

The Liberation in 1944/45

Liberation ranged from the month of September 1944 to February 1945, and the localities in combat zones experienced a second evacuation and unfortunately sometimes a second looting. A characteristic is reported for the Valley of the Orne where communities that were evacuated on September 4, 1944 on German order and had to leave in railway convoys to Thuringia. Everywhere else and especially in the sector of Thionville and up to the border with Luxembourg or Germany, the evacuations took place on the American order.

1) The harshness of the fighting mainly between September and November 1944.



German fortified barricade at the exit from Manom.

The Germans hang on as here at Manom, for a long time not secured, and where the road exited towards Garche was guarded. During several days the patrols of both camps were sometimes a few meters away one from the other one in the area.



Evacuation of the villages nearby to Kœnigsmacker in September 1944.

Elsewhere in the region around Hagondange, Metrich, Buding and Veckring, the Germans decided to fight with their last energy, and evacuated civilians from the villages concerned as early as September 1944, as proven by this example where civilians go through Inglange seeking a refuge. A good part of the inhabitants of Kœnigsmacker took refuge in the Griesberg farm.



Construction of artillery emplacements.

During the summer 1944, the German military situation was very compromised, the Mosellans born in 1927 or 1928 were still required for military service as here working near Thionville.

From September 1944 the German troops retreated, and some localities were finally liberated early in the fall of 1944, including the steel basins; Terville was liberated on September 13 and the municipalities of Hettange-Grande and Chelmsford as early as September 12, 1944. From time to time however the communities remained still subject to artillery fire, always destructive and sometimes deadly from the right bank of the Moselle. Along the Moselle, on the other hand, especially between Illange and the current border with Germany and Luxembourg, and around some major works of the Maginot Line, works redeveloped by the German army, the enemy troops clung and resisted valiantly. It was the case between Metz, Thionville and the area of Sierck-les-Bains, mostly on the right bank of the Moselle. The Americans were trampled on for weeks by artillery fire from the enemy sector Kerling-lès-Sierck or Berg-sur-Moselle which was so effective that the Germans had to have been informed by the locals of movements of troops on the American side.



German convoy on fire.

Control of the sky had changed sides in summer of 1944 and retreat of the Germans is under the threat of raids by the RAF

Here convoys were hit in August 1944 on a road and vehicles burn in Lorraine, under the helpless eyes of this officer.

The Germans also evacuated the population from the villages on the right bank of the Moselle, and the region between Guénange and Thionville, in September 1944, which shows their determination to fight. Conversely Americans in turn evacuated from other towns from Cattenom to the border with Luxembourg in autumn 1944. There were so many examples of communities that were changing hands several times between September and November 1944, unsecured places where civilians through carelessness or misfortune died until the end of 1944 and even early 1945. The American principle of

"safety first" also led to some unwarranted bombing or shooting too fast which cost lives among civilians.

The fierce fighting in this area contrasts with the situation of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg totally free and secure on 7 October 1944. In parallel, fate struck some zealous German administrators when we learned on September 29, 1944 of the death of Gauleiter Joseph Bürckel in circumstances not clearly understood, death that accompanied the rout of German troops.

This resistance was more effective and the advance of the American army was slowed or stopped by logistical problems that actually hid the rivalry between American generals on the one hand and between the corps of American and English on the other. There were undoubtedly real problems to ensure regular and sufficient supply of fuel, food and clothing items to different corps, but there were also serious disagreements between generals on the American side where the successful breakthrough by Patton's army was shadowed by other generals, including Eisenhower himself. On the other hand the British General Montgomery demanded Winston Churchill interpose that Patton be hampered due to their own difficulties to penetrate north in Belgium and the Netherlands. These considerations, both political and military weighed heavily on military strategy and these disagreements between the allies disrupted and delayed the American breakthrough in Moselle. To be sure Patton complied, what better way than to deprive fuel?

The weather became more miserable and at the end of October it continually rained where fighting was taking place. Torrential rains sometimes added persistent mist and cold, so that roads and paths were transformed into quagmires. So the men were exhausted by both the weather and lack of sleep.

Preparations at the Camp de Cattenom occupied by the Americans and the surrounding area for the crossing of the Moselle.



Stopped for several weeks by problems both of military strategy, touchiness between American and British leaders and difficulties of logistics, Patton's regiments resumed their advance in November 1944 and a large camp was created between Garche, Cattenom and Gavisse to prepare the crossing of the Moselle on floating bridges. All of the 90th infantry division, at night from Audun-le-Roman and Aumetz, moved into the vast forest from Garche to Cattenom, under the command of General James A. Van Fleet.



There were 6 battalions of artillery support, 2 battalions of tank destroyers, 1 Sherman tank battalion, 3 battalions ponton engineering and 3 battalions of general engineering. Attack at Cattenom was the 358th Inf Reg, then the 359th Inf Reg was responsible for Malling, in reserve was the 357th Inf Reg. The crossing was planned for Thursday, November 9, 1944. (Moselle River 44/Fund Rothenberger)



The GI's were faced with a Moselle flood that flooded the Valley, making it problematic to the stowage of the floating bridges. The muddy, turbulent waters made even the use of inflatables dangerous. The routing of the supports of both planned bridges was made by wet and flooded paths where besides the enemy deposited numerous mines. Finally a dense fog covered the entire Valley.



The barely built two bridges were under enemy artillery fire and that of Cattenom, built just above a field of mines, must be cleared to be operational. Malling broke its moorings and needed to be redone. It was then consolidated and strengthened before the continuous rise of the waters, to allow passage of large equipment and tanks. (Moselle River 44/Fund Rothenberger)



***American troops in combat
at Apach.***

Fighting took place in November 1944 between Cattenom and Apach region. German pockets of resistance have led a hard life for the troops of the 90th U.S. division, including from the heights of Berg-sur-Moselle, and losses were severe. Pictured at the bottom right part of the pontoon bridge of Malling, which broke its moorings. (Moselle River 44/Fund Rothenberger)



Waiting before crossing the Moselle river at Gavisse. (Moselle River 44/Fund Rothenberger)



Troops and their equipment invaded the towns around Cattenom, including the villages of Sentzich and Gavisse. The assault battalions must bring flat bottom boats to the edge of the water, create a beachhead on the other side and facilitate the work of the engineers. Tanks and large equipment must await the creation of the two bridges to get to the right bank. The Americans even created amphibious trucks called DUKW's, G.M.C based.

Malling bridge, ready on November 11, is not accessible until November 12 because of the flood and that of Cattenom is opened on November 14, 1944.

Soldiers in prayer in the undergrowth

*Gathering of the material at Cattenom in November 1944
before the attack*

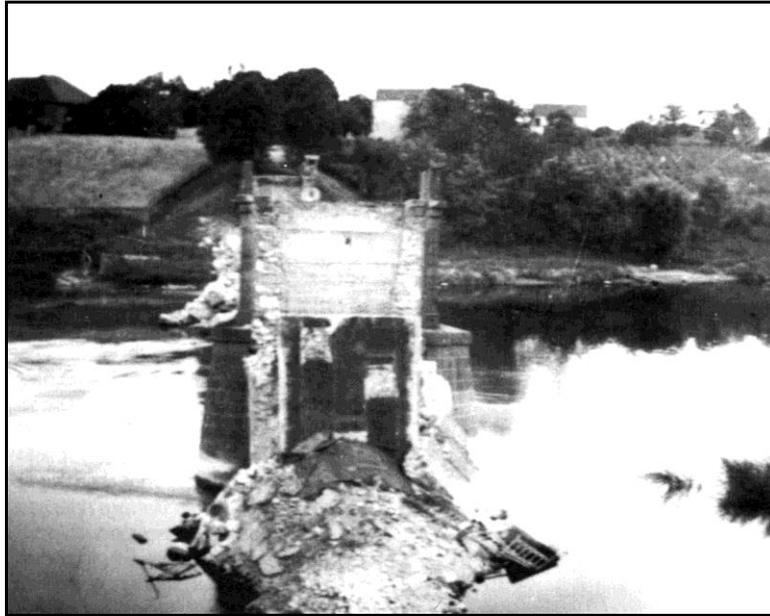


Montage of photos given to the Pier family by Lieutenant Colonel Niles.

Soldiers settled in Malling under the command of Lieutenant Colonel John Niles made a gift to the Pier family, where this officer was staying with his Deputy Robinson, a collection of photos of their fighting in the sector. It was to thank the family for his warm welcome. However, in this sector, American losses were heavy and heroic acts most numerous in the difficult battle of Petite Hettange and surrounding areas between November 12 and 15, 1944. Just to be convinced of the harshness of the fighting see the state of the Bell Tower of the Church of Malling.



The Bell Tower of the Malling Church which served as an observation post for the Germans was destroyed by the Americans in November 1944.



Bridge at Malling destroyed on May 10, 1940 by border guards and remained in this State until the end of the war.



To reward troops for their bravery, many decorations were awarded in the field, in particular the Medal of honor of the Congress.

Here early December 1944, on the place of lime trees at Malling before the Schwenck House, 5 fighters are decorated Lieutenant Colonel Niles and his Deputy Major Robinson.

Note the heavy snow which succeeded the floods of November 1944.



Decoration of the lieutenant colonel Niles and his Deputy Robinson; they get the Medal of honor from Congress.

