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Résumé de l'article

The chapter describes Madeleine Lucette Ferraille, who later changed her name to Ruth Ben David/Blau, during World War Two in France. When the war broke, Lucette was married to a handsome French soldier and gave him a son, but she wanted more out of life than was within easy reach—more, indeed, than the Vichy regime encouraged. By 1943, she was divorced, with a BA from the University of Toulouse. That year, she also helped a female Jewish refugee escape deportation and certain death. Recruited by the Resistance in early 1944, Lucette, who was beautiful as well as brilliant, made her way into the heart of the local Gestapo by becoming the mistress of a Waffen-SS officer, continuing to spy on the Nazi headquarters just a few months before D-Day.

Ruth Blau: A Life of Purpose and Paradox

Motti Inbari

Very few people of the twentieth century had a life story as thrilling as Ruth Ben David/Blau. She was born in northern France in 1920, but as a toddler, her family moved to Paris. Her born name was Madeleine Lucette Ferraille, the only girl of a falling-apart family with a sick mother and an abusive father. Born Roman Catholic, as a young woman, she decided to renounce her birth religion and embarked on a spiritual quest first with Seventh-Day Adventists, and eventually found herself at the heart of the Jewish ultra-Orthodox enclave in Jerusalem. Ruth was a woman of contradictions: a lapsed Catholic who became a Haredi Jew; a free-thinking and promiscuous Parisian who closed herself off in Jerusalem in an environment that oppresses women; a devoted mother to an only son who caused immeasurable suffering to other parents who also had a son; a beautiful young woman who married an elderly and sterile man; someone who ostensibly found her placed in the traditional world of Meah Shearim, yet rebelled against the limited role of the submissive wife, fought to get what she wanted, and ultimately became almost a leader in her own right. How can we explain all these twists and turns?

The following section is an excerpt from the book: Motti Inbari, *Ruth Blau: A Life of Paradox and Purpose* (Indiana University Press, 2023), 25-47. © 2023 by Motti Inbari. Used by permission of the publisher, Indiana University Press.

Resistance

On October 16, 1944, the French military intelligence agency, the Deuxième Bureau, issued a confidential memo with the order to arrest Lucette Ferraille. The notice indicated that Lucette was on the run and gave two addresses where she might be hiding, one in Toulouse and the other in Paris.

The memo described Lucette as an elegant blue-eyed woman aged twenty-three to twenty-four, with a height of 1.60–1.65 meters (5′2″–5′4″), blond (most likely dyed), and rather stout. It

added that she held a bachelor degree in literature and spoke English. She was a school teacher in several locations from November 1939 to October 1944. However, from October 1943 through October 1944, she was employed as a teacher in Arrau in the Pyrenees only by title and did not actually work.

The charges against "Baud's wife," as the document said, were that she had socialized with a certain Captain Martin of the Luftwaffe, the German army, who was last seen in Dijon in eastern France, and that Martin also belonged to the SRA, the German Intelligence Services. The document included the accusation that "the Baud's wife may herself have been part of the GESTAPO" (capitalization from original).

About a week later, the French police found Lucette in Tarbes, and she was held for interrogation between October 23 and October 28, after which they released her. After the liberation of France, women who collaborated with the Nazis or even had affairs with Nazi soldiers had their hair shaved in disgrace, were stripped naked, and were paraded in the streets while people around shouted, spit, or even hit them. After five days of interrogations, not a single hair fell from Lucette's head. But still, where did these accusations come from? What does it mean that Lucette was a teacher only by title: If she was not teaching in the classroom, what else was she doing? Who was Captain Martin, and how does he relate to the Gestapo? The documents found at the Service Historique de la Defense, France's military archives, reveal a story Ruth never told.

Das Reich

A few months before D-Day, in a conference room at his headquarters in East Prussia, Adolf Hitler and his staff discussed what additional units they should remove from the eastern front to reinforce their forces in France. The Nazis anticipated an Allied invasion, and Hitler decided to relocate the Second SS Panzer Division, known as Das Reich, to France.[1]

Das Reich was one of the most prestigious armored divisions of Nazi Germany. It had scored some spectacular victories in the war, but its most significant challenge was yet to come on the French front. Captain Martin was a high-ranking intelligence officer in Das Reich, while Lucette's destiny became embroiled with the soldiers in the division.

