Hopes were also high that the Allies were planning their invasion of France. That hope began to dwindle the more prolonged the expectation hung over the minds of French citizens. Vichy took advantage of the lower morale to uplift the country to believe in the success of what Vichy was becoming. Officials promised those that returned from hiding that their work would be designated in France instead of Germany and a promise of amnesty from punishment. Some of those in hiding returned to villages to begin their STO. Vichy responded to the shift by raising its militancy against the resistance, enacting anti-terrorism laws on January 20, 1944. These laws would bring anyone caught resisting the state to trial and sentenced to death for acts against Vichy.¹⁶⁴ Ultimately, this ploy roused out many who were in hiding, but not those of the Maquis.

Vichy and Germany understood who the main targets for the resistance were. They were typically students, able-bodied men, and immigrant workers, all of which were essential to the STO. These groups were put subjected to non-stop work through various assignments both in France and Germany. Serving their allotted time, they returned to their barracks, only to be assigned to their next job without heading home. Vichy conducted actions to keep citizens away from the Maquis. In many cases, this

¹⁶⁴ Kedward. *In Search of the Maquis*. 75 and Chambard, Claude. *The Maquis: A History of the French Resistance Movement*. Trans by Elaine P. Halperin, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1976), 55-56

backfired. When overworking these groups, many defected, only to join up with resistance groups hiding in the mountains or woods.¹⁶⁵

Though the Maquis were a primary resistance force within the rural regions of Occupied France and Vichy, others were performing their brand of resistance as well. Notably, the Francs-Tireurs et Partisans (communists) were nearly on par when it came to the size of the Maquis. Their roots began around 1939 when Édouard Daladier's government sought to extinguish communist ideology and uprisings from his government as well as in France. Major leaders of the French Communist Party were arrested, while others went into hiding beginning their history of resistance. During the invasion of France, communists chose neutrality under the guidance of the Comintern in Moscow, who had a non-aggression pact with Germany. Following occupation, fractures began to occur between those who were against German collaboration and those who chose a line of neutrality. This stance changed when Germany invaded the Soviet Union, setting the stage of active resistance against the Germans in Vichy and Occupied France.¹⁶⁶ In some respects, the FTP mirrored the journey of the Maquis. Between 1941 and 1943, most FTP groups were lowly armed and trained, leading to several debacles and repercussions against civilians by the Germans. Once consolidated in 1943, and slowly building a stronger fighting force, the FTP continued their active resistance with greater success. Leaders of the Maquis looked to the FTP for how to properly act as a combat force.

¹⁶⁵ Kedward. *In Search of the Maquis*. 78 and Chambard, *The Maquis: A History of the French Resistance Movement*. Translated by Elaine P. Halperin, 62

¹⁶⁶ Jackson, *France: The Dark Years, 1940-1944*, 114-116

Distrust grew between the FTP and Maquis between 1943 and 1944 when it was becoming clear that visions of a post-war France differed.¹⁶⁷

For the FTP, claims that the Maquis and other resistance groups were wasting time and hoarding resources to use against the Germans. By keeping them waiting for “D-Day” and giving into Allied ambitions and agents, they were not representing the voice and interests of the working people of France. The FTP would become a hinderance for the Maquis in 1944, as their actions started becoming dangerous for French civilians and threatening a communist revolution in France.¹⁶⁸

For the first months in the Maquis, the Loewy boys did not see much in the way of combat. Their experience paralleled those of other Maquis across the area. Weapons were hard to come by, and ammunition was even more challenging to find. Resourcefulness was another quality of the Maquis, especially those in Fred and Max's unit. A differing characteristic the Maquis exhibited was their uniforms. Those who fought with the Maquis dawned on the old French army khakis. Near Saint-Germain was the city of Saint-Jean-du-Gard where the Paulhan factory was located. During the night of January 15, 1944, the Maquis raided the factory yielding 1,900 pairs of pants, 1,400 jackets, 1,600 tent canvases, and several other clothing materials calculated worth over 800,000 francs. It was a bloodless raid and did not inflict any damages, partly because the officials of the factory collaborated with the Maquis. The owner was able to write a formal complaint to the prefecture and collect on damages; in return, the Maquis were

¹⁶⁷ Kedward. *In Search of the Maquis*, 47

¹⁶⁸ Kedward. *In Search of the Maquis*, 126

able to get the uniforms and materials needed.¹⁶⁹ Other events like this happened, including a raid on town halls throughout Lozère and Gard. When Vichy and Germany requisitioned weapons, they were locked away in town halls or other government offices. Like the raid in Saint-Jean, officials worked with the Maquis; local officials worked with the resistance to help arm and supply them any way they could.¹⁷⁰ While these raids did their part to give the Maquis a chance, the summer of 1944 saw the support they needed come from the Allies.

The Armistice of 1940 signaled a new era of military strategy for the British. In the background of that, new strategic planning birthed the Special Operations Executive (SOE). Allied leaders tasked the SOE with preparing covert operations to disrupt the German on mainland Europe. The SOE's efforts became solidified when the Allies began the planning for the invasion of Europe. In conjunction with the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the two departments began planning to support partisan efforts.¹⁷¹ Early planning in 1942 was met with difficulties as the ability to make contact or infiltrate Europe by the Allies was nearly impossible. Efforts began to show by 1943, as connections made with local resistance groups began to strengthen through the use of

¹⁶⁹ Document. "Prefect to Minister of Interior, Jan 1944." Archives of the Gard. Location, CA 668. And Kedward. *In Search of the Maquis*. 83 and Ringelheim, "Oral History Interview with Fred Loewy," 96

¹⁷⁰ Ringelheim, "Oral History Interview with Fred Loewy," 103; Kedwar, *In Search of the Maquis*. 87 and Chambard, *The Maquis: A History of the French Resistance Movement*, Trans Elaine P. Halperin, 73

¹⁷¹ Benjamin F. Jones, *Eisenhower's Guerrillas: the Jedburgh's, the Maquis, and the Liberation of France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 25

secret communications, notably with BBC Radio. By late 1943 the two departments began training specialized groups of Commonwealth, American, and French soldiers with the task of linking up with resistance forces. These three-person teams were to parachute into France, Holland, and Belgium, bring together resistance forces into larger fighting units, train these units on the art of sabotage and harassment, and support Allied invasion efforts.¹⁷² Americans began training at Quantico, Virginia, and New York City in the Spring of 1943, selecting volunteers of soldiers who were multilingual and well-traveled. Once initial training was done in 1943, graduates were sent to Britain to begin training and preparations for their missions. The name of the operation took on the name of the region where the training occurred, Jedburgh. The name "Jedburgh" derived from a twelfth-century border war between the British and Scots in the Jedburgh area of Scotland. In this conflict, a group of local Scots conducted guerrilla warfare. By May 1944, the first teams of Operation Jedburgh began making their way to the northern coast of France in preparations of the Normandy landings. Waiting were other teams waiting for their missions.

Allied leaders approved the invasion of southern France on July 2, 1944.

