



"I Never Said Goodbye": Survivor Helene Joffe

Documentary by the Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre



Setting the context:
What was the Holocaust?

The Holocaust

**The planned, systematic mass-murder of 6 million
Jews (two-thirds of European Jewry)
by the Nazi government and their collaborators
during the Second World War.**

- *“complete destruction by burning” (from the Greek hólos, “whole” and kaustós, “burnt”)*
- *Also referred to as the Shoah (שואה) – “calamity”*

Genocide

The intentional, deliberate and systematic destruction of a group of people because of their ethnicity, nationality or religion.

It is always supported by the government of the people committing the genocide.

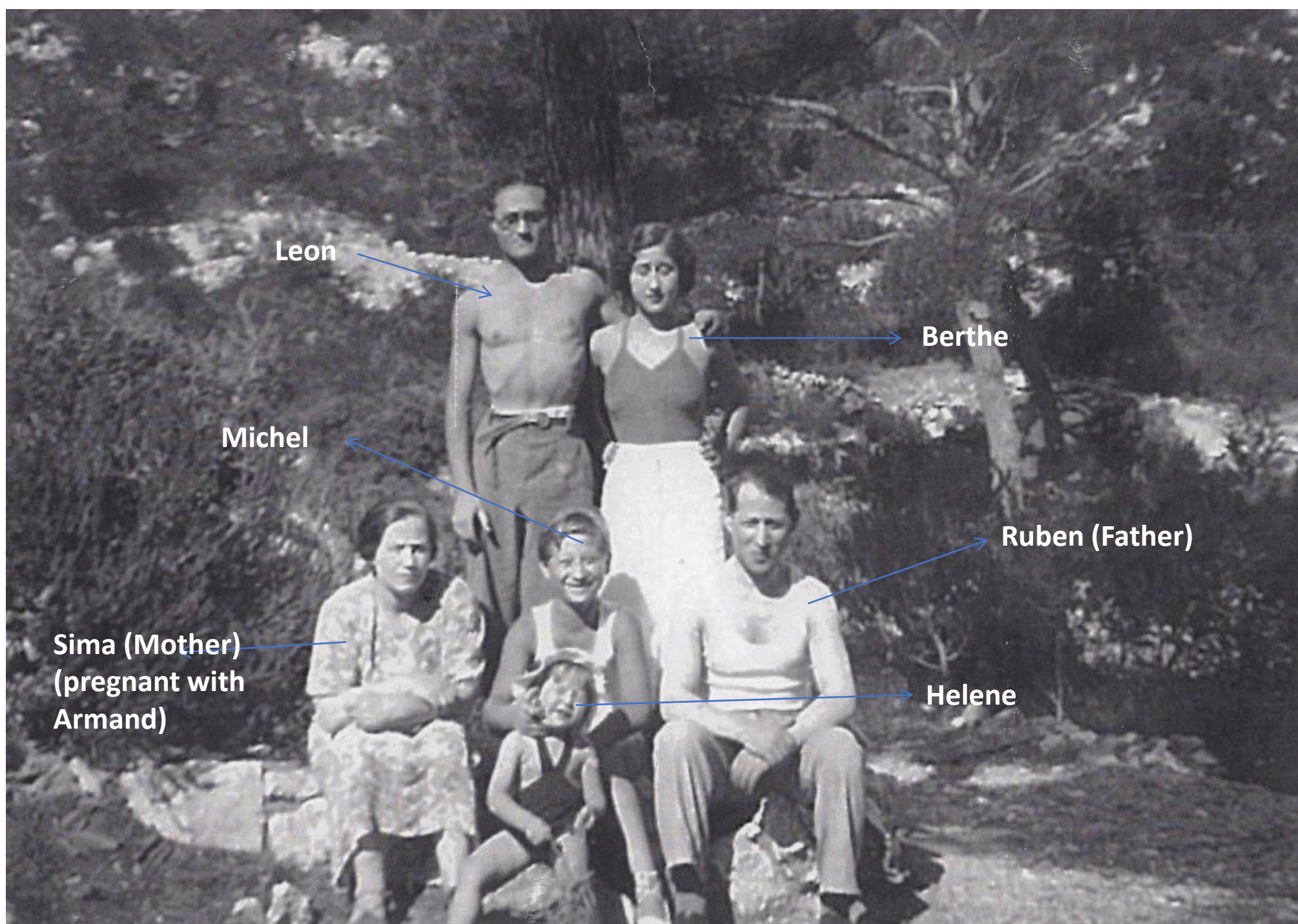
Nazi Domination in Europe, WWII



Pre-war life in France (1930s):
Helene Mindel & family



Helene
grows up in
Marseille,
France,
1930s



Helene and
family,
1930s
(Pre-WWII)