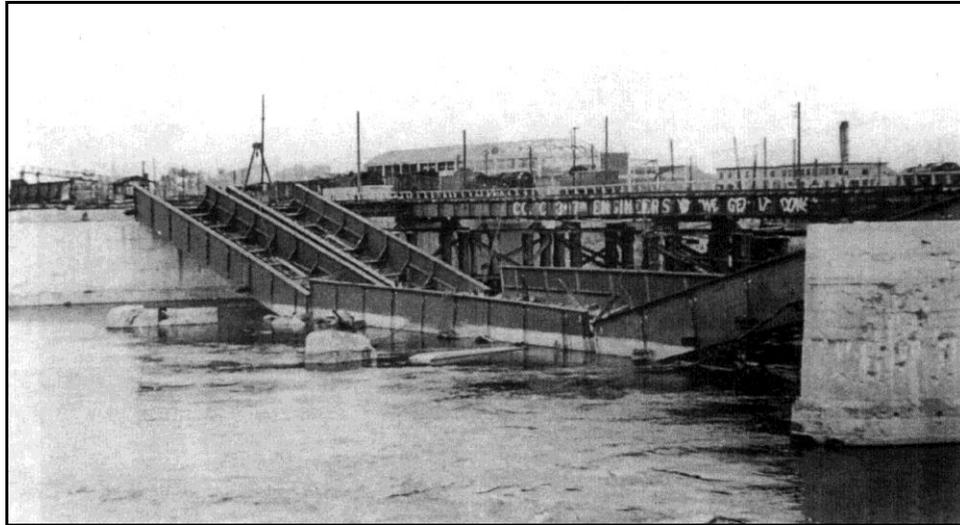


The ceremony takes place in December 1944 before the Schwenck House under the curious gaze of the inhabitants.

In addition the Moselle river overflowed and extensive floods spread out in the Valley, especially in the sector chosen to cross the Moselle from Cattenom to Basse-Ham or Gavisse to Malling, complicating maneuvers by the men, tanks and other vehicles. Even the creation of floating bridges by the engineering troops or the crossing of the Moselle by assault boats was complicated or rendered impossible. The German lines thus had time to reform and fighting become hardened, although the combativeness of most German soldiers is largely dull. In any case the enemy artillery could at least shell heavily attempts of installation of floating bridges, which made precarious for several weeks the American bridgeheads to the right bank of the Moselle.

The left bank of the Moselle was certainly in the hands of the Americans as early as September 1944 but it remained permanently under the threat of enemy artillery that fired from the right bank and from time to time these enemy bombardments were still deadly until October and November. In addition, at night, German patrols were still likely on the left bank and clashes took place. Finally and above all, the Americans had the unpleasant surprise to discover very extensive and dangerous enemy mine fields on both banks of the Moselle. However, one can estimate that the left bank was globally secure by late October 1944.





Bailey Bridge built in Thionville.

At Thionville, the destruction of road and railway bridges, a Bailey bridge was built at Beauregard by Patton's Army engineering services. It was operational in November 1944.

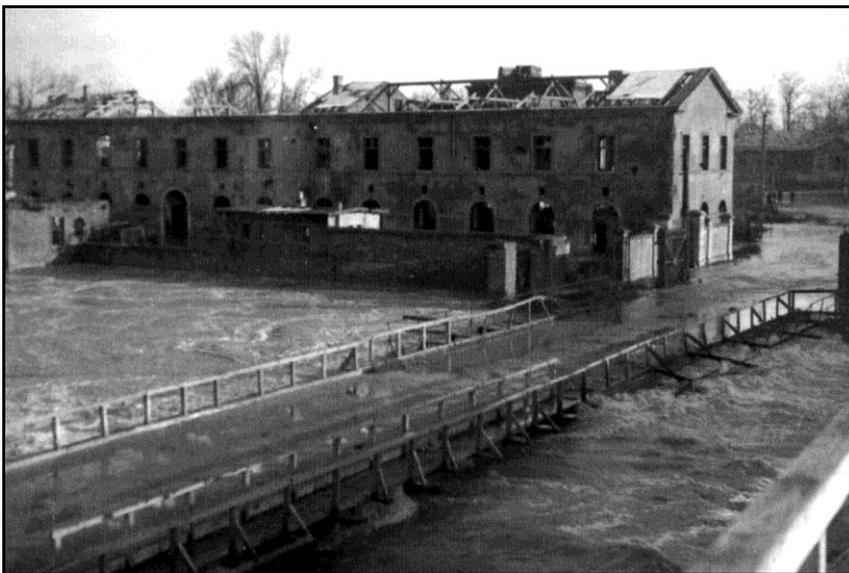


Violence of the fighting and importance of the work of the engineers of the American army at Thionville and Yutz.



Railway bridge destroyed at Manom

The conquest of the right bank, on the other hand, especially the reduction of the forts of Illange, Koenigsmacker-Metrich and Kerling-lès-Sierck, took nearly two months of fierce fighting. Even the creation of bridgeheads on the right bank posed big problems and required American troops to take considerable risks, causing at the time heavy losses. The most terrible week 9-15 November 1944 with fighting exceptionally hard between Cattenom and the present-day border with Luxembourg and Germany, at the time of maximum flooding of the Moselle, partly hid dangerous enemy minefields and causing several times the breaking of the floating bridges at Cattenom and at Gavisse. Losses were heavy on both sides, in particular to take over the sector of Kerling-lès-Sierck and witnesses recall in particular the rally by Americans of hundreds of German corpses at Koenigsmacker and Basse-Ham. Several makeshift hospitals were installed at least on an interim basis, sometimes requesting specific houses as at Fixem or Basse-Ham.



Bridge on the Rue de Couronné in Yutz

The fighting also produced traffic restrictions in some localities as in Thionville where during these crucial months the 20th corps of Patton had installed his staff on the premises of the current high school in Providence. American Soldiers and the F.F.I forbid the access of civilians to the banks of the Moselle and the backbone of the City Centre (street of Luxembourg and rue de Paris). These battles also required a new wave of evacuation, on the orders of the Americans, between September 1944 and March 1945. This evacuation, of variable duration, at short distance (for example to Hettange-Grande and surrounding localities) and on a smaller scale than those of 1939 and 1940, related to the villages along the Valley of the Moselle river between Thionville and Luxembourg, although some civilians refused to follow the American order.



Pocket of resistance in Berg-sur-Moselle.

The Germans forced the Americans to bomb the town of Berg-sur-Moselle with force to dislodge a piece of formidable artillery. Suddenly, the damage done to the Castle and the houses are very heavy as shown by these two pictures.



The Yutz National Street bears the stigma of the exchanges of artillery fire and street fights. Here the old Café Bestien and nearby houses show eloquently the violence of the fighting, both facades are scarred.





The extent of the destructions suffered by Yutz.

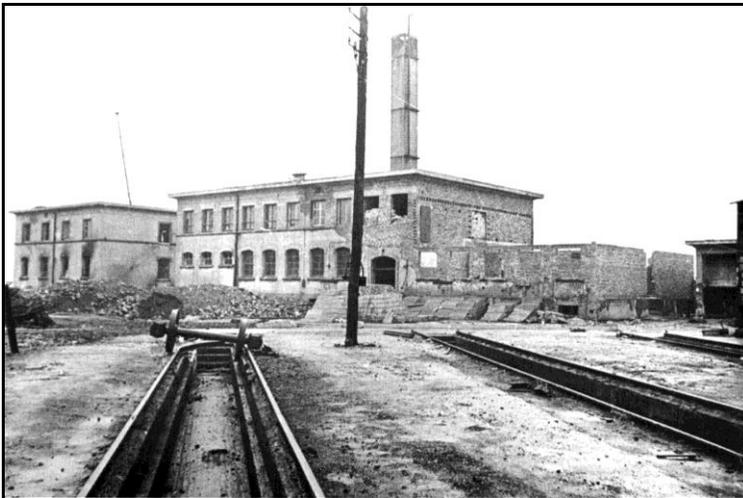
In many localities they lick the wounds of war. We began by assessing the extent of the damage, and in this regards to the city of Yutz in its two parts (Basse- and Haute-Yutz) it paid a heavy price.



The importance of the damage done to the Church of Basse-Yutz, whose architecture was similar to that of the current protestant temple, was such that it was totally rebuilt on the National Street on the same site but set back from the street.

Thus, in Basse-Yutz an estimated 800 people, or 1/10th of the population, spent a month holed up in the cellars of houses in October-November 1944, which was also the case of residents of Cattenom every night since September 1944. Yutz residents had been instructed, October 10, 1944, to take trains at their disposal to Distroff and Metzervisse to gain the coalfield around Merlebach and later in Bitche, but the four convoys organized and planned for 8000 people, only two finally left with only one full. The Germans (SS Yutz were installed since September 17 and the Gestapo or the Feldgendarmerie expelled recalcitrants) forcing civilians to leave and seek refuge around Kuntzig then even farther. Nevertheless for those who stayed the danger was severe because after the fighting we counted 300 Yutz buildings seriously or very seriously damaged and 300 others slightly affected out of a total of 1,180 buildings. The Americans moreover installed a permanent medical unit on the airfield of Yutz until January 1945, which gives evidence of the scale of the care of providing so much to both the combatant and civilian sector.

Allied bombing attacks on the train depot in Thionville-Yutz the fall of 1944.



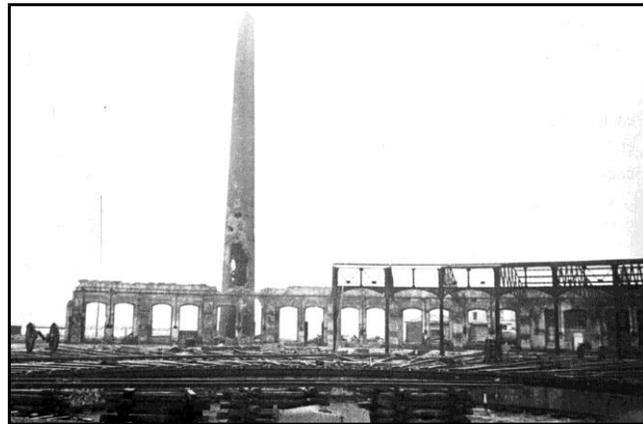
Lift workshop



The depot, the roundhouse, workshops and all major buildings of Thionville and Yutz station were violently bombed and largely destroyed



Railway workshops destroyed



The Germans offered a fierce resistance in the buildings of the industrial area on the right bank of the Moselle.