Immediately, disagreements between Churchill and Eisenhower occurred. Churchill wanted to use the forces set aside for this invasion for a future invasion of northern Italy or the Balkans. Eisenhower did not budge, instead of telling Churchill to take it up with Roosevelt if he wanted to make this a political matter. A week before the invasion,

¹⁷² Aaron Bank, *From OSS to Green Berets: The Birth of Special Forces*. New York: Pocket Books, 1987. 43 and Benjamin, *Eisenhower's Guerrillas: the Jedburgh's, the Maquis, and the Liberation of France*, 27

Churchill reached out to Roosevelt's aide Harry Hopkins, hoping to make his case. Instead, Hopkins gave Churchill a stern rejection. Hopkins noted that shifting material and men for other offenses would not occur, as things were moving for the invasion of southern France. Hopkins finished by saying: "The French will arise and abyssinate large numbers of Germans, including, I trust, Monsieur Laval." (Note: Hopkins intended to associate the word abyssinate to connect the fate of the Wehrmacht to the Italians in Abyssinia the year before, who were beaten back by African forces on the Horn of Africa.)¹⁷³ Team Packard of Operation Jedburgh parachuted into the Lozère and Gard regions in late July. Its team consisted of its commander, American Captain Aaron Bank, French liaison Lieutenant Henri Denis, and radio operator Lieutenant F. Montfort.¹⁷⁴ Their initial mission was to link up with local resistance leaders and consolidate their forces under one fighting force—however, Cpt. Bank arrived to a pleasant surprise.

Under the orders of Charles de Gaulle from London, through the use of the BBC, Maquis units throughout France joined forces to implement a new army, the French Forces of the Interior, leading up to the invasion of northern France. General Marie-Pierre Koenig took command of this new army, who made the call for resistance forces to unify in their regions and to comply with Allied forces in the subsequent operations.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ Benjamin, *Eisenhower's Guerrillas: the Jedburgh's, the Maquis, and the Liberation of France*, 206-208

¹⁷⁴ Benjamin, *Eisenhower's Guerrillas: the Jedburgh's, the Maquis, and the Liberation of France*, 304. Note about Captain Aaron Bank. He would later go on to become the founder of the American Green Berets and participated in a number of special forces missions for the United States Army.

¹⁷⁵ Gordon A. Harrison, *Cross-Channel Attack: The Official US Army History of the Operation Overlord D-Day Invasion of Normandy*, (St. Petersburg, FL: Red and Black

Left out of this grouping were those who were part of any resistance group not aligned with the future vision of France, including the FTP. When Bank and his team landed outside of the mountain city of Alés, the commander of the resistance unit in the region, Commandant Raymond, greeted them. The commandant explained to Bank of de Gaulle's order and the Maquis of St. Croix, Vallée Française, St. Etienne, Vérbon, Moissac, and St. Germain have come together to form the 32nd Corps Franc de la Liberation. The 32nd was to be led by a former high school teacher and reserve artillery officer, Captain René Viala.¹⁷⁶ This pleasant encounter became the benefit of Team Packard's mission, which was to begin training the 32nd in the use of weapons, explosives, and the art of sabotage. The following weeks' Bank and his team traveled across the Lozère region training men for the upcoming support they were to give for the invasion of southern France. Within one of these groups was Max and Fred, who received training from Cpt. Bank himself.¹⁷⁷ Team Packard's overall mission was to disrupt the German retreat from the west and up through the Rhône Valley, preventing them from linking up with German armies retreating from the northern coast. In the Rhône Valley was the city of Alés, a major transportation hub that connected the central part of France to the southern coast. Bank and the 32nd set their sights on liberating the city.

Publishers, 2013), 206-207 and Benjamin, *Eisenhower's Guerrillas: the Jedburghs, the Maquis, and the Liberation of France*, 212

¹⁷⁶ Bank, *From OSS to Green Berets*, 48 and Document, "After Action Report by Captain Viala." (translated from French). Box 02-11, Folder 2007.026.001.065. Loewy Collection. Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archive. Phoenix, AZ.

¹⁷⁷ Bank, *From OSS to Green Berets*, 53 and Ringelheim, "Oral History Interview with Fred Loewy," 105-107.

Between March and July 1944, Vichy ordered the construction of defensive positions around several important buildings and avenues in the city of Alés. The reasons behind this build-up was the understanding of the importance of cities like Alés, Toulouse, and Nimês as vital arteries for supplies and troop movements. The order included heightened protection of supplies moving through Alés, including oil, food, and petrol. At the checkpoints and strong points were sandbags with machine guns manned by the Vichy military to work in conjunction with the Wehrmacht. However, by mid-1944, Vichy witnessed a mass exodus of local officials, including mayors, prefects, and gendarmeries. Locals passively resisted orders from Vichy, finding ways to disrupt the construction of these defensive positions in Alés, while disrupting the travel of the Germans through impromptu roadblocks, misinformation, and false directions. By July, this left Alés poorly prepared for a possible attack by Resistance groups, including the FFI.¹⁷⁸ On the morning of August 15th, the Allies began their landings on the southern coast of France. Landings occurred on beaches near Cavalaire-Sur-Mer, Saint-Tropez, and Saint-Raphaël, with the main forces being from the United States, United Kingdom, and France. From their onsets, the landings were a massive success. German resistance was overwhelmed by the forces of the Allied landing armies, air forces, and navy that punished each sector. Casualties from the Allied side was minimal, with only 95 killed and 385 wounded on the first day.¹⁷⁹ Reports of the landings reached towns, including Alés.

¹⁷⁸ Kedward, *In Search of the Maquis*, 198

¹⁷⁹ Steve Zaloga and John White. *Operation Dragoon 1944: Frances Other D-Day*. (London: Osprey Publishing, 2013), 41-50

The 32nd Goes to Battle

Operation Dragoon began on August 15, 1944, with landings on the southeastern coast of France. Landings were met with light resistance from the Germans, who were ill-prepared for the size of the landing force. German forces in the region were primarily there for rest and rearmaments after serving on the Eastern Front; they were not in a position to take on a massive Allied landing force. Two days later, on August 17th, a general order was given to German forces in southern France to begin retreating into Germany.¹⁸⁰ Wehrmacht forces hastily retreated from west to east toward the Rhône Valley and Lyon. Montpellier was evacuated on August 20th, followed by Nimes on August 21st. In response to the rapidly changing situation, FFI forces begin their attacks on the retreating Germans on August 19th. The 32nd, Fred and Max's unit, arrive on the outskirts of Alés on August 21st with the expectation of a fight. Their commanders and Bank's Jedburgh team survey the city with cautious uncertainty. Abandoned command posts and defensive positions sat unsettling for them, but the order is given to go into the city. Instead of gunfire and explosions, the unit is met with cheers. According to civilians, the Germans already retreated days before. Instead of joining in the festivities, the 32nd set up command in Alés to prepare for future German units. Using Town Hall as a command post, while the medical team builds a first-aid station at the Hotel du Luxembourg the 32nd began preparations for operations.¹⁸¹ The main fighting body of the

¹⁸⁰ Steve Zaloga and John White. *Operation Dragoon 1944: Frances Other D-Day*. 51