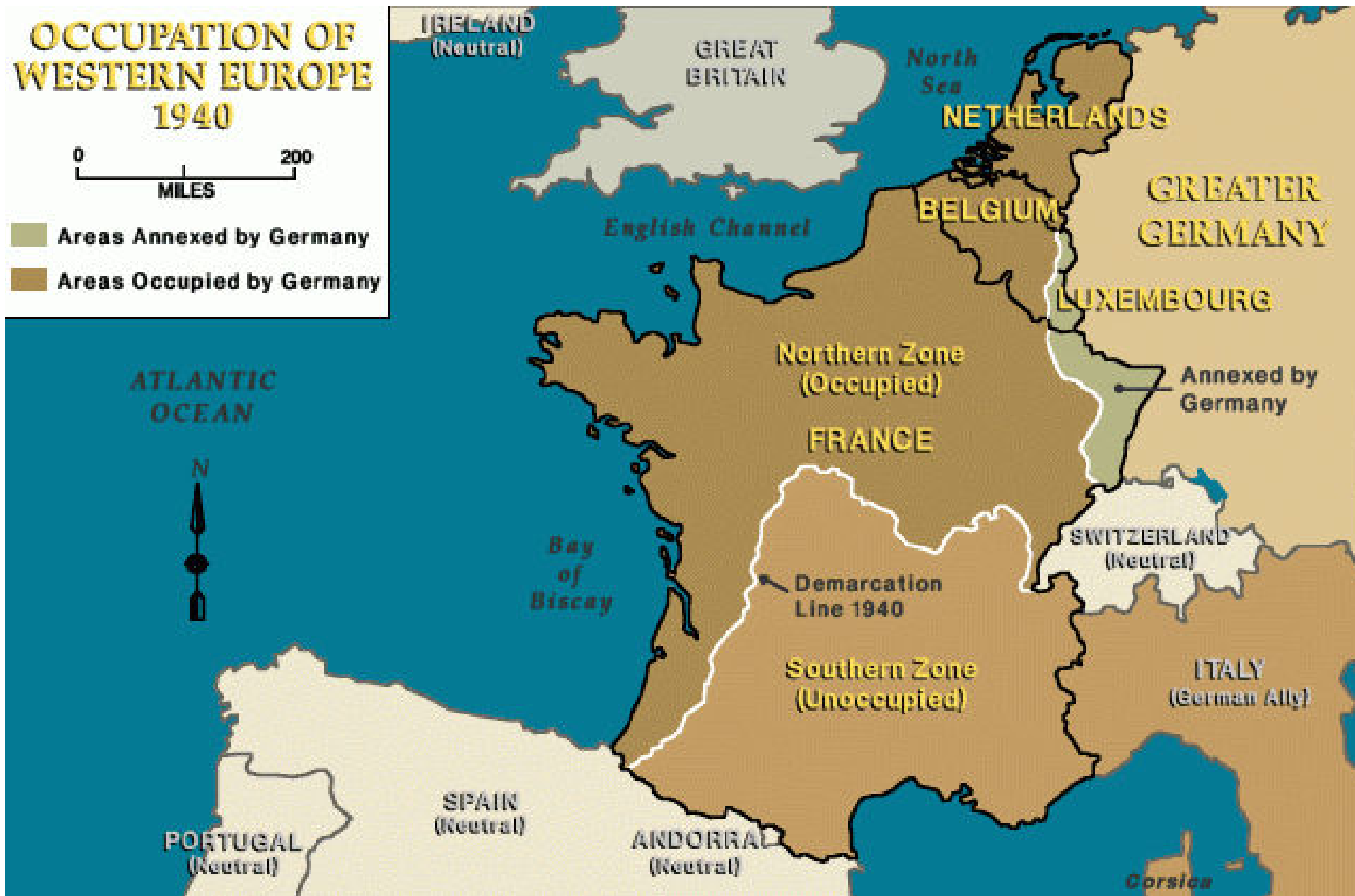
World War II (1939-1945):