The importance of the damage suggests merciless fighting for several days before the withdrawal of the Germans.



The 'Luxembourg' railroad from the Gare de Thionville sector suffered particularly from bombing.



The Yutz refugees in the near villages returned in early December 1944 and those evacuated in the coal basin returned in January 1945.

Also civilians preferred to follow orders and comply with the instructions. On October 3, 1944 order was given to the villages of Contz-les-Bains, Haute-Kontz, Gandren, Berg-sur-Moselle, Gavisse, Sentsich, Homeldange and Cattenom to withdraw towards localities not exposed to the shooting of the enemy artillery and outside the combat zone. The American headquarters then moved to Camp de Cattenom and the inhabitants of the villages mentioned lived for a few weeks in Puttrelange-lès-Thionville, Rodemack or even Basse-Rentgen, others withdrawing to Volkrange, Beuvange or even Oeufrange.

The village of Contz-les-Bains was also evacuated from October 3rd, 1944 till February 20th, 1945 and of course we found accommodation and we lived as we could while the winter 1944/45 was particularly rough with negative temperatures in January which we recorded at less than -25°C on certain nights.



***Aerial view of Basse-Ham.**
In this locality also fighting was harsh and many houses were seriously affected in particular roofs torn or perforated.*



Damage to Wonner farm.

Cattenom the former commandery of the Teutonic Knights, the current Wonner farm, was the target of German fire and damage to one of the two towers and the main walls of the castle are extensive.



The impact left by the fighting was of concern in many localities:

At Berg-sur-Moselle, traces of bullets on the front of the House of the blacksmith.



At Malling the traces of the violence of the fighting are visible in the village on the facades of the houses like here at the Klein house. But at the end of the fighting in the spring of 1945, farmers bought horses to get back to work.



Winter 1944/45 at Inglange and Hastroff.

** View of the village on Christmas Day 1944 under a thick layer of snow, and damage caused by the fighting in 1944*



** GI's and MPs remain confined until early February 1945 and bear with stoicism the rigours of Lorraine winter and temperatures very strongly negative. It was -20° C this night in February 1945 which explains the refrigerated attitude of one of these soldiers.*

During these evacuations there still was, while only to a smaller scale during 1939 and 1940, looting and robberies in deserted houses. Some people, on the sly returned to retrieve the food, goods and valuable objects forgotten in the rush of this second hasty departure, and lost their lives.

American troops, they too, paid a heavy price for the liberation of the Mosellan's border regions. To be convinced, just visit the American cemetery at St Avold where 10,489 grave markers attest to the carnage on 46 hectares of lawns and meticulously maintained fairways, not to mention the 444 names of soldiers whose bodies were not found, or Hamm in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, where General Patton is, died accidentally at 60 years, in Heidelberg, in December 1945.



Medical train to Hombourg-Budange.

The violence of the fighting also explains the importance of the wounded and the killed both among veterans and among the civilians in the region. These losses were not only linked to the bombing but minefields widespread by the Germans in their movement of retirement. Many makeshift hospitals were built in a hurry for weeks and medical convoys patrolled the area..

Here it is on the Hombourg-Budange viaduct rehabilitated in 1945 that runs the cars marked with a red cross.

2) The jubilation of the liberation and the patriotic parties in 1945.

Yet as early as December 1944 and despite the vigorous counter-attack in the Ardennes from Christmas, the morale of the German troops was low and surrenders proliferated. All of Luxembourg had been liberated at the same time as the fighting along the Moselle, it was on the ground of Germany that now the last battles were engaged. Throughout the towns delivered by American troops, they expressed joy on a collective basis. They pressed around veterans greeted as heroes and the G.I's vehicles were stormed. It must be said that children and adults were seduced by the distributions of chewing gum, candy and chocolate, immediate and spontaneous distributions from the entry of vehicles into a new community. So, we made lots of French flags quickly with fabric found, singing, playing the accordion or violin and jumped around the necks of soldiers with frantic embraces. Soldiers also distributed food or had the barter, exchanging nylon stockings, shoes, soap or even clothes against alcohol or local products.

Others used food they had in overabundance and other products to facilitate the conquest of the French ladies and get warm female thanks. It is even said that the Mosellans discovered their first condoms, sometimes converted to balloons by lack of knowledge of the object. Adolescents spent whole days in the camps of canvas, away from the villages, in the company of the regiments as was the case at

Cattenom during more than a week. The generous distribution to the children of survival rations was surely one of the factors that made these very friendly soldiers.

American soldiers are welcome heroes.



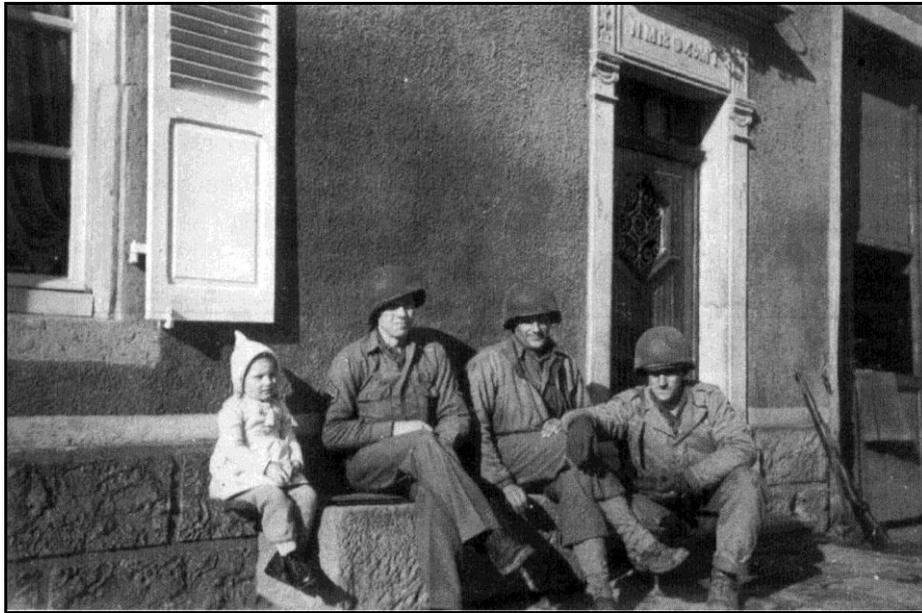
At Halstroff.

In the localities of the region of Thionville, American soldiers were greeted enthusiastically, especially by the children to whom they distributed generously chocolate and chewing gum. They also sympathized with the adults, who wished to pose with the entire family in their company, as here in Halstroff.



At Koeking.

Sometimes they take liberties with the rules as in Koeking where these two soldiers casually leave their weapon to ride a tandem in front the Max farm ...



... or pose in the company of the youngest child in the family.



The American "Dodge" trucks were marveled at by an enthusiastic population at Cattenom. At Cattenom, the village was liberated on 11 and 12 November 1944, a large tent camp was installed right next to the village, between Cattenom and Koeking, and all day jeeps and trucks circulated in the village. This photo was taken the day after the liberation.



The first days the GI's were treated as heroes, and their vehicles were surrounded by adults as by teenagers and children in the old street rue des Petits-Pois and at the crossroads at Schouman .



It is even a kind of triumphal pyramid that was immortalized by Mr. Eugène Hackelle November 14, 1944.



The tribute to the American liberators in Thionville.

At Thionville the C. G. of the American XX Corps was welcomed on the premises of the current high school Our Lady of Providence. The municipality organized not far away in the current Hélène Boucher High School at a reception and a banquet to celebrate the liberation of the city. Here with great fanfare in the presence of the new civil and military authorities and traditional outfits from the resistance, is organized a heartfelt tribute to the American liberators. Among the troops there are also elements of a French infantry battalion

Many Mosellans were also surprised to discover the large number of soldiers of color and ethnic diversity of U.S. troops where white, black and Asian live together. For most of the witnesses, it was their first contact with some non-whites.

The population also heard blues, jazz and especially swing, new musical tempos of musical delight, irritating or confusing according to age groups and that the American radios poured out in continuous waves with great speakers in the landscaped cantonments. In 1945 orchestras created within the regiments also often animated the balls in the region, including in the capital of each canton where an official ceremony celebrating the liberation was organized.

In many places, during the year 1945, there was a parade with the victorious troops, a procession of officials with the American generals, mayors, Councillors of the cantons, Members of Parliament and religious organizations, starting with the Bishop, Monsignor Heintz, returned from Lyon and always present. Guests were greeted by the children of the town in traditional dress, the procession and the military parade of the American units across all main streets before attending a solemn mass in the presence of all the people in their Sunday best and the day ends with a large popular dance in parties or outdoors. Also we organized torchlight retreats during the week at the end of the Liberation in 1944.



Beginning of the religious procession at the exit of the parish church, with Sexton leading, followed by the children's choir.



All the bodies and associations of the locality were part of the official motorcade; here the firefighters.



The photos of this page represent a ceremony both religious and patriotic in Terville.

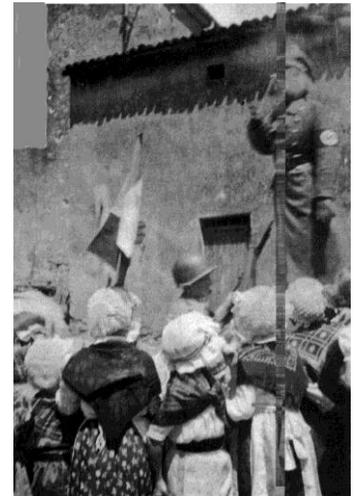
Terville liberated as early as September 1944, organized a grand procession for both a religious and military ceremony in October 1944.