¹⁸¹ Dominique Magnant, "La Bataille D'Alés." 20

32nd was made up of three groups totaling 130 men armed with a varying type of rifles and automatic weapons. A series of drops by the Allies armed the 32nd with German, Italian, and Russian rifles along with French and American light machine guns.¹⁸² Reports made their way to the 32nd, stating the Germans still held the road between Alés and Montpellier, as well as several villages along the corridor. Fred tells of the attack he orders on German units in this area near Saint-Christol and the Tavernes. According to his accounts, he built up a small fighting force consisting of members of the FFI, FTP and Alés civilians. Making their way south down the road, they encounter a German convoy set up outside of a farm in the village of Saint-Christol. Ordering an attack on the Germans, a firefight ensues that sends the Germans into retreat. Split into two groups, Fred and Max take command of each separately. In military terms, the two attempt a pincer movement, a tactic widely used by the Soviets on the Eastern Front to encircle the Germans. Fred's unit is caught out in the open, with its only cover being grapevines or an orchard. Fire is directed toward his unit until Max's unit gives up its cover. During the firefight, the Germans offer a surrender. Fred explains that he believed this to be a trap, which it was. One of Fred's men, François Lechapt, stands up to take prisoners only to be shot in the leg, leading to the rest of the men hitting the ground for cover.¹⁸³ Given cover, Fred made his way to the farmhouse with a plan to reach the attic and give better fire support. By this point, the majority of the German unit has already retreated in their troop

¹⁸² Ringelheim, "Oral History Interview Fred Loewy," 106

¹⁸³ Document. "After Action Report by Captain Viala." (translated from French). Box 02-11, Folder 2007.026.001.065. Lowey Collection. Arizona Jewish Historical Society. Phoenix, AZ, and Ringelheim, "Oral History Interview Fred Loewy," 115-116

transports. The skirmish left the 32nd with one wounded, later to pass away from the wounds, along with a number of German provisions left behind in the rushed retreat. The Aléstian came out unscathed, where the members of the FTP took off during the battle, only to be later captured and executed by the Germans.¹⁸⁴

Though it seems like a small harassment by the Maquis, this skirmish forwarded the roles of the Loewy brothers. Both were promoted to Sub-Lieutenant of the 32nd for their actions. According to documents, due to their quick thinking and judgement, their actions gave the 32nd the security and time needed to set up a proper defense and command post in Alés. With this promotion, Fred Loewy had now become the youngest Lieutenant in the French Army at the age of 18.¹⁸⁵ The following week witnessed a few more small skirmishes along with sabotage and disruption against the Germans. For the 32nd, all of their training was put to the test at the end of that week.

Battle of Saint-Just-et-Vacquières

With Alés fully liberated, Aaron Bank and his team set up command at the local post office. From the onset of the Allied invasion, the hope was to have the U.S. 7th Army drive up the Rhône Valley to link up with Allied forces making their way south from the

¹⁸⁴ Document, "Fight of St-Christol-les-Ales" (Translated from French). Box 02-11, Folder 2007.026.001.065. Loewy Collection. Arizona Jewish Historical Society. Phoenix, AZ, and Ringelheim, "Oral History Interview Fred Loewy," 117

¹⁸⁵ Document. "Document Confirming Promotion of Max Lowey." Box 02-11, Folder 2007.026.001.038. Loewy Collection. Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archives. Phoenix, AZ and Document. "Promotion of Fred Lowey." Box 02-10, Folder 2007.026.004.008. Loewy Collection. Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archives. Phoenix, AZ.

Normandy invasions. 7th Army General Alexander Patch would meet with Patton's 3rd Army and stop the German retreat from the west. Here, the two generals had differing ideas for how to implement the FFI. Patton wanted the FFI to protect his flank, something the Maquis were not equipped to do. Patch sought to use the FFI the way their commanders back in London wanted, for intelligence and harassment. The German 11th Panzer were in the south along with a number of Reserve Infantry and Mountain Light Infantry Divisions. The Maquis were the primary weapon to keep tabs on the "armored".¹⁸⁶ Between keeping eyes on their movements, they were to be used to harass their ability to retreat.¹⁸⁷ Within the apparatus came reports of a group within the 11th Panzer making their way toward the Rhône Valley. Initial estimates were around 2,000 motorized and horse-drawn soldiers. Captain Viala ordered a small group to set up outside of Alés to prepare for the German column approaching. Originally planned as an ambush, only 20 soldiers were set up on the roads overlooking the road. As the first wave of Germans approached, one of the French machine guns fired too early. The Germans dug into defensive positions and began returning fire.¹⁸⁸

With a substantial stream of gunfire heading toward the French position, the Germans attempted to flank the group on the left side of their position. Fred and Max

¹⁸⁶ Benjamin, *Eisenhower's Guerrillas: the Jedburghs, the Maquis, and the Liberation of France*. 205. These armored division were more in name than practice. Being pulled off the front lines of the Eastern Front following battles at Kursk.

¹⁸⁷ Benjamin, *Eisenhower's Guerrillas: the Jedburghs, the Maquis, and the Liberation of France*. 209

¹⁸⁸ Ringelheim, "Oral History Interview with Fred Loewy," 123 and Document. "After Action Report by Captain Viala (2)." (translated from French). Box 02-11, Folder 2007.026.001.065. Lowey Collection. Arizona Jewish Historical Society. Phoenix, AZ

caught the attempt and repositioned their machine gun to stop the advancement of the Germans, inflicting several casualties. Captain Viala understood the situation was something that his soldiers were not trained to do. He ordered a runner back to Alés for reinforcements, bringing the remaining 120 members of the 32nd. At the same time Captain Bank, using his radio in town, ordered air support from an aircraft carrier off the coast. By this point, the 32nd and Germans had been fighting for over three hours, neither side giving in. An hour after the call was made, two Allied naval fighter planes arrived on the battlefield. Once acquiring the battle lines, the two planes began strafing German positions making several passes over until possibly fuel or ammunition ran low. The actions of the Allied pilots gave the 32nd a moment of exuberance, and they let it be known by jumping up and cheering on the pilots with waved handkerchiefs, caps and cheers. The Germans used this moment to their advantage and began firing mortars back at the 32nd. Shells started landing among the ranks, causing Fred to dive for cover behind large rocks. During the shelling, the Germans began their retreat. The Germans did not see the benefit of continuing this engagement. Though Alés was a major artery through the Rhône Valley, German forces were more concerned about leaving France safely than taking on needless combat and casualties against Resistance forces. This gave the 32nd the time they needed to also retreat. When arriving back in Alés, the 32nd was ordered to prepare for a counterattack, which never happened. Before setting up a new position, Captain Viala pulled Fred aside, where he gave Fred the news that Max had been killed during the shelling.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁹ Ringelheim, "Oral History Interview with Fred Loewy," 123 and Document. "After Action Report by Captain Viala (3)." (translated from French). Box 02-11, Folder

After learning of Max's death, Fred was pulled off the front lines. In total 300 Germans and later discovered Russian volunteers were captured after surrendering to the 32nd with 150 killed.¹⁹⁰ The same evening, Max was brought back to Saint-Germain along with Fred who delivered the terrible news to his family.

Life After War

Some days following the liberation of Montpellier on September 2, 1944, the Loewys arrived back to the city. Now part of the French Army, Fred was placed within military intelligence as a translator serving under General Henri Zeller with the 16th Military Region.¹⁹¹ The remaining soldiers from the 32nd were integrated into the French 81st Regiment for future actions against Germany. With Fred being the only serving son, he was not required to join his comrades and opted for stateside work.¹⁹² With the 16th

2007.026.001.065. Lowey Collection. Arizona Jewish Historical Society. Phoenix, AZ and Document. "Report from Capitaine Severac." (translated from French). Box 02-10, Folder 2007.026.004.007. Lowey Collection. Arizona Jewish Historical Society, Phoenix, AZ.