Nazi occupation of Europe

OCCUPATION OF WESTERN EUROPE 1940

0 200
MILES

Areas Annexed by Germany
Areas Occupied by Germany

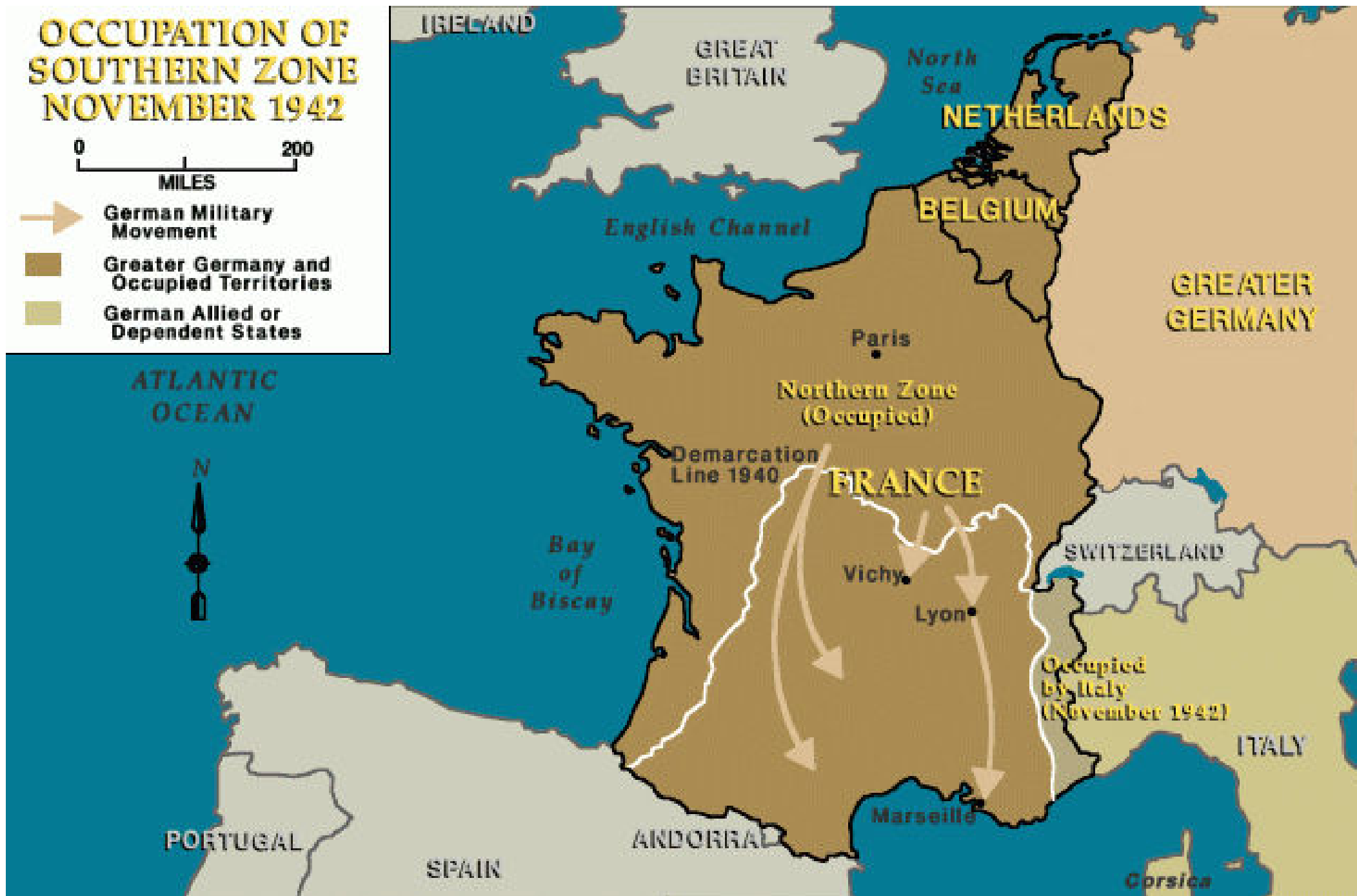


Nazi
occupation
of France,
May 1940

OCCUPATION OF SOUTHERN ZONE NOVEMBER 1942

0 200
MILES

- German Military Movement
- Greater Germany and Occupied Territories
- German Allied or Dependent States