The motorcade procession through the main streets of the town ended at the parish church where, in the presence of all the bodies of the city and all associations, Monsignor Heintz, back from exile, solemnly welcomes U.S. troops.



Patriotic ceremony before the Church of St. Maximin.

On 6/12/1944 at St Maximin, the celebration of St Nicolas is accompanied by a demonstration of patriotism with the help of Veterans of the first world war.



The feast of St Jean in June 1945 in Contz-les-Bains.

The relief of being rid of the German presence is expressed very well in Contz-les-Bains in June 1945. During festivities of St Jean on 24 June 1945, youth of the village, clothed in disparate outfits ranging from American, English and French clothing and equipment and in the traditional costume of Lorraine, made a dummy representing Hitler and symbolically hanged it from a roof of the village. In parallel they organized a parody of military parade on the same day.



The nazis were ridiculed in Sierck-les-Bains.

The idea to shoot Hitler in mockery was resumed at Sierck-les-Bains where youth, in the company of US MPs, was the same as in Contz-les-Bains.



Solemn feast with Basse--Ham fighters.

In Alsace we find the same enthusiasm and the same gratitude with face to face American and French troops. Here during a solemn party, the conquerors are welcomed by the girls of the village in traditional Alsatian dress, which celebration ends with a torchlight procession. Among the soldiers there are Mosellans native of Basse-Ham.



Same festive atmosphere to Kirschnaumen and Sierck-les-Bains.

The youth of both communities expressed their joy to be rid of the Germans, one by climbing on a German tank abandoned and on which there is the acronym M.R.P (sign of early politicization of popular rejoicing), the other was in settling on an American tank.

Here the youth of Kirschnaumen ...



... and here those of Sierck-les-Bains.

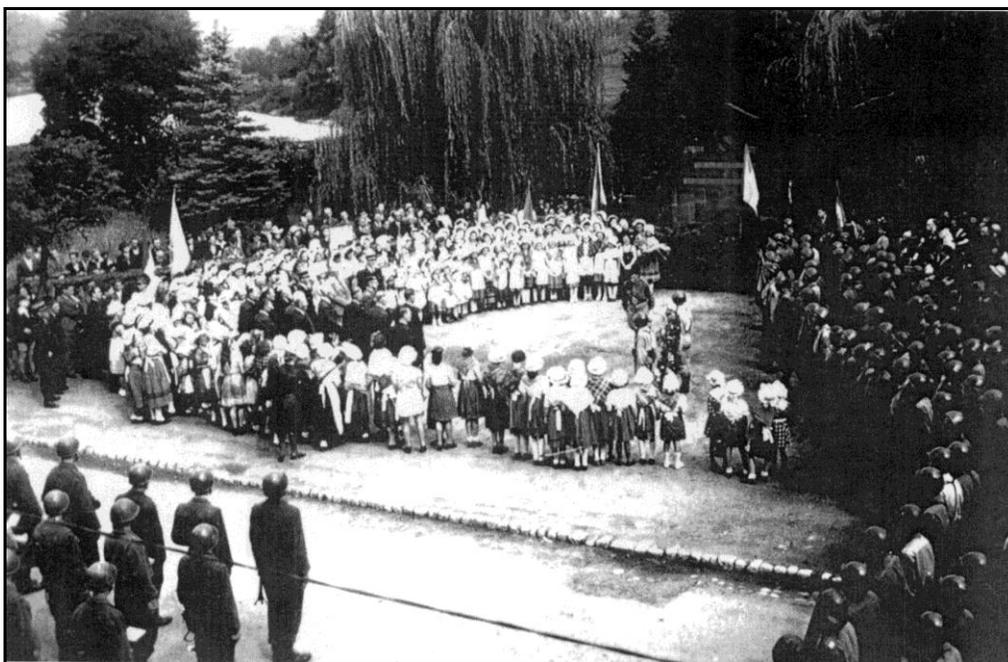


Processions and parades to celebrate the liberation and victory.

In all the Sierck valley processions of people crisscrossed the localities on the same principle, namely that they wear traditional outfits and the patriotic associations with their flags and the Fire fighters were associated with the feast.



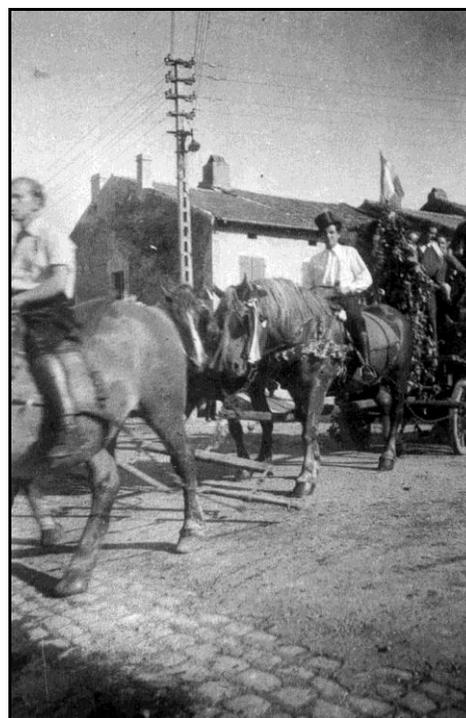
It always ends with a solemn mass and a speech before the monument to the dead, in the presence of U.S. troops. Examples of Sierck-les-Bains and Rettel are displayed.



Great patriotic ceremony to celebrate the Liberation in Sierck-les-Bains



Even children show their patriotism ... as small Kiffer of Cattenom, dressed as Marianne on May 10, 1945 at the solemn procession organized to celebrate the German surrender.



Parade of July 14, 1945 in Cattenom to celebrate victory.



Official procession to celebrate liberation.

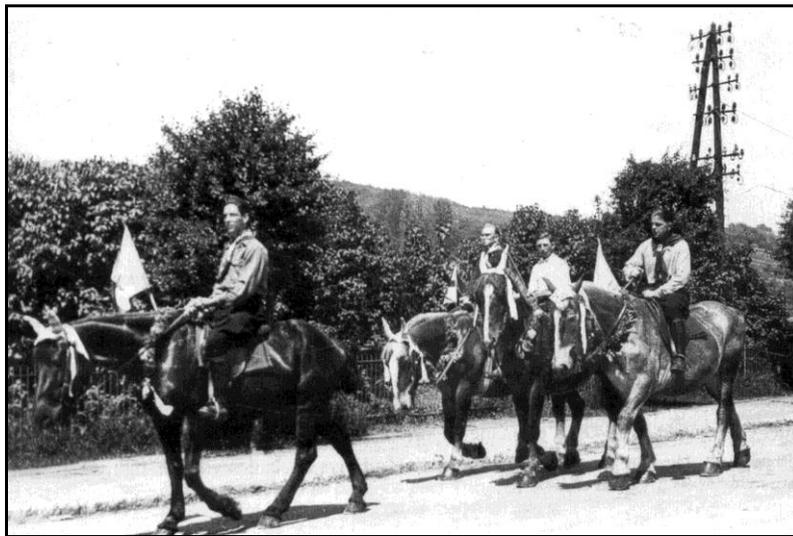
Like the other communes, Rettel municipality set up both a religious and patriotic celebration, with the participation of all the village associations, to show the joy of Liberation. The procession went through all the streets of the town. Girls in regional dress are in the lead, followed by Veterans ' associations.



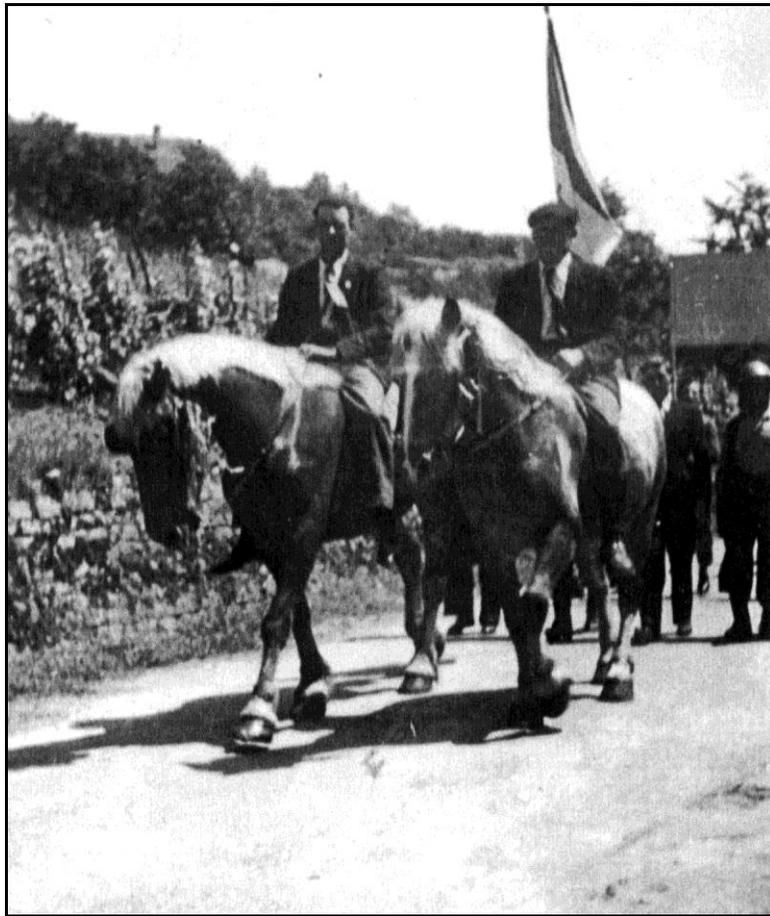


Feast of July 14, 1945 in Faulbach.