¹⁹⁰ Document. "After Action Report by Captain Viala (4)." (Translated from French). Box 02-11, Folder 2007.026.001.065. Lowey Collection. Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archives. Phoenix, AZ.

¹⁹¹ Document. "Letter from General Zeller." (Translated from French). Box 02-11, Folder 2007.026.004.037. Lowey Collection. Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archives. Phoenix, AZ, and Ringelheim, "Oral History Interview with Fred Loewy," 123

¹⁹² Ringelheim, "Oral History Interview with Fred Loewy," 124 and Magnant, "La Bataille D'Alés." 15

Military Region, Fred took charge of translating German documents and interrogating prisoners and later tasked as the company archivist and cartographer.¹⁹³

Now in Montpellier in the Spring of 1945, the Loewys witnessed people coming home from the camps that were liberated in Germany and Austria. Elias began work with local Jewish organizations to help those returning. Now the regional director of the Federation de Societies Juives de France (FSJF), Elias was tasked with helping many of those who lost everything. His tasks included recouping houses, possession, and businesses taken away by Vichy and Germany. The Federation was supported by funding from other organizations from the United States. The initial plan consisted of giving money to cover some of the costs of what was lost. Instead, Elias sought out a different way to properly hand out the money. The plan was to give the money out as no-interest loans to help people get back on their feet. According to Fred:

[They were given] a lump sum, equivalent to maybe one or three years of the charity. If they have the money, later on, they can repay it, and if not – either they can give more to other people, but if not, there you go.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹³ Document. "Lowey Family Resistance (7)." Box 02-14, Folder 2007.026.003.012. Loewy Collection. Arizona Jewish Historical Society. Phoenix, AZ, and Document "Letter from Lieutenant Moisson, Chief of the Historical Services of the Military Staff of the 16th Military Region." (Translated from French). Box 02-15, Folder 2007.026.005.006. Loewy Collection. Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archives. Phoenix, AZ.

¹⁹⁴ Ringelheim, "Oral History Interview with Fred Loewy," 135 and Document. "Letter from Federation des Societies Juives de France." (Translated from French). Box 02-10, Folder 2007.026.004.008. Loewy Collection. Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archives. Phoenix, AZ.

As the months continued, word started reaching the Loewy's about the concentration camps. Among the news reaching France, Elias came to hear that his mother, four brothers, sister, and their families were all killed in camps.¹⁹⁵

Loewys Make it to the United States

By Summer 1945, word of the work Elias was doing had begun to spread. While working in Montpellier, Elias was approached by a U.S. Army Medical Officer, Major Sol Leland. Major Leland's unit was part of the liberation of Flossenbürg camp. At the camp, Maj. Leland helped a young boy named Jacob. When Maj. Leland met Elias, he explained that the boy was the last of his entire family, and he hoped to adopt the boy back in the United States. However, Maj. Leland had orders to go to the Pacific. Elias was asked if he could help the boy get to the United States, in which Elias obliged.¹⁹⁶ While the papers were being prepared for Jacob, Elias placed him in a French school. In the meantime, Elias continued his work while also applying for French citizenship. He hoped to finally become a French citizen after nearly two decades in the country. However, he would be denied citizenship under the claim of not being "assimilated"

¹⁹⁵ Ringelheim, "Oral History Interview with Fred Loewy," 137

¹⁹⁶ Document. "Letter from Major Leland about Jacob." Box 02-10, Folder 2007.026.004.008. Loewy Collection. Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archives. Phoenix, AZ, and Ringelheim, "Oral History Interview with Fred Loewy," 138

enough for France.¹⁹⁷ Despite this disappointment, the Loewys were met with news that was much needed about the United States.

As papers were being prepared for Jacob, word reached about what the Loewys had been doing not only in Montpellier, but throughout France. Officials reached out to Elias, requesting that he return to the American consulate with information about his family in hope of possibly getting them to the United States.¹⁹⁸ For the Loewys to head to the United States several moments of luck and good fortune worked in their favor. Most important was the United States restrictions on immigration even after the war. Following World War I, the United States had effectively ended immigration to the country for anyone from Europe and Asia. The Johnson/Reed Act of 1924 further tightened restrictions by adding quotas to those coming into the United States to 150,000 a year. Until 1948 following the Displaced Persons Act did only the quota rise from 150,000 to 400,00 persons.¹⁹⁹ Because Elias was placed in charge of the care for Jacob, along with his work with Jewish organizations, and Fred being a veteran of the French Army, the United States felt he and his family could be allowed entry. Initially, Jacob was sent off

¹⁹⁷ Document. "Denial of French Citizenship." (Translated from French). Box 02-12, Folder 2007.026.005.006. Loewy Collection. Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archives. Phoenix, AZ

¹⁹⁸ Document "Visa Transmittal Letter from U.S. Consulate." Box 02-15, Folder 2007.026.005.014. Loewy Collection. Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archives. Phoenix, AZ. This document is a letter from the American Vice Consul in Marseille noting the Loewys nonpreference immigration visas.

¹⁹⁹ David M. Reimers. "Post-World War II Immigration to the United States: Americas Latest Newcomers." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 454, no. 1 (1981): 2.

in March 1946 due to a lack of space on the boats leaving France to the United States. But in May 1946 their time had come, the family made it to New York City and began their new life as American citizens.²⁰⁰ A number of advantages worked in the Loewys favor. In the face of a quota system, even after the end of the war in Europe, the family found themselves in an extremely lucky position. First off, Fred's time in the military gave the family priority boarding on boats. Secondly, the Loewys had family already in the United States that could vouch for them. Mentioned earlier, one of Berthe's brothers had made their way to the United States during the early years of Hitler's regime.

In New York, Elias opened a radio store as he had in Colmar, hiring his son to work with him. Though the new life was far more peaceful than what they had experienced, Elias began experiencing heart difficulties related to the car accident in Alsace. The family doctor pushed Elias to find a warm, dry climate to alleviate the symptoms. Elias received rejection letters from Colorado, California, and New Mexico, when asked if there was the ability to move his family and start a business. These states were not encouraging Elias to move there due to the lack of opportunity to properly open a business. However, he did receive one acceptance from the state of Arizona. At the time, the state was seeing a small population and economic boom, as more people began to make the desert their home.

²⁰⁰ Document, "Head of the Return Abroad Section." (Translated from French). Box 02-16, Folder 2. Loewy Collection. Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archives. Phoenix, AZ, and Document "Letter from the Inspector General." (Translated from French). Box 02-16, Folder 2. Loewy Collection. Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archive. Phoenix, AZ.