Nazi
occupation
of
Marseille,
November
1942

Nazi deportations of French Jews 22 January 1943

The story of
Ruben Mindel



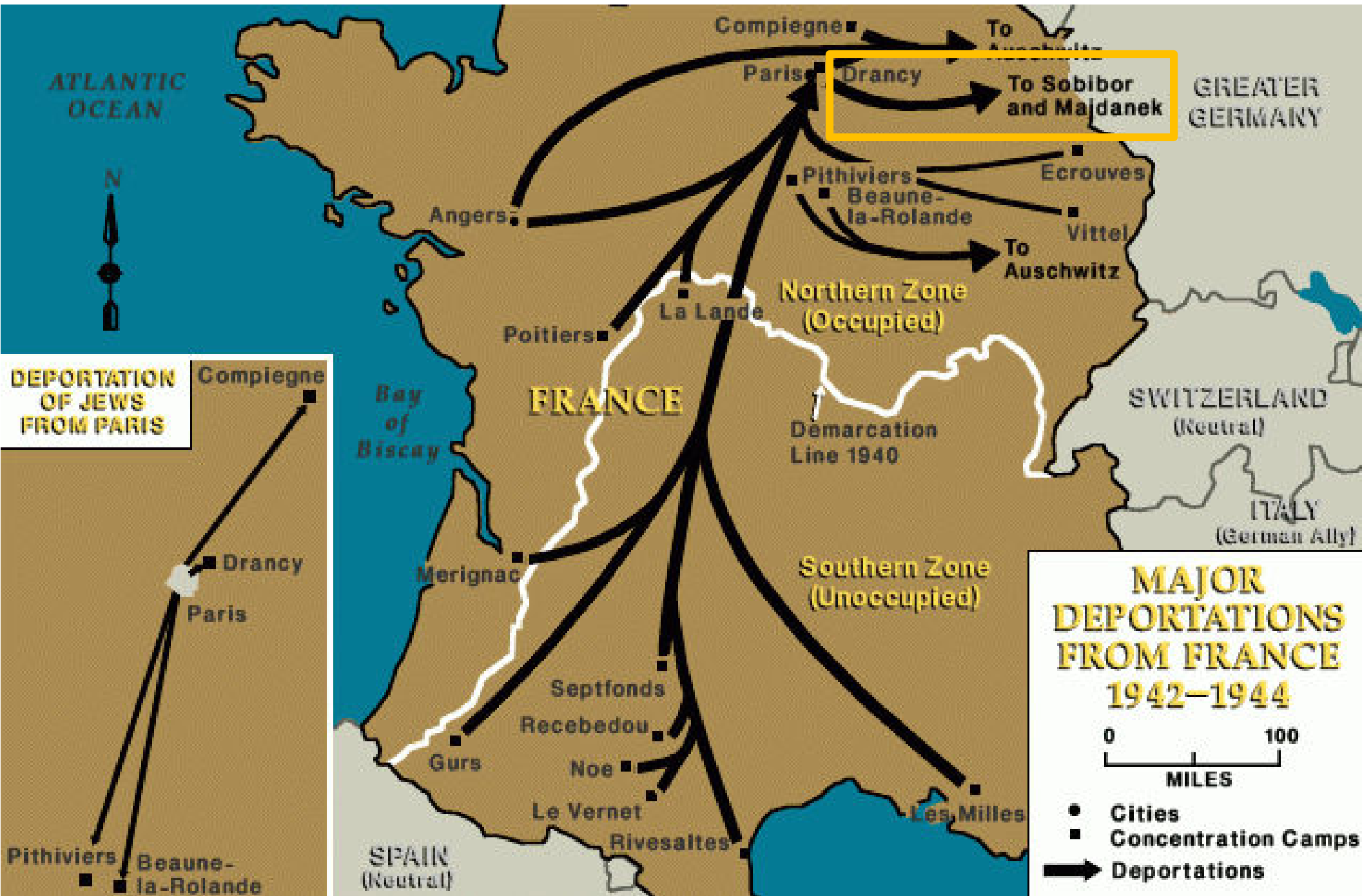
CAMPS IN FRANCE 1942



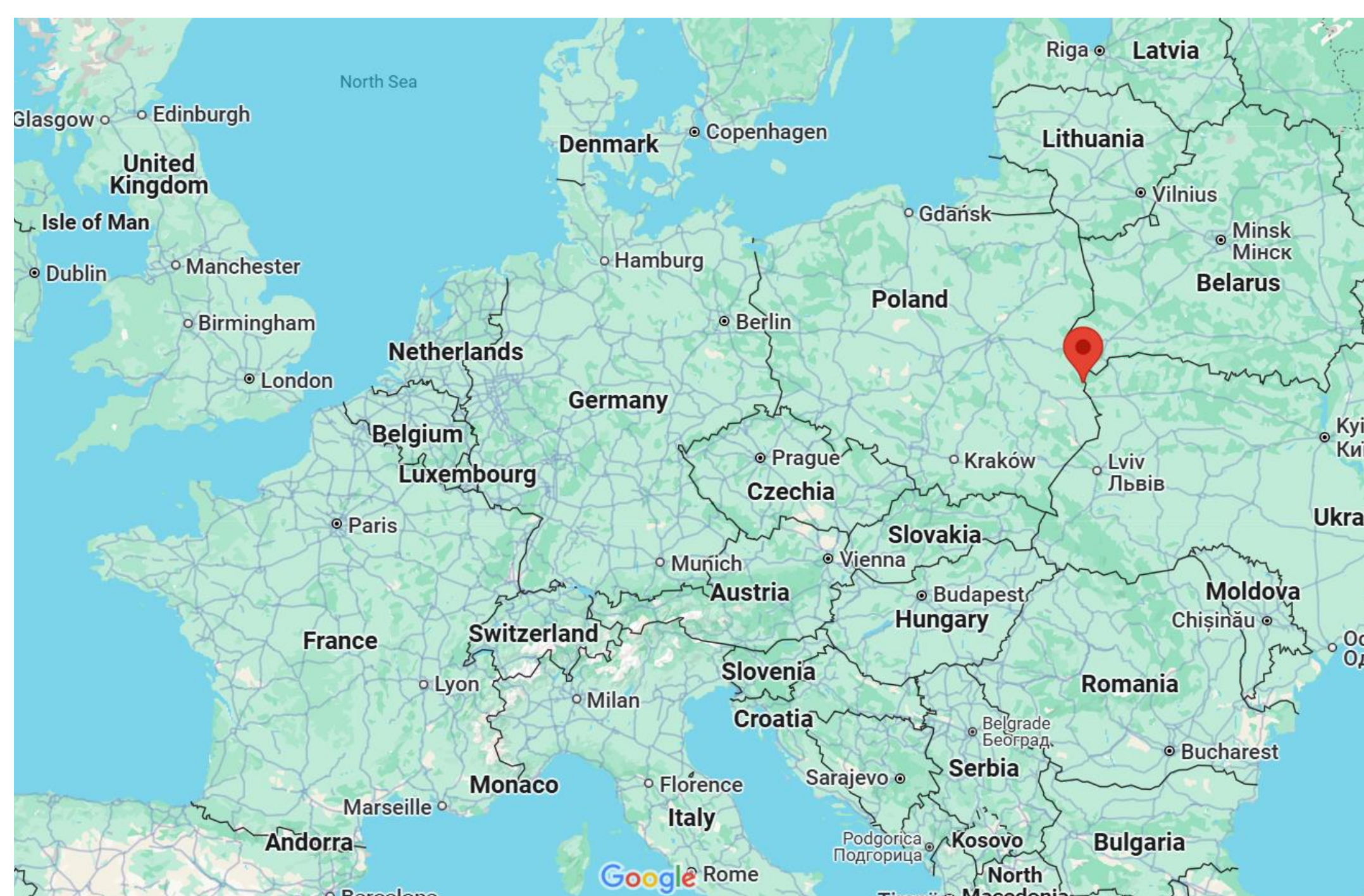
- Vichy Camps
- German Camps



Ruben is deported by the Nazis to **Drancy transit camp**, near Paris, January 1943



Ruben is deported from **Drancy** (France) to **Sobibor Death Camp** (Nazi-occupied Poland), early 1943



Ruben
murdered at
Sobibor
Death Camp
in Nazi-
occupied
Poland,
1943.