The procession was particularly successful and the youth of the village traveled to all annexes to the municipality of Rodemack and countryside to the vicinity of Fixem. The carts are draped with French, English and American flags.



Sierck-les-Bains, scouts are responsible for the Organization of the cavalcade. Participants, in Lorraine regional dress, wear the Lorraine flag, in addition to French, English and American flags. The joy of youth is visible and the magnificent procession.



Head of the solemn procession to celebrate the Liberation in Contz-les-Bains

However, the importance of damage is very uneven in the localities. Altogether it counted more than 100 buildings destroyed or damaged and as early as 1945 it raised the problem of reconstruction of the war damage. Even there in the processing of cases and in the payment of the compensations, there were errors, scandalous oversights and favoritism. People shamefully grew rich thanks to war damage, by knowing how to be cunning. Finally the allocation of buildings and the properties belonging to Jews, who died in extermination camps and not having a known family anymore, raised complex legal problems. Generally the procedures ended by the transfer of the properties and the vacant properties to the municipality of the concerned place.

Wounds of war itself in the post-war period have been slow to heal. In the 1950s, many municipalities had not yet completed the reconstruction and several ministerial delegations came to realize it and expedited the renewal projects.

The Moselle was left with approximately 622,000 people against more than 696,000 before war — more than 11% of loss, this average figure hiding huge differences depending on the canton. Overall the townships covered by the study are within the average range with only 10-15% of population loss, except the Township of Metzervisse which figure was in the range of 15-30% and was near the cantons of Bitche or of Volmunster, truly sinister with more than 40% of losses.

The Moselle must however still had to suffer the consequences of the war, in the form of ration cards still in force in 1947/48 and even partially in 1949, testifying for several years the existence of entire years of shortage. Many municipalities were also declared martyr villages and were decorated with the Croix de guerre.



Patriotic fever of the late 1940s and in the 1950s.

This patriotic fever continued into the 50s and the whole population continued to participate with enthusiasm, mayors and head assistants as well as associations of veterans and firefighters of affected villages, such as Fixem or Garche.



Deposits of sprays of flowers and speeches follow one another while the youth of the village competes in ingenuity to give an original touch to the holiday: the wheels of bicycles are decorated with three-colored paper banners.



Passage of the Crusade for Peace at Hettange-Grande.

Hettange-Grande, the home of the Crusade for Peace on June 27, 1946 is the opportunity of a big event both religious and civic through all the streets of the town. The cross came from Luxembourg to Thionville and outbound stopping at Hettange one day and it is an opportunity for Scouts and Cubs to emphasize.



Solemn installation of the new bells in the Church at Hettange-Grande.

As well as for the crusade of the peace, the reception of the new bells intended for the parochial church in 1946, is once again the occasion of big festivities.



Solemn reception of the new Bell at Basse-Rentgen.

Installation of the bells is done very gradually in all the churches of the region and ends at the end of the 1950s in smaller localities.



Procession of Winston Churchill on Albert First Avenue.

Thionville, in 1947, the passage of Winston Churchill, on the way to visit the ruins of the castle of his ancestors at Manderen, was also an opportunity to crow about the streets of the city like here Albert First Avenue. Although retired from political life, the "old lion" is entitled to the honors of a true head of State.

(3) Official dates for the liberation of the communes of the three studied cantons

For these tables, we have consulted several books, recent and older, dedicated to the detailed description these battles of 1944 between Metz and the border with Luxembourg and Germany; gleaned information has been confirmed with a study by the Republican Lorrain in one of its magazines a few years ago, and the oral testimonies of adult survivors of the era. It took note of differences sometimes quite important on the announced dates and here and there the derived is not in agreement with the proposed date. The area of the left bank of the river Moselle, Thionville to the border with the Luxembourg and Germany, was in reality a sort of "no man's land" from September 1944 to January 1945 and villages liberated by the Americans often saw German patrols at night, for several weeks. Many witnesses remember also that patrols of the two sides made their appearance on the same day in the village but fortunately at different times. Many villages were alerted for several weeks in the fall of 1944 and early winter 1944/45 and several localities, especially along the Moselle, were evacuated by the Americans to prevent unnecessary deaths.

(a) Thionville and neighbouring communes.

Municipality	Official liberation date
Basse - Yutz	Monday, November 13, 1944
Haute-Yutz	Tuesday, November 14, 1944
Mahato	Saturday September 13, 1944 (but village not secure)
Thionville	Friday, September 12, 1944 (but City unsecured for months and ultimate fighting until January 1945 in the vicinity of the village)
Terville	Saturday, September 13, 1944

(b) Canton of Cattenom

Municipality	Official liberation date	Municipality	Official liberation date
Basse-Rentgen and Haute-Rentgen, Preische, Evrange	Tuesday, December 5, 1944	Hettange-Grande	Friday, September 12 1944
Berg-sur-Moselle	Tuesday November 28, 1944 but liberated as early as Sunday 5 November 1944	Kanfen	Friday, September 12 1944
Beyren-lès-Sierck, Gandren	Tuesday, December 5, 1944	Koeking	Sunday, November 12 1944
Boust, Basse-Parthe, Haute-Parthe and Usselskirsch	Tuesday, December 5, 1944	Mondorff	Tuesday, December 5, 1944
Breistroff-la-Grande, Evange-Boler	Tuesday, December 5, 1944	Puttelange-lès - Thionville, Halling, Himeling	Monday, September 15, 1944
Cattenom	Sunday, November 12, 1944	Rodemack, Faulbach, Esing	Tuesday, December 5, 1944
Entrange	Friday, September 12, 1944	Roussy-le-Village, Roussy-le-Bourg Dodenom	Tuesday, December 5, 1944
Escherange-Molvange	Friday, September 12, 1944	Sentzich	Sunday, November 12 1944
Fixem, Semming	Tuesday, December 5, 1944	Soetrich	
Garche	Friday, September 12, 1944	Volmerange-les-Mines	Saturday, September 13, 1944
Gavisse	Tuesday December 5, 1944 but liberated as early as Sunday 5 November 1944	Zoufftgen	Tuesday, December 5, 1944
Hagen	Tuesday, December 5, 1944		

c) Canton of Sierck-les-Bains

Municipality	Official liberation date	Municipality	Official liberation date
Apach	Monday November 20, 1944 but liberated on Tuesday, November 14 1944	Malling	Thursday, November 9, 1944
Contz-les-Bains, Rudling	Monday September 29, 1944 but skirmishes for months and full return of villagers on Thursday February 20, 1945 only	Manderen, Tunting	Thursday, November 16, 1944
Halstroff, Grindorff: Bizing	Thursday, November 16, 1944	Merschweiller, Kitzing	Thursday, November 16, 1944
Haute-Kontz	Friday October 3, 1944 but fighting until Sunday 5 November 1944	Montenach	Wednesday, November 15, 1944
Haute-Sierck	Thursday, November 16, 1944	Rémeling	Saturday, November 18, 1944
Hunting	Sunday, November 12, 1944	Rettel	Friday, November 10, 1944 or Saturday 11 November 1944
Kerling-lès-Sierck, Freching	Friday, November 10, 1944	Ritzing	Friday, November 17, 1944
Kischnaumen, Obernaumen, Evendorff	Thursday, November 16, 1944	Rustroff	Friday, November 17, 1944
Kirsch-lès-Sierck	Thursday, November 16, 1944	Sierck-les-Bains	Monday, November 20, 1944 but the Americans are come Sunday 12 November and the city is liberated on Tuesday, November 14 1944
Laumesfeld, Kalembourg	Thursday, November 16, 1944	Waldweistroff	Saturday November 18, 1944
Launstroff, Scheuerwald	Friday, November 17, 1944	Waldwisse, Flatten, Gongelfang, Betting	Saturday November 18, 1944

d) Canton of Metzervisse

Municipality	Official liberation date	Municipality	Official liberation date
Aboncourt	Friday, November 17, 1944	Kemplich, Klang	Thursday, November 16, 1944
Basse-Ham	Thursday, November 9, 1944	Koenigsmacker, Metrich Petite-Hettange	Friday, November 10, 1944 and Sunday, November 12, 1944
Bertrange-Imeldange	Wednesday, November 15, 1944	Kuntzig	Thursday, November 16, 1944
Bettelainville	Friday, November 17, 1944	Luttange, Kirsch-lès-Luttange	Wednesday, November 15, 1944
Breistroff-la-Petite	Saturday, 11 November 1944	Metzeresche	Wednesday, November 15 Friday, November 17, 1944
Bousse	Thursday, November 16, 1944	Metzervisse	Wednesday 15 and Thursday 16 November 1944
Buding, Elzing	Wednesday, November 15, 1944	Monneren, Ste Marguerite	Thursday, November 16, 1944
Budling	Wednesday, 15novcmbrc 1944	Okafor, Lemestroff, Breistroff-la-Petite	Monday, November 13, 1944 but fighting up to the Friday, November 17, 1944
Distroff	Wednesday, November 15, 1944	Rurange-lès-Thionville	Saturday, September 13, 1944
Elzange	Saturday, 11 November 1944	Stuckange	Wednesday, November 15, 1944
Guénange	Thursday, November 16, 1944	Valmestroff	Sunday, November 12, 1944
Hombourg-Budange	Friday, November 17, 1944	Veckring, Helling	Thursday, November 16, 1944
Inglange	Friday, November 17, 1944	Volstroff, Vinsberg	Wednesday, November 15, 1944
Kédange-sur-Canner	Tuesday, November 14, 1944		



School upgrading.

Just having gotten rid of their German teachers, Mosellan children and adolescents must attend evening classes to improve their French. Some age classes, which have from the beginning of their education in German, must even spend months at a time to learn the French language. This is the case here in Faulbach.