Phoenix witnessed rapid growth around the start of World War II in part to a number of defense contracts that set off the construction of several military bases. These included Luke Field, Williams Field, and a Naval training base at Litchfield Park. The Phoenix metropolitan area, known as the Salt River Valley, also benefited from military construction contracts with existing Valley companies. This brought in workers from around the United States who fell in favor with the region. After the war, many service members and workers brought their families to the Valley creating new permanent homes. The companies that gained military contracts during the war experienced a smooth transition from military construction to private industry, making themselves appealing to others to make their way to Phoenix. This included companies like Goodyear Aircraft, Aluminum Company of America, and Motorola who made the Valley their central hubs. With Motorola in the valley being a major radio and electronics parts manufacturer, the prospect of electronics sales became appealing for the Phoenix Chamber of commerce. Helping matters was the financial sector of Phoenix which became one of the largest west of the Rocky Mountains. Bank loans for new businesses and construction exceeded over two billion dollars in 1947.²⁰¹ Phoenix's climate became a deciding factor for many as well. The Valley saw more sunny days than any other region within the Southwest region of the United States. Even with the high temperatures

²⁰¹ Michael Konig. "Phoenix in the 1950s Urban Growth in the "Sunbelt"." *Arizona and the West* 24, no. 1 (1982): 19-21.

that were associated with those sunny days, advancements in air conditioning and water cooling made the summer months more bearable for those who arrived.²⁰²

Resilient as ever, the family made their way to Phoenix, opening up a radio and television business. Elias acquainted himself quite well within the growing Jewish community of Phoenix. His time during the war gained him a new lease on life, and he sought to share that in any capacity. By the 1950s, Elias, along with a couple of close associates, worked to create one of Phoenix's more successful institutions, the Jewish Free Loan, which provided interest-free loans to anyone in the community without a strict repayment period.²⁰³ Building off his work from France, the Jewish Free Loan was based off of the same idea he was using with the FJSF. The interest-free loans could be paid back or not, just as long as in some way the community received benefit from the money they received. Still restless, Elias wanted to provide more. Growing up in an Orthodox family, he sought to bring its teachings to the Valley. He found himself in the good company of others, including Max Jacobson and Morris Polesetsky, immigrant Jews from Eastern Europe who left before the war. Initially starting at Max's home, numbers grew for this small congregation, leading to the need for a building to call their own. By May 1954, the congregation had raised enough money to construct their synagogue. However, plans would be put on hold, as Elias succumb to the ailments he had been experiencing for some years. While serving as the first president of the congregation, Elias Lowey

²⁰² Konig. "Phoenix in the 1950s Urban Growth in the "Sunbelt"." 24

²⁰³ Document. "Copy of Articles of Incorporation of the Phoenix Jewish Free Loan." Jewish Free Loan Collection. Folder 2000.029.013.01-.05. Arizona Jewish Historical Society. Phoenix, AZ

passed away.²⁰⁴ He would never see the completion of his dream, which finished construction in 1956. In his absence, the renowned Rabbi Abraham Lincoln Krohn stepped in to see his friends' vision through. Rabbi Krohn was the spiritual leader of Phoenix's first and largest congregation, Beth Israel. During the period of growth for Beth Hebrew, Rabbi Krohn helped with financial support, as well as provided essentials, donating a plot of Beth Israel's cemetery, two Torahs, candelabras, and an Ark. These small acts contribute to the beginnings of the memory of Beth Hebrew.

In an act of resilience, the greater Jewish community came together to help a small congregation get off its feet. In what is argued as a response to Nazism, Beth Hebrew saw its day in part due to the community's strength. Before the war, Phoenix's Jewish community was fractured. The 1930s saw the only congregation in Phoenix split due to a disagreement of teachings with Temple Beth Israel, the Reform congregation, and those who did not follow Reform Judaism, Beth El. The latter became the Conservative congregation in the Valley and still finds its home here today.²⁰⁵ Postwar America witnessed a blurring of lines among the different denominations. Jews were able to combat the legacy of Nazism by capturing their identity and strengthen it. Theologian Emil Fackenheim called this the “614th Commandment,” meaning that Jews just hold and

²⁰⁴ Document. “Organization of Beth Hebrew (1).” Beth Hebrew Collection. Box 02-32. Folder 88.138 (History, Incorporation). Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archives. Phoenix, AZ.

²⁰⁵ Document. “Beth EL History (1).” Beth El Collection. Box 04-34. Folder 2011.015.001.01-.02 (Beth El History). Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archives. Phoenix, AZ

rebuild their faith and ideologies so they may not give the Nazis a “victory.”²⁰⁶ After Elias' passing, Rabbi Krohn, formerly of Beth Israel, was approached to lead Beth Hebrew as its president, a task he gratefully accepted. The 1950s saw little in the way of Jewish communities speaking about the atrocities of the Holocaust publicly. There were no public commemorations, lectures, or real discussion about what happened to European Jews. Arguments had been made that American Jewry unintentionally kept itself blind to the Holocaust, not wanting to make it part of American Jewish public life.

Society and education in the postwar period of America were attempting to protect the younger generations from experiencing the pain and horror of the Holocaust, essentially doing damage to the memory of those who experienced such. Other reasons for possibly not bringing the attention to the Holocaust was the heightened early state of the Cold War along with the Republic of Germany becoming an ally to the United States. In a period of heightened anti-communism, any attempt to discredit or speak out against an American ally could be seen as pro-communist, bringing unwanted attention to their doorsteps. The turning point publicly for this thought process occurred at the end of the Six Day War in 1967 and the trial of Adolf Eichmann in the 1960s. Internally the Holocaust had an adverse effect for American Jewry.²⁰⁷

What the Holocaust did for American Jewry internally was blur the lines between the numerous denominations. It strengthened Jewish organizations in the United States

²⁰⁶ Emil Fackenheim, *To Mend the World: Foundations of Future Jewish Thought* (New York: Schocken, 1982), 213

²⁰⁷ Hasia R. Diner. “The Myth of Silence.” *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (55, no. 33 (April 24, 2009). 1-2

including B'nai B'rith, the American Jewish Congress, and Hadassah. American Jews began sending their children to Jewish schools while the years following World War II witnessed one of the largest growth points of synagogue membership. While there seemed to be little publicly about the tragedy from the mouth and words of American Jews, internally it tightened their bounds and brought on a new wave of Jewish pride and culture. Internally, the Jewish population in America was memorializing the victims and survivors of the Holocaust by showing its strength as a whole. The perpetual fear of prejudice continued in the postwar ear for American Jews. However, over time the barriers began to come down, though gradually and minimally in some areas. These erosions were in part to the unplanned congregation of the Jewish population in the face of tragedy. Who not only stood up to what happened to their European co-religionists, but to the weight of American prejudice.²⁰⁸ Beth Hebrew's inception speaks to the silent resilience and resistance of the Jewish faith, as a response to those who kept them down during the war years. They saw the promise of a better future through their actions of creating new. The community as a whole coming together, participating in bettering their people.

What stands out about this remarkable period was the healing of denominational lines. A Reform Rabbi helping an institute and grow an Orthodox congregation, while also meeting the needs of a growing community. There was a call from those on the east side of Phoenix who, in following strict Orthodox teachings, refused to ride on the Sabbath and chose to stay home, Beth Hebrew was the response to that. Others of the

²⁰⁸ Diner. "The Myth of Silence." 4-6

community would also join in to help, including Charles Korricks of Korricks New York Department Store, and other affluent members of the Valley.²⁰⁹ Congregation Beth Hebrew's members were not the more well off compared to their counterparts in the region, nor were they the youngest. Primarily, its congregates came from Eastern Europe as immigrants who made their way to Phoenix, many in the same way the Loweyes had. This age discrepancy would play as its pitfall, as the congregation had difficulties in attracting younger members who sought more Reform teachings by the 1970s.²¹⁰ Phoenix's rapid growth by the mid-century played a prominent role within Jewish life as well. The community sought to follow the synagogues along with the community centers, eventually making their way north toward Scottsdale, where today resides the Jewish Community Center, Beth Israel, and Beth El.