(Camp location
shown here on
modern-day map.)



Sobibor
Memorial
site,
Poland

Nazi deportations of French Jews

23 January 1943

Helene and the rest of her family:
Fréjus camp, and then into hiding



Nazi round-up of
French Jews in
the port of
Marseille,
January 1943



Bundesarchiv. Bild 101I-027-1477-16 / Fotoa(r)f(in): Vennemann. Wolfaand



Bundesarchiv. Bild 101I-027-1477-21 / Fotoa(r)f(in): Vennemann. Wolfaand



Bundesarchiv. Bild 101I-027-1476-37A / Fotoa(r)f(in): Vennemann. Wolfaand



Bundesarchiv. Bild 101I-027-1477-19 / Fotoa(r)f(in): Vennemann. Wolfaand

*Helene recalls
people bringing
their pets.
Her doll is
trampled on.*



Joining the French Resistance

Helene's siblings:
Leon, Michel, Berthe

JEWISH PARTISAN ACTIVITY IN WESTERN EUROPE 1942-1944

0 100
MILES





Leon Mindel

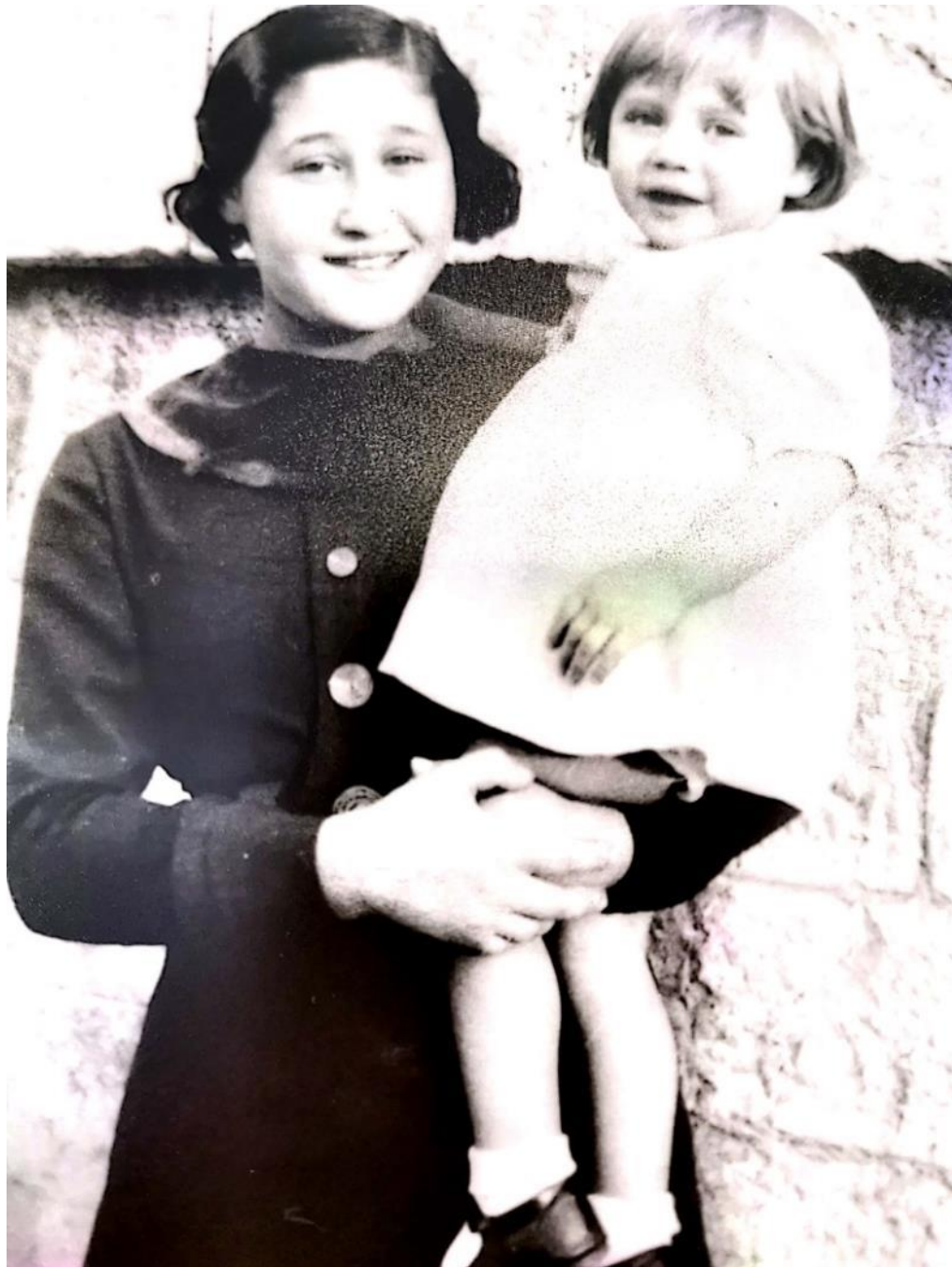




FORCES FRANÇAISES DE L'INTÉRIEUR	
<u>CARTE INDIVIDUELLE</u>	
F - T - P - F	
Nom et Prénoms	M I N D E L Michel
Matricule	52 124
Adresse	104 Bd Perier 104
Date et lieu de naissance	21 Janv 1924 M A R S E I L L E
Profession	Employé
Date de l'enrôlement	Janvier 1945

EMPREINTES	
	
Grade	LIEUT

Michel Mindel



Berthe Mindel

(Here with Helene, pre-war)

Flight into hiding

Helene and her
brother Armand



German authorities continued the deportations of French Jews until August 1944.

Approximately 77,000 Jews living in France perished in concentration camps and killing centers – the overwhelming majority of them at Auschwitz.

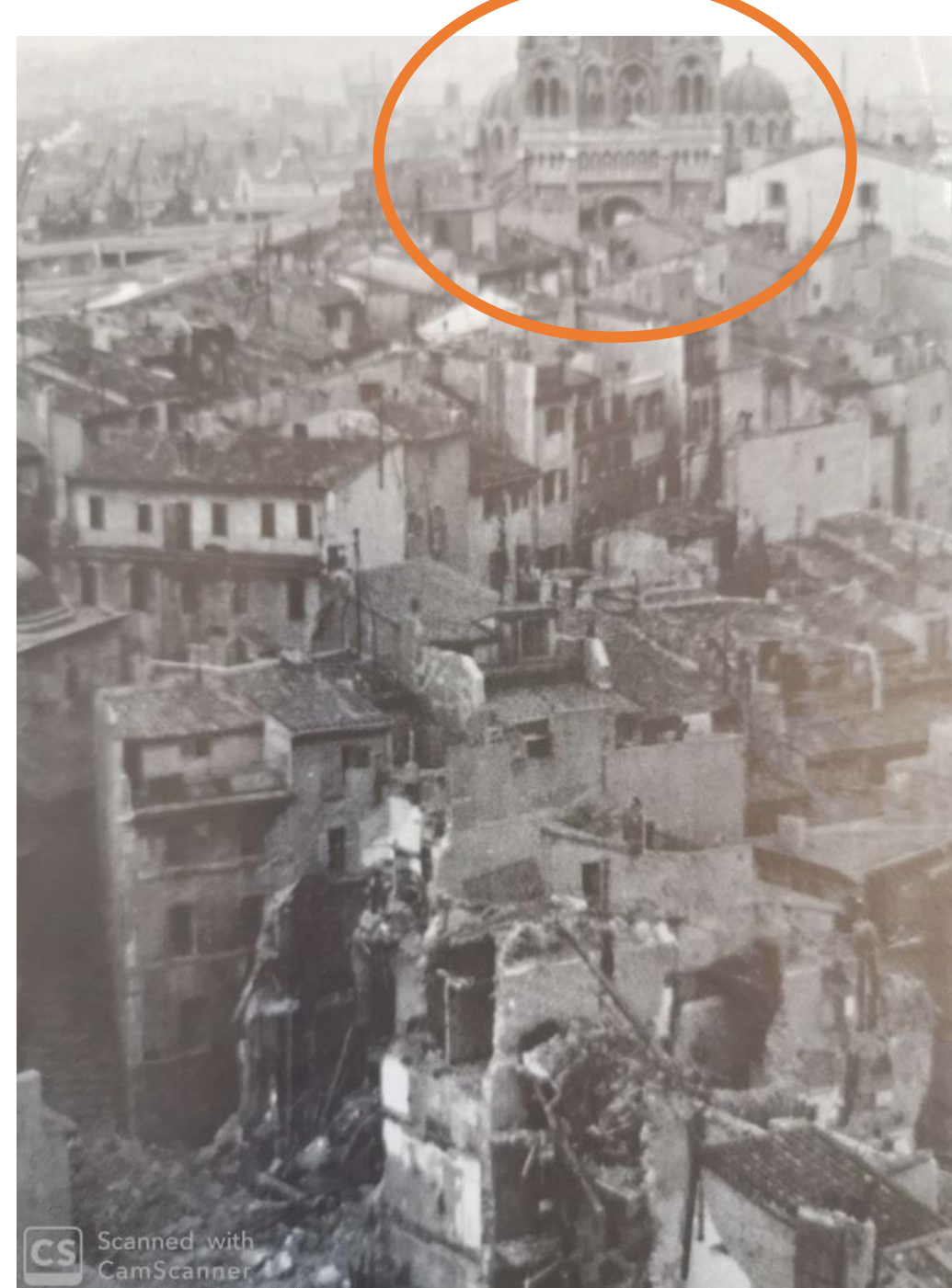
Liberation – 1945

The Mindel family is reunited
in France



Helene and
family, pre-war
(left).