Das Reich was part of the Waffen-SS, a wing of the Nazi military headed by Heinrich Himmler. By late 1943, the Waffen-SS had won the führer's trust and had grown exponentially.

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The SS formations became the spearhead of Germany's armies on the eastern front and served on every major front except North Africa. The Waffen-SS as a whole earned a dual reputation for their remarkable aggression and stamina on the battlefield and their murderous atrocities against civilians and prisoners. The Waffen-SS had become the fire brigade of Hitler's empire, rushing to each new crisis. In January 1944, Heinrich Himmler said: "So far, the Waffen-SS has never under any circumstances caused disappointment."[2]

Das Reich's first great victory came during the Nazi invasion of France, where the division defeated the French and British armies at Calais in 1940. In 1941, Hitler redeployed it to invade Yugoslavia, and from there, it marched toward the Soviet Union. The division captured Kyiv, massacring the city's Jewish community, and then headed for Moscow, reaching a point just ten miles from the city's center. As winter arrived and the war became a battle of attrition, the division was reassigned to Krakow, Poland. Even during the retreat of the Nazi army, Das Reich fought with distinction throughout the great summer battles of 1943, especially in the slow fight back to the Dnieper in August. After losing Kyiv by the end of 1943, the remnants of Das Reich were sent to France to combat the Resistance and prepare for the Allied invasion.

By the spring of 1944, Germany had already lost around one million soldiers on the eastern front, which consumed endless men and resources. Divisions that were sent to France had either been decimated in Russia or were untrained and medically unfit. It would be an exaggeration to suggest that Das Reich was merely a shadow of its former glory, but it was far removed from the elite all-volunteer force that had swept into Russia with the Wehrmacht in June 1941. To fill the ranks, nine thousand replacements flooded the division: untrained boys, almost all aged seventeen or eighteen, many of them Hungarian or Romanian, and with a large contingent from Alsace. Three months before one of the great battles of history, the recruits held a weapon for the first time.[3]

Hitler decided that the division headquarters and training center would be in Montauban, just north of Toulouse. There Das Reich could prepare for the battle in a quiet area, well-positioned to intervene along France's north or south coasts when the Allies landed.

The division had three main wings: Panzer tanks, infantry, and secret police (Gestapo). The Gestapo's primary mission was to crush the Resistance, and Das Reich's officers did not shy away from brutality. The barbarity of the Gestapo caused dread among the civilian population and the

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various Resistance movements in southern France. From March 1944, when the division camped in the Toulouse area, until June, with the invasion at Normandy, Das Reich lived up to its appalling reputation.[4]

When the Allies landed in Normandy on June 6, 1944, the division was ordered to move to the frontline from its positions. Along the way, the French Resistance delayed it by frequent acts of sabotage. The soldiers responded furiously, executing 99 civilians in Tulle in retaliation for the death of some 40 German soldiers. On June 10, the capture of an SS military camp by the Resistance served as an excuse for the Das Reich soldiers to destroy the peaceful village of Oradour-sur-Glane near Limoges. This act entailed the murder of 640 civilian men, women, and children.

The German armies could not uphold the Allies invasion, although they fought ferociously. By January 1945, Das Reich had collapsed on the French border, but the division was revived and sent to Hungary to save the country's vital oil fields. After failing on that front, what was left of the division retreated to Austria and Dresden, Germany. Its last operation was to evacuate German civilians from Prague. Das Reich was the most decorated division in the history of Nazi Germany.[5]

As a secret agent, Lucette penetrated the headquarters of the Das Reich Gestapo section in Montauban after she joined the Alliance resistance underground.

La Résistance

France fell on May 10, 1940, and on June 22, France and Germany signed the Second Armistice at Compiègne. The so-called neutral Vichy government, headed by Marshal Philippe Pétain, superseded the Third Republic. Germany occupied the north and west coasts of France and their hinterlands, while the collaborative Vichy regime controlled its southern parts. The Allied invasion of Normandy, D-Day, came nearly four years later on June 6, 1944, and by September 1944, most of France had been liberated.