Seeking more suburban lifestyles, Jews left Phoenix for Scottsdale by the late 1970s, leaving behind their inner-city dwellings, as well as Beth Hebrew. The congregation closed its doors in 1977, and its remaining congregates merged with Beth El. The story of Beth Hebrew congregation carries with it the story of the Loewys and its congregates. Resilience and renewal as the congregation as a whole refused to back down, seeing through the rise of their new place of worship, in it they experience a new

²⁰⁹ Document, "Phoenix Jewish News about Purchase of Building," Beth Hebrew Collection. Box 02-31. Folder 88.138 (History, Incorporation). Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archives. Phoenix, AZ.

²¹⁰ Document. "More history from Fred to the AZJHS (3)." Beth Hebrew Collection. Box 02-32. Folder 88.138 (History, Incorporation). Arizona Jewish Historical Society Archives. Phoenix, AZ.

outlook on life following the terrors of Europe, proving that through the ashes will come new.

Conclusion

By using the Loewys as an agent across several periods and locations of the Jewish experience during the early 20th century, the themes of resilience, rescue, and resistance are shown repeatedly. They brought an intimate and detailed view of the trials of Jews attempting to find their place in states and regions who pushed against them. Their ability to survive what was against them, and to eventually make their way to the United States while finding success and security, is a testament to theirs and Jewish resilience.

For Elias, the most significant testament to his resilience was the numerous networks he found himself apart of, or created, while in Europe. Starting with life in Alsace, joining local Jewish organizations, and quickly integrating himself and his family into the community. The lessons he learned there carried on to Montpellier, building an underground with locals and Camille Ernst. That network saved the lives of many, later becoming what Elias built in Montpellier in their return in 1945. The ability to adapt to numerous regions is also a testament to the family's resilience. When it came to life in Frankfurt, Elias probably knew nothing about the culture, but sure enough, he was able to find slight success in the city and begin his family. The same could be said in Alsace and later in St. Germain when they had to conceal their identities as Catholics and under a new name. Ultimately, it was that resilience that paid off in the end, leading to their immigration to the United States and a place that the family could call a stable home.

This theme plays into the others within this research, as rescue would not have been possible without it.

The story of rescue by the Loewys is one that can stand alongside the others from the Holocaust. What differentiates theirs is the concept of Jews rescuing Jews. Predominantly the story is of gentiles rescuing Jews, as noted by the award given by Yad Vashem to those gentiles recognized for rescuing Jews. Rescuing any number from a camp is a history worth mentioning. For the Loewys to rescue 1,500 and avoid both Vichy and German officials also becomes their first foray into resistance but more importantly their legacy to rescue. We witness the Loewys participating in both passive and active resistance while in Vichy. The creation of the underground in Montpellier, helping those who were rescued continue to enjoy their freedom, is the beginning of a four-year resistance to Germany and Vichy. One act does not stand out as more impactful than another. What Fred and Max did is a testament to the abilities of this family, while Elias continued his underground work wherever he was set up. This family stands out as an example of the Jewish experience in ways while showing a new perspective. Their story can carry through Beth Hebrew, which was created in the imagination of Elias, carried on through the perseverance of Fred, and ultimately saved by the Phoenix Jewish community. We can allow the building of Beth Hebrew to be now a tool of not only the memory of the Loewys, but for the Jewish experience during the early 20th century.

EPILOGUE

DIGITAL HUMANITIES: BETH HEBREW ARIZONA WEBSITE

One of the goals projected for this research was to create a digital exhibit that would bring the story of the Loewys, Beth Hebrew, and its people to the public. Creating a digital exhibition was paramount for the result of a self-guided, easily sustainable and easily available resource. Allowing for a collaborative effort between several disciplines, including history, geography, and religious studies, the hope for the online product was creating a well-rounded story and interactive experience for those who will visit it. Attached to any digital medium is explanation, historicization, translation, and analysis.²¹¹ Being that we live in a technological world, the use and need for digital humanities is becoming apparent. Therefore, having the information and materials at someone's fingertips allows for more significant learning and understanding topics including the Holocaust, Resistance, and little know histories of World War II through themes of resilience, resistance, rescue, and migration. With this site being about a family of Holocaust survivors, French Resistance fighters, Jewish advocates, Phoenix leaders, and racial integration allows those who use the website as a springboard for future research.

This project can also act as a foundation for future high school, undergraduate, and rgraduate students for their research and findings to the public, easily accessible, and allow for their work to be shown to those otherwise not visible. The digital exhibit becomes a way for students to learn about local history – Beth Hebrew – as well as a

²¹¹ Sheffer, Jolie A., and Stefanie Dennis Hunker. "Digital Curation." *Pedagogy* 19, no. 1 (January 2019): 81

range of themes from anti-Semitism, to the Holocaust, to World War II, Jewish Migration, and the growth of Phoenix. This exhibit encapsulates these themes and will springboard into other stories like the Loewys and Beth Hebrew. With the ease of a digital exhibit, it will allow for any visitor to examine and introduce themselves. Self-guided and easily available, it can become a resource that is sustainable, meaning always available and easily curated. Noting that the majority of the documents and items on the exhibit come from the Arizona Jewish Historical Societies archives will act as a draw to bring attention and traffic to their facilities.

A personal benefit of a project like this provides a foundation for a new, growing, and rapidly changing job market. Within the veil of academic studies are outdated modes of apprenticeship and training. While these studies provide a student with the resources of academia, at some point, academia will have to give in to change, especially within the humanities. Modes of research are everchanging, including digital libraries, journal articles at the ready, and lectures provided by video. The direction the humanities and history are trending toward is evident. Similar works for comparison includes Walt Whitman Archives, Amy E. Earhart's project on Alex Haley's notes for his biography on Malcolm X at Columbia University, and the University of Houston's Digital History

exhibit on the Civil War and Reconstruction.²¹² The best comparison comes from the Oregon Historical Society's Oregon Women During World War II digital exhibit.²¹³

The Oregon Historical Society holds thousands of records and hundreds of oral histories with some available on their digital history website, the Oregon History Project.²¹⁴ The exhibit on women during World War II in Oregon follows a structure that we strive for in ours. Stories include women who worked in the shipyard, ordnance depot, Women's Land Army, Red Cross, Native Americans, African Americans, and a spy. The site is broken down into several categories, followed by a detailed explanation of the history behind each theme. For our exhibit, we are including a look into the archival material available as it pertains to the story of the Loewys, Beth Hebrew, and those who occupied the building. Each section will have a story about the different eras of the building, tying the whole story together but allowing for each to be enjoyed on their own. It is a varying degree of experiences like the Oregon History Project's site. Each of the above stories are broken up into separate sections, allowing for a detailed history of each. They all are connected but can be enjoyed individually.

²¹² "The Walt Whitman Archive." The Walt Whitman Archive. <https://whitmanarchive.org>; The Malcolm X Project at Columbia University. <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/ccbh/mxp/>; "Overview of the Civil War." Digital History at University of Houston. <http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/era.cfm?eraid=7&smtid=1>.