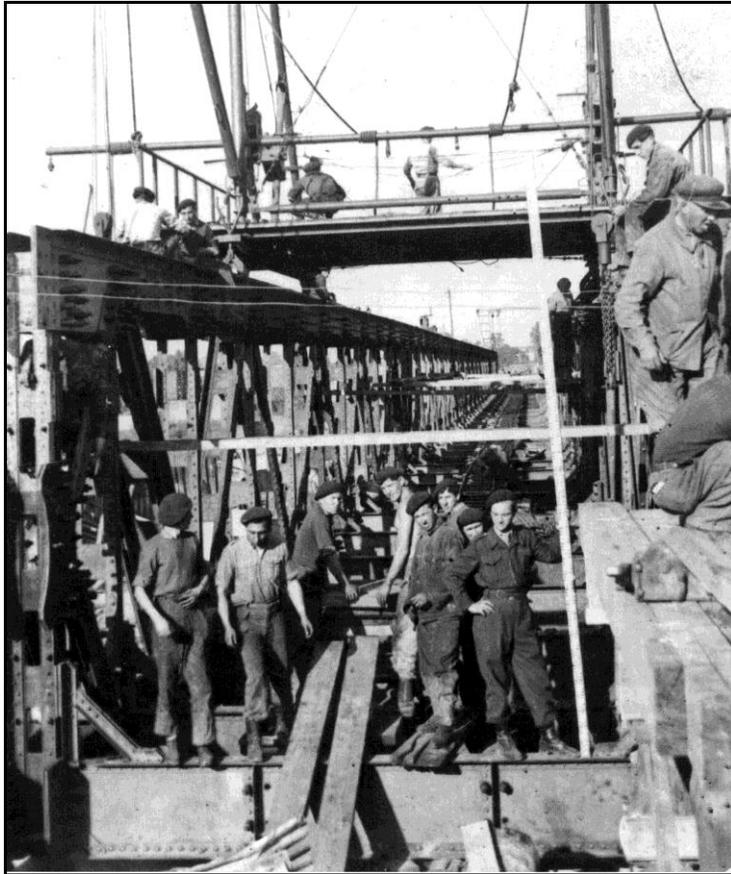
German prisoner remained as a farmhand.

After the war the Russian or Polish prisoners remained in the villages as farmhands and never returned home. Some Germans like this in Faulbach did the same, at least for a few months after the end of the conflict.



Rehabilitation of the road in Rustroff.

From 1945 the neighborhood) of villages were reconditioned and we filled at least shell-holes including with the reinforcement of the conscripts on leave.



Reconstruction of the railway bridge of Beauregard in 1946/47.



October 12, 1952, the president of the Council, Antoine Pinay, paid a visit to one of the affected cities of Moselle during the second world war, Maizières-les-Metz. In the company of two other Ministers, Jean-Marie Louvel, Minister of Industry and Trade and Robert Schuman, Minister for Foreign Affairs, he is greeted by the Mayor and the city General Counsel, Mr Barthélémy, and the Deputy Mayor of Metz Raymond Mondon.



Personalities visit several reconstruction projects in the city where the legacy of the hard fighting from 1944 was still visible in 1952. This is the time where iron ore and coal of Moselle were at the base of the revival of the France.

CONCLUSION

The second world war, which resulted on the local level in the annexation of the Moselle in 1940, German occupation during 4 years and the liberation by American troops in late 1944 and early 1945, left deep traces. Materially first was the destruction two times in 1940 and 1944 of rail and road infrastructure which has long been visible in landscapes, some equipment was barely rebuilt at the end of the 20th century such as the bridge of Malling, while the bridge of Cattenom, dating back to the 1960s and single track, still retains its metal deck made with American equipment dating from the war (it relates to the five bays belonging to the floating bridge at Arromanches).

On the mental plane then: despite 60 years of decline, the spirits are still marked by stories of the elders who lived through this period. Many witnesses still have shame from being swathed in German uniform in pictures of the time.

Certainly there are many more of these elders who have experienced these years as adults and even septuagenarians or current octogenarians who are struggling to trace all the events of their lives during these years, when they were children or teenagers. Reconstitution of the precise route of evacuation, village-by-village, is therefore difficult, especially if you want to be rigorous at the level of dating. However, to make a synthesis of the conditions in which this possible exodus occurred highlights the diversity of dates and especially the spelling of the localities and individual choices adopted by a family.



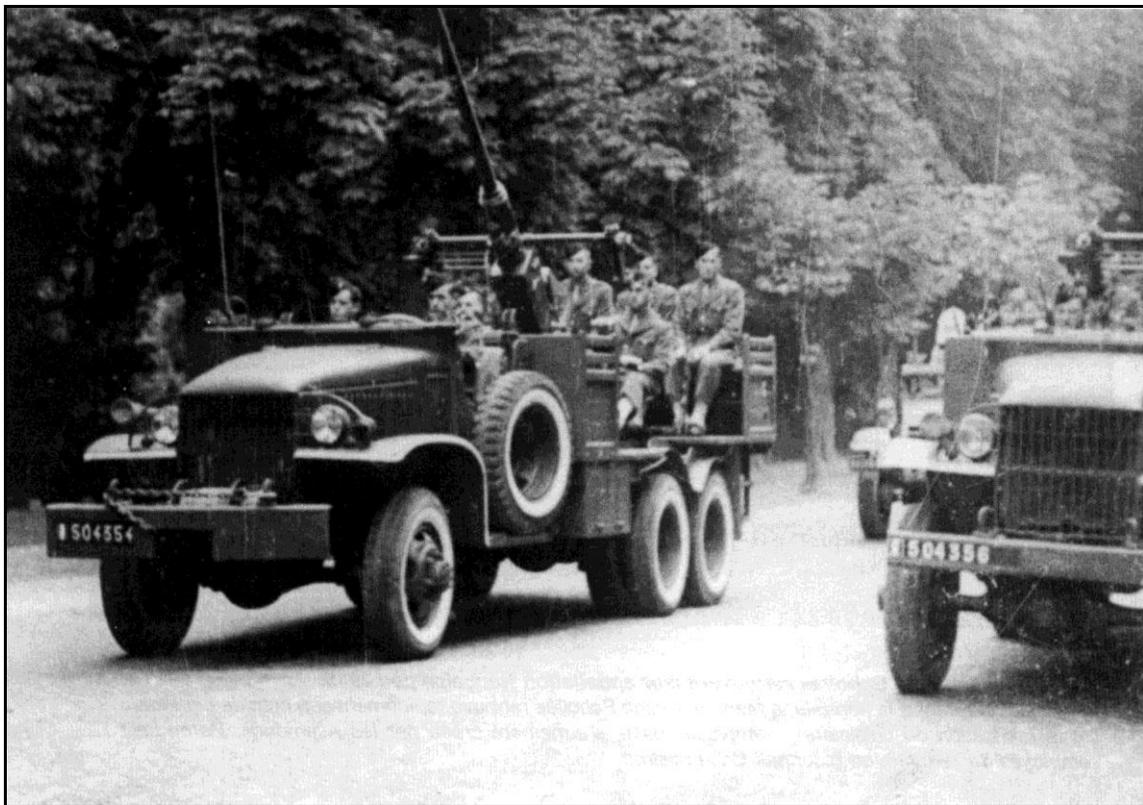
Scholtes institutions found their French name as early as 1945.

A symbol of the return to normal in Manom, the Scholtes plant soon recovered its name and the manufacture of stoves replaced the arms factory created by the Germans. Among employees from 1945 to 1946, we recognize Odile Piacenza.

More than this exodus, eventually almost all players remember with nostalgia what they refer to as an interesting adventure (it must be said that there's always nostalgia for the young in years), it's those returnees to Moselle and everyday life under the German heel who still shudder.

We must first go to the obvious: Mosellans not evacuated and the French armed forces were the main predators of the assets of the poor refugees and this observation was a terrible shock for them on their return to Moselle.

Then the German presence not only was an obstacle to the freedoms, but hurt because it woke up in some the lowest and basest human instincts. This means anonymous denunciations, minor deals or small compromises with the occupier, or even acts of genuine partnership, especially between 1940 and early 1943 when the German victory seemed assured. In each locality there were the creeping struggles between families, of petty acts of vengeance, for the behaviors of the less equivocal officials set up by enemy forces or by the Nazi administration. Overly docile practices vis-à-vis German demands could be found among officials or some traders. A part of the inhabitants took revenge towards the latter after the war, making them weigh to the nearest gram goods purchased and refusing to pay a premium compared to the quantities ordered. A few volunteers here and there supported the German war effort or the control of minds by threatening their neighbors as Patriots and Gaullist. In short the local population has been divided. Many young men had to hunker down and serve in the German army on the Russian front for fear of possible reprisals against the family or the country. Many would have liked to desert and have not done so because of the risk of sanctions against their families.



Parade of 1945 Place de la Liberté in Thionville.

In 1945 a lavish military parade was organized with the participation of French troops using American G.M.C. trucks to Freedom Square, terminus of this parade, has never justified its name so well.

Fortunately also there were acts of resistance and a refusal to compromise on the part of many members of the clergy or education as part of the local administration. Many paid for this resistance by expulsion or arrest or even worse by deportation. The vast majority of inhabitants have champed at the bit, in silence, but remained deeply attached to France. Some non-negligible "Despite us" intensified efforts to not fight and desert despite previously reported risks. Obviously these acts of refusal of Nazism especially increased in late 1943 and 1944, when the major turning points of the war had been a change of hope, but who cares, the Mosellans were able to stand up to the occupiers despite the intensity of the "brainwashing" suffered and despite major leverage of the occupier. It was worth the trouble to fight for Alsace and Moselle, despite those of "inside" France, who said the opposite when speaking of "Boche East" to describe Lorraines and Alsatians.