As Nazi troops marched into Paris in June 1940, over six million French citizens flooded the south, the most significant single movement in Europe since the Dark Ages. According to American diplomat and historian George Kennan, who witnessed the flight, the scene was one of "panic, defeat and demoralization of a disintegrating society."[6]

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In a radio broadcast to his countrymen, the eighty-four-year-old Marshal Pétain blamed the defeat on "too few arms, too few allies" and also on the country's moral failures, which included a lack of discipline and "an unfortunate spirit of pleasure." Many in France were joyful at Pétain's capitulation; they laughed, kissed each other, and drank to Pétain's health. On June 25, 1940, the marshal announced the terms of the armistice. In a speech he gave that day, he demanded that the French people show a new spirit of sacrifice. France was to be divided between occupied and unoccupied territories.[7]

A week earlier, a relatively unknown French two-star general, Charles De Gaulle, sat in front of a microphone at BBC Broadcasting House in London and gave his own speech. Lasting less than six minutes, his words were a passionate rejection of the armistice with Nazi Germany. Very few French people responded to de Gaulle's speech, primarily because it was difficult not to accept Pétain's logic that Nazi Germany had won. Indeed, most saw de Gaulle as irrelevant, while Pétain won massive support. As scholar Olivier Wievioka has shown, out of a population of some 40 million people, there were no more than 300,000 to 500,000 women and men in the "army of the shadows," the French Resistance.

Moreover, the Resistance itself was not a united movement but included many subgroups that were not always on good terms with each other. Not all the Resistance was military—many of the groups concentrated on publishing a clandestine press that challenged the Vichy regime and Nazism on the ideological level. Furthermore, the Communist Party adopted an ambiguous position. In light of the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact of August 1939, the party only engaged in full-blown anti-Nazi resistance after Germany invaded the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941.[8]

Among the millions who fled out of Paris was Marie-Madeleine Fourcade, who refused to reconcile herself to France's defeat and, as early as 1940, decided to defy the Nazis. In 1941, at the age of thirty-one, she became *la patronne* (the boss) of what would emerge as the largest and most important Allied intelligence network in France. It supplied the British and American high commands with vital German military secrets throughout the war, including information about troop movements, submarine sailing schedules, fortifications, and coastal gun emplacements as well as the Reich's new terror weapons, the V-1 flying bomb and the V-2 rocket.

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Throughout the conflict, Fourcade, the only woman to head a significant Resistance network in France, commanded three thousand agents, infiltrating every major port and sizable town. As we will see, her group also entered Nazi headquarters. The agents came from all segments of society. Thanks to Fourcade's determined efforts, almost 20 percent were women—the highest proportion in any Resistance organization in France.

Her group's formal name was Alliance, but the Gestapo called it Noah's Ark because its agents used the names of animals and birds as their aliases. Fourcade was the Hedgehog, an animal that, though small, even a lion would hesitate to bite.

Until July 1944, Marie-Madeleine Fourcade managed to elude her foes like the animal she named herself. Many others in her network were less fortunate. For the previous year and a half, the Gestapo had engaged in a full-scale offensive to wipe out the Alliance. Hundreds of agents had been captured in subsequent arrests and killings; entire organization sections had been annihilated. By the summer of 1944, Fourcade had no idea how many of her people were still alive. Dozens, including some of her closest associates, had already been tortured and executed. After each crackdown, the Gestapo were sure they had destroyed the group, but she was able to cobble together a new infrastructure each time.[9]

One of the recruits to the network was a young woman living in southern France, Madeleine Lucette Ferraille.

Marriage and Divorce

In 1937, a German friend suggested that Lucette (age seventeen) spend the summer with his family in Stuttgart, and all involved were happy to send Lucette off on the proposed vacation. Over the course of the correspondence between her father and his friend, it transpired that the friend had become a Nazi. Accordingly, the father decided not to send her to Germany but, instead, for a French Rivera vacation.

In Nice, Lucette met Henri Baud, a young man who two years later became her husband. From Ruth's autobiography, we learn that he was handsome, had no parents, and lived in a boarding school with his brother, under the supervision of an uncle. The summer ended, but Lucette and Henri maintained a long-distance relationship; she returned to Paris while Henri remained in Nice. He proposed to her in 1938, and Lucette received her mother's approval but not

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that of her father, who disliked and never met his son-in-law. Ruth later remarked that had her father been reasonable, she would certainly have paid attention to his views, but he offered no grounds for his rejection of the match except to claim that she was too young. On September 5, 1939, the couple married in southern France: Henri was twenty-one, and Lucette was nineteen, just finishing high school. Four days before their wedding day, war broke out. The groom had already been drafted to the army, and the wedding took place in the town where he was stationed. Very shortly after that, Henri left for the Maginot Line, a chain of concrete fortifications, obstacles, and weapon installations built by France in the 1930s to deter invasion by Nazi Germany.