²¹³ "Home Front Stories of World War II." Oregon Historical Society. <https://www.ohs.org/events/home-front-stories-of-world-war-ii.cfm>.

²¹⁴ Platt, Amy E. "Go into the Yard as a Worker, Not as a Woman': Oregon Women During World War II, a Digital Exhibit on the Oregon History Project." *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 116, no. 2 (2015): 234

When creating a digital exhibit, especially for pedagogical purposes, theoretical questions are attached. According to the Digital Humanities Manifesto, the issues to be answered are: Does this collection contain information on organizational, community, or personal history to support critical historical writing? And, can the arrangement lead to or support new theories?²¹⁵ For these questions, we can answer with a resounding yes. Within the exhibit are histories and information about the organizations (French Underground, Jewish organizations in France and Arizona), community (the number of communities involved with Beth Hebrew), and personal histories of each of the major players of this building. With this information being presented to the public, it can lead to and support new theories pertaining to the themes, personalities, and histories. When creating something like this publicly, people from differing backgrounds and schools of thought can decipher and disseminate the information provided in ways that the presented may not have considered.

Pedagogy

Topics including the Holocaust in France, anti-Semitism in Vichy, German collaboration, the role of internment camps in France, passive and active resistance by Vichy officials, and rescue from camps as the main focus for this exhibit. The hope of this exhibit is for the use of pedagogical support, research and presentation by having the history, archival material, and interpretations available for anyone, using it as a tool

²¹⁵ Arjun Sabharwal, "Archives and Special Collections in the Digital Humanities." *Digital Curation in the Digital Humanities*, (2015): 32

for several disciplines. While the Holocaust is a theme of this exhibit, its strength is its multifaceted view on several topics and subjects. The story of Jewish migration and the Holocaust will be another layer that can be deciphered and used for purposes of education and understanding. Currently, in 2020, only twelve states are required to teach about the Holocaust. Arizona has a bill going through the Chambers that will make the state the thirteenth.²¹⁶ This exhibit can contribute to another issue, the lack of awareness of the Holocaust. According to research done by the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, 22% of people between the age of 18 and 34 have not heard of the Holocaust, and 41% of the same group believe that the number killed in the Holocaust was two million or fewer.²¹⁷ With a legislative bill being pushed through the Arizona Legislature, this exhibit can become a tool for schools in Arizona to teach about its local history about the Holocaust. To avoid bias, a story like the Loewys' is just as unique as those of other survivors and resisters. However, it is the story following that makes them stand out. Creating interest in this subject matter and encourage students to further study other stories of survival, resistance, and renewal. With the Loewys being interned in 1940, they can represent the early story of the Holocaust, and how other countries collaborated or expanded upon the German model. The Loewys stands out in aspects as well, which do not fit the mold of traditional Holocaust history. For the family, their story of survival does not represent the millions who lost their lives, diverting them from the

²¹⁶ Arizona (State). Legislature. Senate. *A Concurrent Resolution Expressing Support for Holocaust Education in Arizona's Schools*, 2019.

²¹⁷ "New Survey by Claims Conference Finds Significant Lack of Holocaust Knowledge in the United States," Claims Conference, (April 12, 2018), <http://www.claimscon.org/study/>

overall story of the Holocaust. Their story, however, brings attention to how the Holocaust occurred through the collaboration of nations friendly to Germany like Vichy. With these topics in hand, the outreach for the exhibit can be a tool to be used for differing populations. While the Holocaust is a difficult topic to disseminate for younger audiences, this can be used for any one of high school aged and higher. Becoming a tool for classrooms that teach on the Holocaust, it can create a connection for local stories of survivors or victims not in just Arizona but abroad. Creating a personality out of this exhibit brings the Holocaust closer to those who use it.

Arizona has been considered a transient state for some time. People do not settle here for long stretches, along with other families not having permanent homes here. That creates a challenge for retelling the history of the state, notably its capital. Phoenix, like other major cities, has a rich and diverse history. What Beth Hebrew does is create a capsule that holds a part of the city's history. Beginning with the next chapter of Beth Hebrew, the Centros de Milagros and Roy DeLaGarza as its minister. With the 1970s being a time of flux for the city, the story of Roy's congregation again presents an opportunity, not for just the religious aspect. Still, for the advocacy, Roy DeLaGarza participated in, as well as the story of migration within the city of Phoenix. An opportunity arises to provide materials for a researcher wanting to better understand the life of Hispanic Americans in Phoenix, especially and outlier groups like Pentecostals within Hispanic communities. The exhibit lays how the area around the building changed from a predominantly white and Jewish community to the beginning of integration and the neighborhood becoming a majority Mexican American community. It brings attention to the minister himself. Roy DeLaGarza is a well-known minister now in California with

a regularly scheduled radio and television show. He got his beginning in Phoenix with this building, and he took full advantage of it. He and his congregation were active in the community, notably during the drug epidemic strangling the city. Centros de Milagros worked with the city of Phoenix to combat the drug problems, contributing to the program's success according to stories.²¹⁸ While Roy's time as the congregation's leader was short-lived, it was impactful. By the 1980s, he brings his teaching to California and sells the building to Phoenix's Black Theatre Troupe. Introducing the histories of these two groups adds another layer of learning goals for what the exhibit can bring. A greater understanding and insight into how Phoenix's housing segregation played out, migration of differing groups within the downtown Phoenix area (and can act as a tool for other major cities in the United States), as well as Phoenix's own civil rights fight for both the Chicano and African American populations.

Like the stories before, the impact the Black Theatre Troupe had on Phoenix was on par. This exhibit gives their story a voice as well. During a period of racial tension and segregation, the Troupe gave disenfranchised African American artists and youth an avenue to express themselves in a time where their freedoms were challenged continuously. Like the other's connected to this building, the exhibit brings forth their story allowing for the public to digest and comprehend a part of Phoenix history.

Overall, the purpose of this exhibit is to present an opportunity for research on several topics. By covering a wide range of themes and disciplines, the exhibit will be beneficial for this purpose. We hope that this will become a tool to use, and one that can

²¹⁸ Interview with Roy DeLaGarza, Michael Levine, and Jason Bruner at Beth Hebrew, Film 3. Min. 4:10. 4/22/2019.

be consistently built upon as more of the building's history comes to light. An eventual goal is to become a digital archive for the building, including all materials connected, digitized and available for the public. As it stands now, we have the majority of materials from one side of the story, the Loewy's, in thanks to the Arizona Jewish Historical Society and its archives. However, we are aware that there are more documents and materials available on the family and its time in France that would be a welcome addition to the exhibit and archive.

Interdisciplinary Collaboration

While the exhibit will be the strength, none of it would be possible with the work of several disciplines and groups connected to this site. As it stands in its current form, labor, and materials from the Arizona Jewish Historical Society, the Barleycorn Board, the National WWII Museum, Arizona State University School of Geographical Sciences and Urban Planning, Arizona State University School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies, and Arizona State University Jewish Studies. This collaboration presents a unique product, with these many disciplines working cohesively. One of the factors of a successful digital humanities project is the real work with several departments and ways of thought.²¹⁹

The benefit of a project like this is the ability to work in a university setting, providing the materials needed for success. When approaching this project from a digital

²¹⁹ Jolie A. Sheffer and Stefanie Dennis Hunker. "Digital Curation." *Pedagogy* 19, no. 1 (January 2019): 79

aspect, we made sure that it followed what the Digital Humanities Manifesto laid out as the framework for success. Does it aggregate practices from multiple fields with a focus on disseminated knowledge? Does it emphasize interdisciplinary collaboration within the humanities? Does it present successful teamwork, and does the final product show the results of that work?²²⁰ These questions can be answered with a resounding, yes. The work done by all parts of this research was done in a collaborative effort leading to successes, including this digital exhibit.