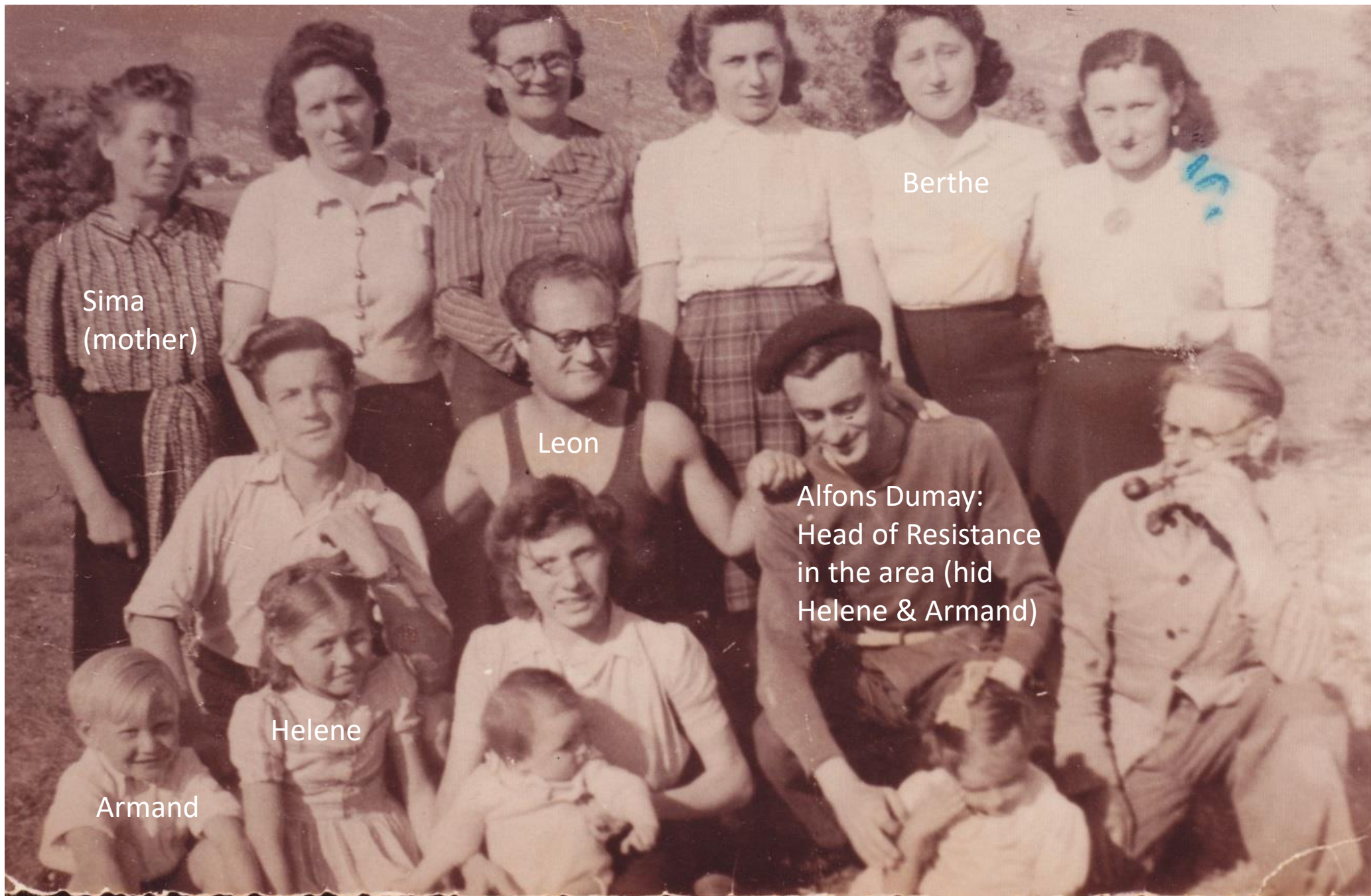
Destruction from
WWII (right).



Castellane Marseille

Michel was known as “the madman of Castellane for fighting the Nazis at this fountain, during the liberation of France.





Reunited in 1945

Notes:

Brother **Michel** survived but does not appear in this photograph.

Sadly **Ruben** (father) is missing. Later it would be discovered that he was murdered by the Nazis at Sobibor Death Camp.



La République française
en hommage aux victimes
des persécutions racistes et antisémites
et des crimes contre l'humanité
commis sous l'autorité de fait
dite "Gouvernement de l'Etat français"
(1940 - 1944)
N'oublions jamais

Memorial
acknowledging
the role of
France in the
deportation of
French Jews
during the
Holocaust.

Coming to South Africa

Helene met and married her
husband Louis Joffe.





Speaking to many school groups about her story of survival.



Receiving the Legion of Honor, the highest civilian honor in France.