Lucette became pregnant but suffered a miscarriage. She decided to remain in the Pyrenees in southern France near the Spanish border, anticipating that Paris would be bombarded, and she invited her mother to join her. She found a job as a teacher, and when her husband came to visit for a few days after three months of the war, she became pregnant again.[10]

In June 1940, France capitulated, and Germany seized two million French prisoners of war, sending them to camps in Germany, among them Henri Baud. The pregnant Lucette rented a small house in Tarbes in the Pyrenees. A few weeks before she was due to give birth, Henri suddenly appeared, having managed to jump off a train carrying prisoners to Germany.

On October 1, 1940, Claude was born. Lucette had to stay in the nursing home for two months after she developed phlebitis in her legs and could not walk. During her long sickness, she lost her job, but after returning home, she found another job, as did her husband, who found a job at the postal office.

When Claude was one year old, Lucette enrolled at the University of Toulouse to become an art and philosophy teacher. Lucette had lost interest in her husband a little more than a year into their marriage. She felt that she had matured and become a mother, while Henri had remained "the same typically thoughtless southern French young man." After returning home from work, his main ambition was to dress up in fine clothes and go for a walk in the center of town, where the youth would gather. Ruth later said that Henri was proud of her, her looks, and their splendid son. But she had enough of that. She recalls that her parents forced her almost every Sunday to walk for hours along the boulevards of Paris. They would sit in cafés and stare at the passing crowd, and she found the experience boring and pointless: "I could not spend my life like that and be

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happy." She wanted to advance her husband socially and spiritually, but he had no interest in studying and showed no evidence of any spiritual needs. He still loved her, but there was no intellectual or spiritual bond to hold them together. She realized that she desired him only for his looks, but she aspired for more and eventually decided to divorce him. The couple signed their divorce papers in 1942. Henri was shocked and bitter, and he left Lucette and their son without ever paying alimony or seeing his son.[11] Only seventy years later would father and son finally meet again in Nice, France, on the initiative of Claude (now called Uriel); by this time, his aging father was already in his nineties.

Choosing to divorce in the middle of the war and the harsh conditions in the unoccupied part of France was not an easy decision. Even before the war, France had been a male-dominated society where women were expected to be in a family and take care of the household.

Under the Vichy regime, however, the emphasis on the family was accentuated, and the government clearly favored the traditional family model. The regime blamed women for the failure of France, claiming that they had neglected their duty to the nation by failing to produce enough children. Marshal Pétain even said that "the state should strike down laws permitting divorce, against the winds and storms of public protest."[12] As a result, divorces became more challenging to obtain and were approved only after three years of marriage; this explains the delay in Lucette and Henri's divorce proceedings.

The regime also encouraged French women to make themselves more attractive morally and physically and condemned them for their vanity and material concerns. The regime fiercely opposed the ideas of feminism and women's emancipation. It condemned ambition, pride, and even intellectualism, and it argued that pronounced femininity would lead to frivolity, flirtatiousness, seduction, and, above all, infidelity. The Vichy regime discouraged equal education for the sexes, and its approach to education, in general, was marked by anti-intellectualism and anti-individualism. Women were viewed as unsuitable for professional careers; the only suitable vocations for them were in education.

At the same time, the government encouraged large families and declared that "a single child is a spoiled child." The Catholic Church applauded the imposition of measures intended to

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bolster the family and the morals of the French nation, and most French women agreed with this worldview and supported the regime's policies.[13]

Lucette Ferraille, of course, embodied everything the new regime detested. She was separated from her husband. She had a mind of her own and nurtured ambitions that stretched beyond housekeeping. She gave up on having a large family, satisfying herself with one "spoiled" child. She wanted to learn and be educated in philosophy and art, against the general understanding that women should not pursue higher education. She did not fear living in poverty as a result of her separation. She was disgusted by the regime and everything it stood for, and she refused to be silenced and fought for her freedom and dignity.

Given her character and convictions, it is hardly surprising that Lucette found herself in opposition to the regime. The fact that she did not know fear made her a perfect candidate for a journey in espionage and resistance.