For the School of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies, we spent the majority of our research gathering, translating, and interpreting the materials presented to us in archives. With the generous contributions from the Dr. Larry Bell and the Arizona Jewish Historical Society (AZJHS), archive exploration was completed in a few months. The archives at the AZJHS hold the documents of the Loewys, with the majority written in French. In that period, we scanned all documents connected to the family's history, military records, organizational records, and Beth Hebrew documents. The following months included interpreting and translating foreign documents through the help of the AZJHS archivist Marty Richelsoph and its director Dr. Laurence Bell.

Archival Research

A vast majority of documents were written in French, with others in German and Yiddish. With over 150 documents, the following months were dedicated to translating

²²⁰ A Digital Humanities Manifesto.” A Digital Humanities Manifesto RSS. University of California Los Angeles. <http://manifesto.humanities.ucla.edu/2009/05/29/the-digital-humanities-manifesto-20/>.

these and putting pieces together. As a foundation, we used Fred Loewy's oral history conducted by the United States Holocaust Museum in 2005. Fred's account of his experience acted as a guide through the numerous documents but was not the final say on the matter of their history. The shortcoming with oral histories includes an accurate recollection of events, along with a human tendency to embellish on certain parts of the story. One topic that took time to put fully together was the combat record of the Loewy boys. In Fred's oral history, he gives his account of the combat he saw while part of the Maquis. Using the documents that were given to the AZJHS became a foundation to research the overall picture of the battlefields. One such incident that became difficult to corroborate was the capture of three or four Germans by Fred following a skirmish outside the city of Alés. In his oral history he talks about overhearing gun shots and riding a bike to the area. When arriving he witnesses the aftermath of an attack by one of the Maquis groups on a German truck. A wounded Maquis is in one of the ditches outside the truck, along with a scattering of weapons and shrapnel. In that rubble Fred claims he grabbed a pistol and approached a group of Germans who were attending to the wounds of one of their comrades. From there captured the group of three or four and sent them away to the command post in Alés.²²¹ While this could very well be true, throughout the official records in the archive, along with other accounts written about the 32nd, nothing was mentioned of that day or that incident. Attempting to be a responsible researcher, the decision was made to leave out that incident from the thesis and exhibit until there is a

²²¹ Ringelheim, "Oral History Interview with Fred Loewy," 119 - 121

way to corroborate that story. Once finished with translating the documents did the history become evidently clear.

The challenges faced for this portion of research included the accuracy of Fred's account in connection to the documents presented to us. The abundance of documents made it difficult to decide what is essential to the story, what we can corroborate, and what has been exaggerated. There were significant gaps in the story of the Lowey's. The few documents left from their time in Galicia, Germany, and Alsace pushed us to discover avenues to recreate what the Loewys experienced where they were living at different times. Notably, the family's time in Alsace, along with their flight from the war, were clear examples of this difficulty. Very few documents were provided on this period, outside of pictures of a radio expo in Colmar, and a train pass from Colmar to Bordeaux. We relied heavily on Fred's account of the history to fill the gaps, but also connected his recollection to others who experienced the period as well.

Another significant gap in history is their time between Bordeaux and Toulouse in Vichy, once again having to rely on Fred's testimony. However, the archival documents left were equally plentiful to paint the picture of the Loewy's from their internment, to resistance and migration to the United States. These documents are the backbone of the exhibit and the connection to this vital part of Arizona's history. These documents from the archives included written testimonies from members of the French Underground, the note that freed the Loewy's from Agde, after-action reports from Fred and Max's unit, letters from several consulates rejecting and granting the Loewy's citizenship, and testimonies from Jewish organizations describing the work Elias performed during and after the war to help Jews seek safety and recover their possessions following. Even with

this abundance, there was still tension between the documents and other sources of research used including oral histories given by Fred Loewy. One such example lies into the reasoning behind why the family was interned in 1940. In an oral history with the United States Holocaust Museum, Fred claims that his family was arrested for violating a Vichy law that anyone who arrived in France after 1936 was subject to arrest.²²² Within the documentation from the archive, along with outside research, we could not corroborate this claim. The original *Status de Juifs* does not mention this from the October 3 decree.²²³ This is the responsibility of the researcher to sift out even the smallest details like this so we may not present incorrect information to the public. Creating a public exhibit exacerbates that tension, as you're allowing your work to be meticulously picked apart by a wider audience. While processing the documents on the Loewy's in Europe, others from Arizona State University were researching the records left on Beth Hebrew and other organizations linked to the Loewy's.

Website Design

The website www.BethHebrewAZ.com will serve as the home of the digital exhibit. A landing page will give a short synopsis on the building and its people, a link to publications on Beth Hebrew, while also allowing the visitor and opportunity to contact myself. The main portions of the website will fall under the tab "History." A dropdown

²²² Joan Ringelheim, "Oral History Interview with Fred Loewy," transcript of an oral history conducted 2005 by Joan Ringelheim, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Collection, Washington D.C. 2005, 51

²²³ Curtis, *Verdict on Vichy*, 74 and Weisberg, *Vichy Law and the Holocaust in France*, 55

menu will lead you to the history of the players of Beth Hebrew, including the Loewys, Roy, the Black Theatre Troupe, and Michael Levine. Each history will carry the visitor through the timeline of each. For example, the Loewy's will start with the lives of Elias and Berthe in the late 19th century up to when they met in Frankfurt in 1918. Each chapter of the family's life will be accompanied by pictures and documents to bring the story to life. Give the Loewy's personality, while making it easier to connect to them. Along with photos and documents, a map will accompany the journey to show just how far this family traveled in their lives. It is easy to say the names of cities or regions, but when you can lay it out visually it expands upon the picture and reality of what the family endured. Similar layouts will accompany Roy, the Black Theatre Troupe, and Michael. Hopefully with maps of downtown Phoenix during its growth from the 1950s to the 2010s, which will have an equal impact on the story of Beth Hebrew.

The story of Beth Hebrew is the memory left by the Loewy's for the city of Phoenix. In all, another 100 plus documents were researched with thanks to the Arizona Jewish Historical Society. Like the Loewy's, these documents left us enough to create a picture of the history of this congregation and its people. Preliminary research of early congregation lists point to just who occupied this space from 1955 to 1971. The account left us a better understanding of the area, who lived in the neighborhood, along with cultural and racial lines within Phoenix. Thanks to these documents, we discovered that many congregates were Eastern European descent, including many of the founders. They spoke both English and Yiddish, as shown in the newsletters and testimonies from those part of Beth Hebrew. A story like the Loewy's and Beth Hebrew enforce the importance of archival research as it pertains to both academic and public history. Because of the

efforts of organizations such as the Arizona Jewish Historical Society, the research is possible for accounts that are little known to the unknown

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