“I Never Said Goodbye” (30 mins)

Group A (Focus on Rescue/ Resistance):

*Look for the specific actions – both small and large – that **ordinary people** and the **French Resistance** took to keep Helene and her family safe or hidden.*

Group B (Focus on Identity/ Resilience):

*Pay attention to what **Helene had to give up** or change (like her daily routine, her name) to stay alive, and how she coped **emotionally** as a child at the time.*

“I Never Said Goodbye” (30 mins)

Group A (Focus on Rescue/ Resistance):

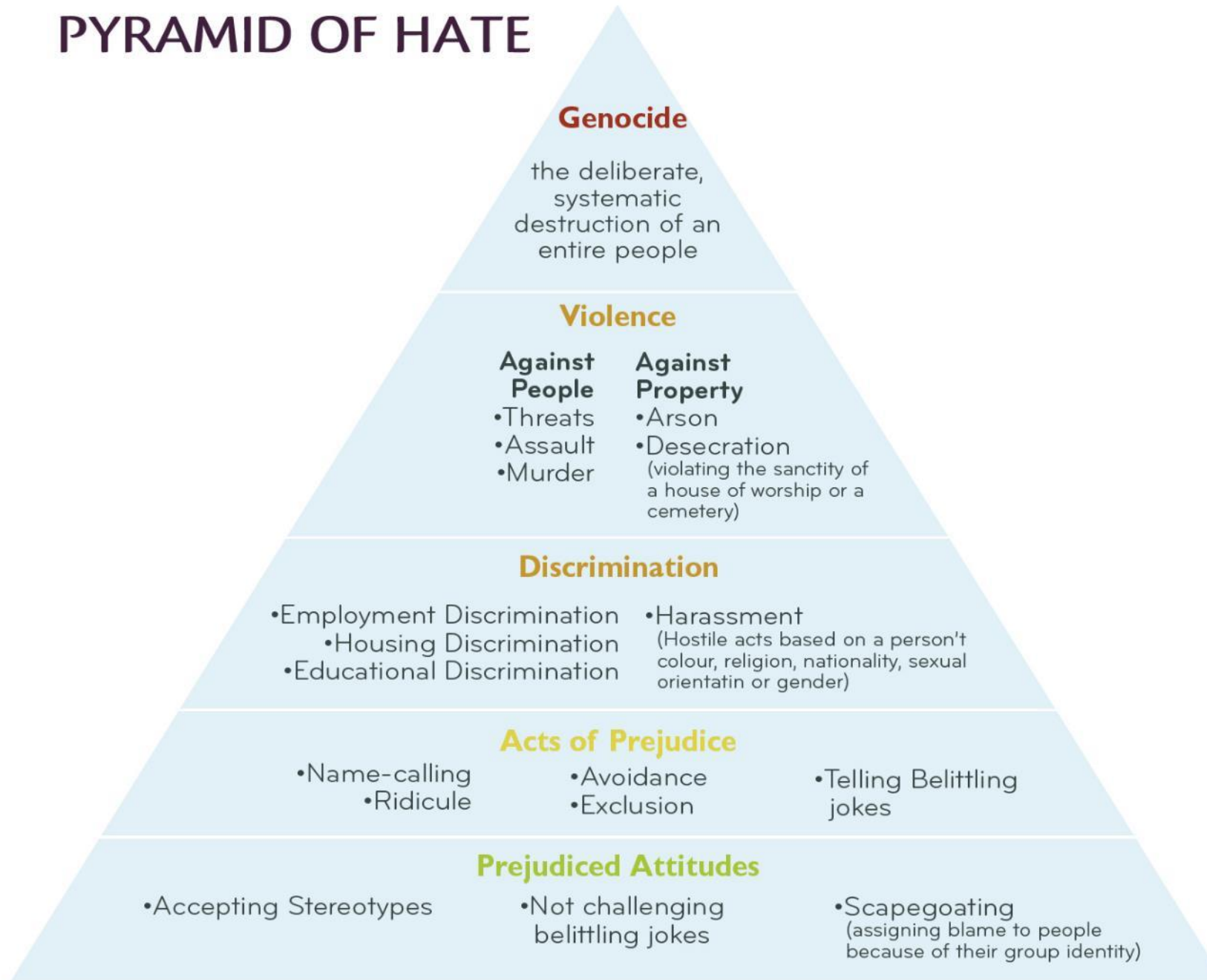
What stood out to you about how ordinary people and the French Resistance kept Helene and her family safe?

“I Never Said Goodbye” (30 mins)

Group B (Focus on Identity/ Resilience):

What did survival cost Helene emotionally as an 8-year-old child?

PYRAMID OF HATE



Pre-war life	Wartime experiences
Helene Mindel (The Reality)	
Jewish identity and heritage	
Lived in a vibrant city (Marseilles)	
Close with her parents and siblings	
Had freedom and a happy childhood	

Pre-war life	Wartime experiences
Helene Mindel (The Reality)	Helene Arnaud (The false identity, in hiding)
Jewish identity and heritage	False identity (French Catholic), ban on practising Jewish traditions or festivals.
Lived in a vibrant city (Marseilles)	Hidden in quiet, rural isolation.
Close with her parents and siblings	Separated – had to pretend her past never existed.
Had freedom and a happy childhood	Limited freedom, had to do physical tasks to survive. Lived in fear of being discovered.