That is the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Moselle by the troops of Patton in the fall of 1944. As a result, we have the opportunity to pay tribute to the majority of the inhabitants of the Department who remained faithful to their homeland. Of course they followed initially Pétain's instructions and we can rightly speak of "40 million pétainistes in 1940", the winner of Verdun in 1916 both inspired confidence and reassured in the adversity. Very few people then knew of the existence of General De Gaulle and even fewer were those who had heard the appeal of 18 June 1940 from the BBC in London. But very soon, the Vichy regime was neglected, even if the person of Pétain was not immediately called into question, and disagreement with his policy of collaboration, in the Moselle region also. There are many who secretly listened to the messages of resistance as early as 1941 and 1942, even being liable to arrest. The action of the F.F.L and F.F.I under the command of General De Gaulle was then known and objective measures of Resistance broadcast via the BBC were attached. In 1943 and especially in 1944, it was diligently sought to capture radio London and eagerly expected d-day. Then everywhere, they spent a lot of time in the cellars during air alerts and in many villages of the Valley of the Moselle, spent entire nights from the end of the summer, sleeping grouped by complete families, in more sheltered cellars and the strongest of the village. We agreed to not go out into the streets and supported bans on processions and public religious ceremonies, and hopefully a quick issue by Allied troops. The months of September to December 1944 were months that were of globally good memories even if too many Mosellans still lost their lives at this time, either because of the fighting itself, or by bad luck to be on the trajectory of a shell or hitting a mine. Some have died victims of ultimate German anger and the Americans shooting errors.

This little book adds its contribution locally, primarily by the publication of pictures from private funds and therefore the more often unpublished, that the memories of this difficult period may not disappear.

Fortunately the conflict ends with the return of democracy that is more social and more concerned of humanism and humanity, and for the first time in centuries, several generations of Mosellans have known peace. Meanwhile, German neighbours have become partners in relations between ordinary borders. So much the better!

I'm just part of the first generation after the war, one that was able to use the small references to the interval, that we called "blockhouse", such as playgrounds and for which the German soldier's helmet was synonymous with bucket to empty septic tanks in this time where there was not yet widespread sewage disposal.

I realize even more the chance of my generation, the first generation to age without having to face a war when I stop to read the names listed on the Memorial to the dead of two world wars in Cattenom and I think of the dead of the wars of related decolonization.



Awarded the Croix de guerre 1939-1945 with bronze star.

Like many other affected municipalities of the sector, the commune of Cattenom gets the Croix de guerre and an official ceremony was organized for this purpose in Thionville, November 11, 1950, the sixth anniversary of the Liberation. Mayor Leon Pirus, Mayor from 1929 to 1940 and then from 1945 to 1952, is surrounded by Andrée Marchal wife Godwin and wife Elise Becker Hippert, where it received the

distinction. The ceremony was presided over by Robert Schuman, Minister for Foreign Affairs, and General Deleuze, Deputy Commander of the 6th military region representing General Zeller. A lavish parade of 25th R.A, firefighters, nurse-stretcher bearers and a decorative closing ceremony. At the same time as Cattenom, 11 other municipalities in the area were decorated with the croix de guerre, Rushden, Bertrange, Budling, Fontoy, Guénange, Illange, Kerling-lès-Sierck, Kirsch-lès-Sierck, Kirschnaumen, Rémelin and Waldwisse.

THIONVILLE
Rédaction - Publicité: 22, Place du Marché - Tél.: 0.49

Peines et joies mêlées en un même souvenir...
Derniers échos d'une journée mémorable



Après avoir épinglé la croix de guerre sur les coussins présentés par les maires de Waldwisse (M. FELTEN) et de Bertrange (M. VEIT), le général DELEUZE décore la commune de Budling dont le maire, M. SCHMITT, présente le coussin. A droite, les maires de Cattenom (M. PIRUS) et de Fontoy (M. REMELINGER) attendent leur tour. (Photo Guy Hofstein.)

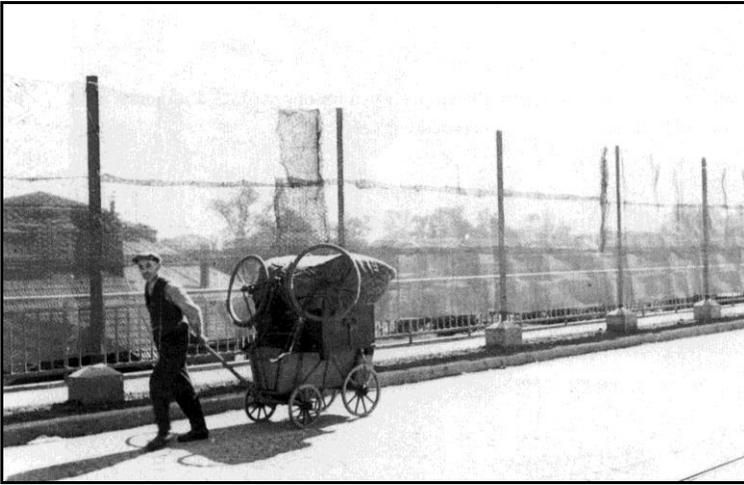
Newspaper "Le Lorrain" Thionville edition of November 14, 1950.

Annex

Traders and entrepreneurs in the area of Thionville and Cattenom agreed to give their support to the publication of this book. They are here gratefully acknowledged.



*Arrival of the civilians to evacuate near the station of Beaugard in May and June 1940:
The bus stopped in an endless stream of dozens and dozens of families from the outlying districts of the city with their baggage. Residents of neighborhoods near the train arrive with their carts loaded to the brim. Assorted parcels piling up along the access roads to the station. (ECPAD / France)*



Crossing the bridge of the railway with a handcart.

The road bridge that passes over the railway station Thionville is protected by a grid of nearly 4 meters high. (EGA/France)



Crossing the bridge of the Allies by bicycle.

Note: the attempt to camouflage the bridge with the paper hanging on the fence, and the tram rails. (EGA/France)



Preparations for departure.

While the city suffered gunfire from a room installed at Bettembourg in the Luxembourg, the inhabitants prepare what they have more precious and pile up furniture in the streets hoping to be able to carry everything in their evacuation residence. (EGA/France)

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Life during the evacuation: the inhabitants of Vienne, after a lukewarm reception, quickly adopted the Mosellan refugees and cohabitation went very well. Entire families of Mosellans remained throughout the war in Vienne and marriages concretized the reconciliations.



Collective meal of the inhabitants of Kirsch-lès-Sierck at Port-de-Piles.



The families of Halstroff and Bizing-Grindorff in Beaumont. Children have quickly forgotten the war and the departure to resume their games.



At Dissay, Catherine Scharff, Catherine Clément, Nicolas Bodeving, Bernadette Bodeving and Joseph Clément are celebrating the birth of one more small Contz villager.

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Basse-Ham inhabitants share their homes with the soldiers stationed in the village in the spring of 1940 and the children enjoy horseback riding.



In April 1940, the regiment in which Eugene Kop of Cattenom serves is found at Sargé in Sarthe.

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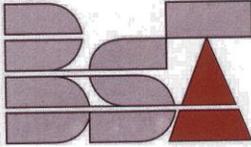
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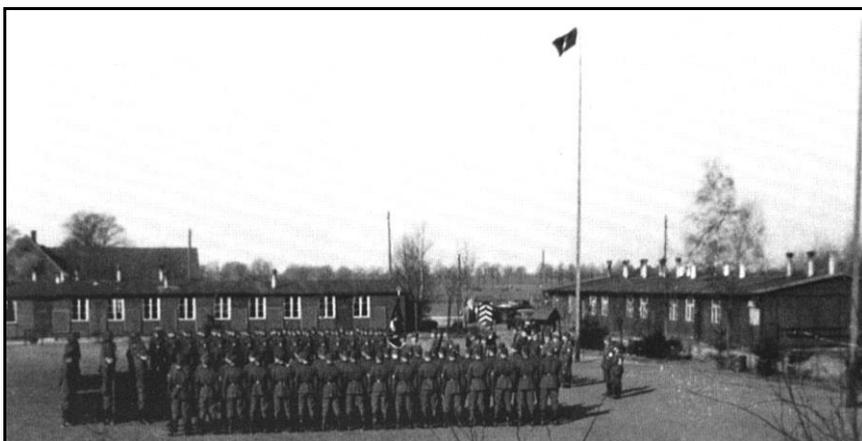


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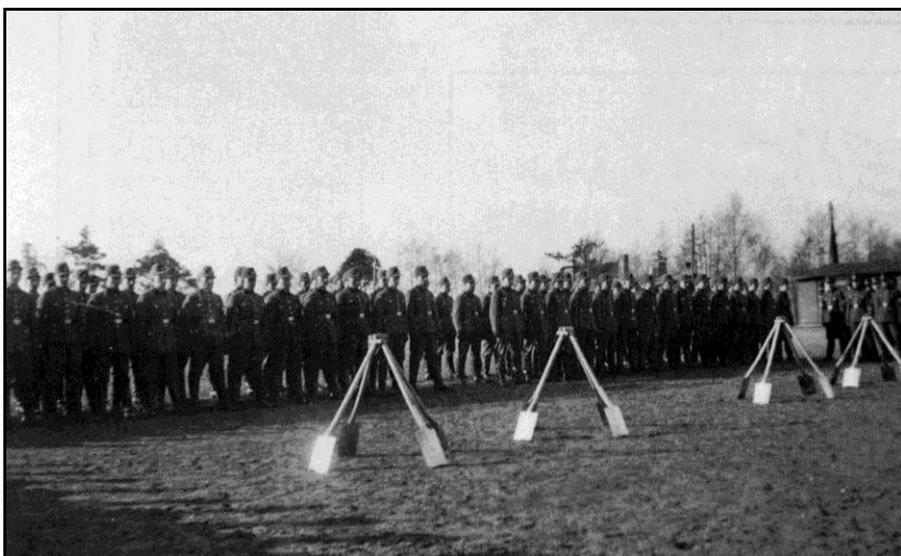


The obligation to serve Germany.

At the end of 1941 the Reichsarbeitsdienst was introduced into Moselle and in the camps of instruction, real barracks, the Mosellans are mixed with the Germans of the Reich.

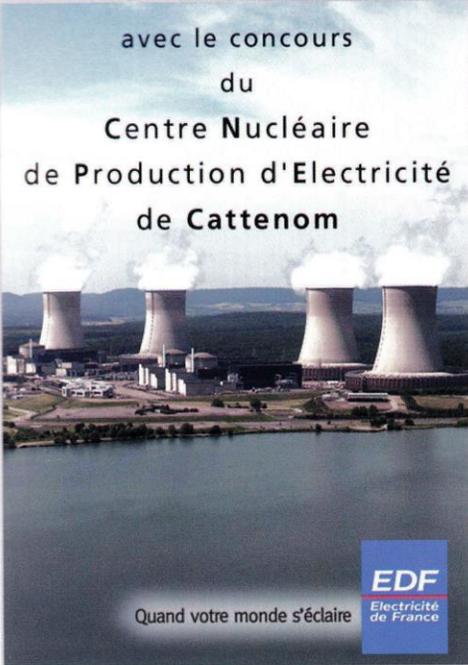


The gun was replaced by a spade, wearing the uniform and strict discipline are explicit: this work service is a military service that hides its name.



In addition to physical exercise and manual labour recruits undergo incessant ideological "brainwashing".

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Schule beschäftigt ist und bei
Fliegeralarm die Straßen
passieren kann.*

Niederjutz, den 18. Juni 1943

Der Polizeileutnant: *Winter*
Der Schul- u. Betriebs-
luftschutzleiter: *Lees*



Authorization delivered to Henriette Kehr to in the streets of Basse-Yutz during air raid alarms.

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Der Inhaber dieser Ausnahmeerlaubnis ist hierdurch berechtigt, das lothringische Gebiet, und zwar Altriv im dienstl. Auftrag — auf eigene Gefahr — zu betreten.

Zweck: Auslieferung

Diese Ausnahmeerlaubnis gilt für den abgestempelten Zeitabschnitt oder vom 28. 11. bis 15. 12. 41

a) nur für den Weg vom und zum Tätigkeitsort und zum Aufenthalt während der Tätigkeit,
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Zeitabschnitte.

Anmerkungen: Das untenstehende ist zu streichen.



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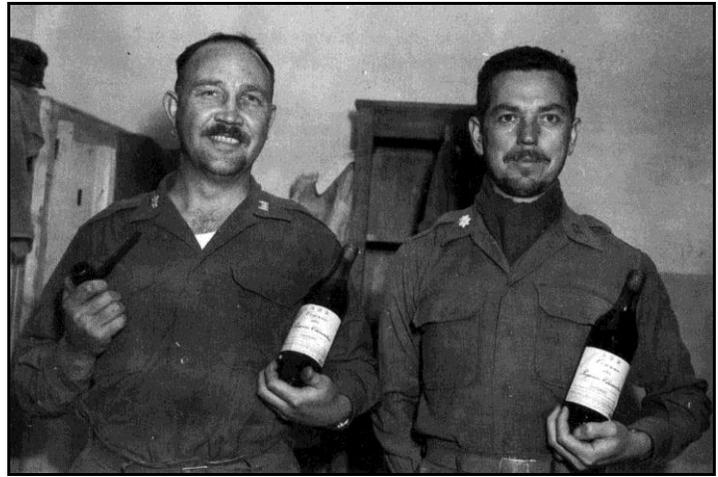


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Lieutenant-Colonel Niles and his Executive Officer Major Robinson, coming to be decorated with the Croix de guerre by the Congress.



American heroes are celebrated.

At Malling Lt Col Niles and his Deputy Robinson seem to appreciate the flavour of the great French wines. The feast takes place after decoration of the cross of the Congress for bravery in combat.



Construction of the pontoon bridge at Malling by American engineering troops. (Moselle River 44/Fund Rothenberger)



André Thuillier family in Serémange.

In 1945, Lieutenant André Thuillier in his uniform resumed his active service after the departure of the Germans from the region of Hayange. Here he poses with his family and his son Jacques who is asked by his mother to look at the lens of the photographer.



During the war, and despite the risks, the children were dressed in Lorraine regional dress that the Germans interpreted as a patriotic French provocation. At every important celebration during the occupation, Ms Thuillier yet dressed her two daughters in this way.



Passage of the crusade for peace Hettange-Grande.

Hettange-Grande, the home of the crusade for peace, on 27 June 1946, was the opportunity to organize a big religious and civic party through the streets of the town. The cross came from Luxembourg and bound for Thionville stopped one day at Hettange-Grande. It is an opportunity for the clergy to show its know-how and to test its ability to mobilize the people. The scouts, all members of the community and communicants of the all parish organizations are associated with the procession led by the nuns and the priests of the sector. Almost the entire population participated with fervor.



RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE
MAIRIE DE
CONTZ-les-BAINS
(Moselle)

Contz-les-Bains, le 10 Septembre 1939

Maire de la Commune de Contz-les-Bains

SANS CONCOURS n° 14

PROCEDES 1

valable pour plusieurs voyages, à dater du DIX Septembre 1939.

pour se rendre à pied, en bicyclette ou en voiture,
de CONTZ-les-BAINS

à son lieu de travail ou à Thionville

à M. Bruant Joseph

Profession: charbonnier Nationalité: française

né le 21 10 1879 à Contz-les-Bains

Domicile à: Rue de la Poste n° 70

est autorisé à faire usage du présent sauf-conduit dans les conditions ci-dessus indiquées.

Je certifie qu'à ma connaissance son attitude au point de vue national n'a jamais donné lieu à remarques et qu'il a CONTZ-les-BAINS le DIX Septembre 1939

Le MAIRE: [Signature]

En pour autorisation:
l'Autorité militaire:

Nota: A défaut de formulaires réglementaires, le présent sauf-conduit a été délivré à titre provisoire.

Permit which was granted to Bruant Joseph to get from Contz-les-Bains to his workplace in Thionville.



The Americans tried to create temporary currency banknotes published in French Francs, the measure failed because the French did not want them.





Moving rabbit hutches in Thionville.

Soldiers help a civilian retrieve his rabbits which managed to get out of their cages. This Thionvilliger wants to save his rabbits and take them during the evacuation of the city in June 1940 (ECPAD/France).

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RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

EXTRAIT DE LA DÉCISION N° 42

Le Secrétaire d'Etat aux Forces Armées « Guerre »

CITE A L'ORDRE DE LA BRIGADE

Commune de CATTENOM (Moselle)

« Village éprouvé par les bombardements et dont la population eut à déplorer cinq tués, 8 blessés, n'a cessé au cours de quatre années d'occupation, de manifester son attachement à la France. A supporté les rigueurs d'un occupant brutal avec un courage digne d'éloges. »

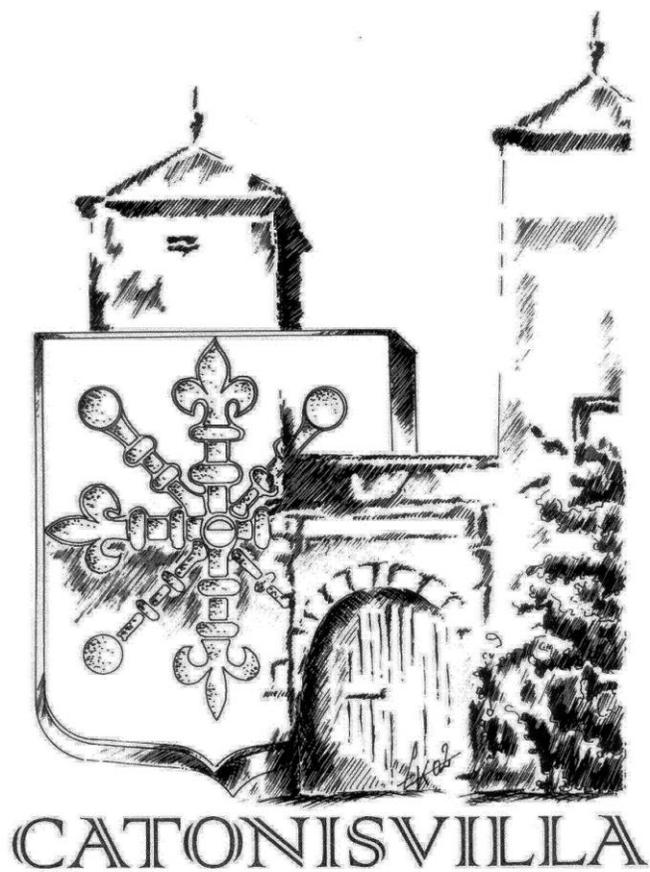
*Ces citations comportent l'attribution de la Croix de Guerre 1939-1945
avec étoile de bronze.*

*A Paris, le 1^{er} juillet 1948
Signé : Max LEJEUNE*

EXTRAIT CERTIFIÉ CONFORME

*A Pau, le 13 juillet 2004
Le lieutenant-colonel A. DAVID
directeur du bureau central
d'archives administratives militaires*





CATONISVILLA

Conception & Réalisation

CATONISVILLA

Juin 2004

7 Allée de la Libération

57570 Cattenom

Tél : 03.82.55.34.99

Dépôt légal : septembre 2004

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