The new recruit Madeleine Lucette Ferraille and her patronne, Marie-Madeleine Fourcade, had more in common than the similar-sounding names. Both women were young Parisians who now lived as refugees in similar locations in southern France. Both were divorced or separated from their husbands and had young children. Both were independent women in a patriarchal society who refused to obey society's rules and assumed responsibilities generally regarded for men only.

The Gloviezoner Family

Lucette settled in Trabes during the war (1939), supporting herself by working as a teacher. In 1941 she began to study for a bachelor's degree at the Faculty of Letters at the University of Toulouse. In November 1943, she graduated in geography, modern and medieval history, and ancient literature.[14]

Her first act of resistance to the regime took place in September 1943. A short entry in her file in the military archives confirms an episode she wrote about in her autobiography regarding her actions to rescue a Jewish woman from a concentration camp in Nice.

By the summer of 1940, there were around 340,000 Jews in Metropolitan France, on top of that there were some 70,000 Jewish refugees who had fled to France to escape the Nazi persecutions in Germany and elsewhere.

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Based on the Nuremberg Laws, the Vichy regime enacted anti-Jewish laws, depriving the Jews of civil rights and dismissing them from many state-sponsored positions. The regime also established concentration camps for Jews in southern France. Around 75,000 Jews were sent to the death camps, mainly Auschwitz, although some 330,000 Jews were able to escape deportation and survive the Holocaust in France. Generally speaking, Jewish refugees in France were rounded up by the Vichy regime and sent to their death, while most Jews who were French citizens were spared.[15]

In her autobiography, Ruth says that in Tarbes, she was approached by friends who asked her to help a woman who was caught in Nice, some seven hundred kilometers away. The woman had been arrested together with her husband by the Gestapo. The husband had disappeared while the wife was waiting in a concentration camp. The city was closed, and a permit was required to enter or leave. The friend had no idea how Lucette could enter the city, but she had forged identity papers that she could use to leave.

Lucette decided to go to the German headquarters, the Kommandatur, and find a way to get into Nice. She sat in the lobby and an officer approached her. She told him in German that she was a student who wished to travel to Nice to obtain some books she needed for her exams that would begin in a few days. The officer denied her request, but she continued to beg him for a permit and eventually asked him whether there was a way to get into the city without a permit. After nagging him for a while, he finally told her of a way to get in and out of the city unhindered. She thanked him warmly and went home to prepare for her journey.

She began her trip in the evening, traveling by train the whole night and the following day. The trains were very slow, and she had to change often as accidents were frequent owing to sabotage actions by the Resistance. She completed the final part of her journey on foot, entering Nice before sunrise.

Lucette went straight to the address she had, where all the Jews were concentrated, awaiting their uncertain future. She met the person she was looking for and told her of the escape plan. In the autobiography, she referred to the woman by the pseudonym Mrs. Segal, but her real name was Mrs. Gloviezoner (her first name remains unknown). At first, Mrs. Gloviezoner was too afraid to consider the escape plan. Originally a refugee from Poland, she ran from the Nazis, was arrested

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by the Gestapo, and lost track of her family. Her traumatic experiences had reduced her to a nervous wreck, subject to uncontrollable fits of trembling.

She was afraid to leave the house and dreaded encountering a Gestapo inspection on the train, which was quite common in this period. It took several hours to persuade her to agree to leave for Tarbes the following day. They decided that Lucette would present the documents to the Gestapo, if they were questioned, and say that she was too sick to do anything by herself. This would spare her from direct contact with them, something that was enough to put her in a state of terror. Luckily for them, there was no inspection during their journey back home, and they arrived safely in Trabes. As they reached the place of shelter, a wonderful surprise awaited Mrs. Gloviezoner. Her husband, Abraham, had managed to escape the train taking him to Auschwitz and had arrived safely at the hiding place with only minor injuries. The couple remained in Tarbes with their false identities until the end of the war. They stayed in touch with Lucette and used her house as a safe haven whenever there was a state of alarm.[16]

Abraham Gloviezoner's statement to the police in Tarbes on August 25, 1944, confirmed the story Ruth wrote in her autobiography. In a short testimony, he thanked her for saving his wife's life. He said that on September 29, 1943, "Madame Lucette Baud, born Feraille, went to pick up my wife at Nice, hunted by the Germans carrying on her fake but necessary documents to save my wife. I acknowledge all the devotion this young person was capable of while putting her life on the line."[17]

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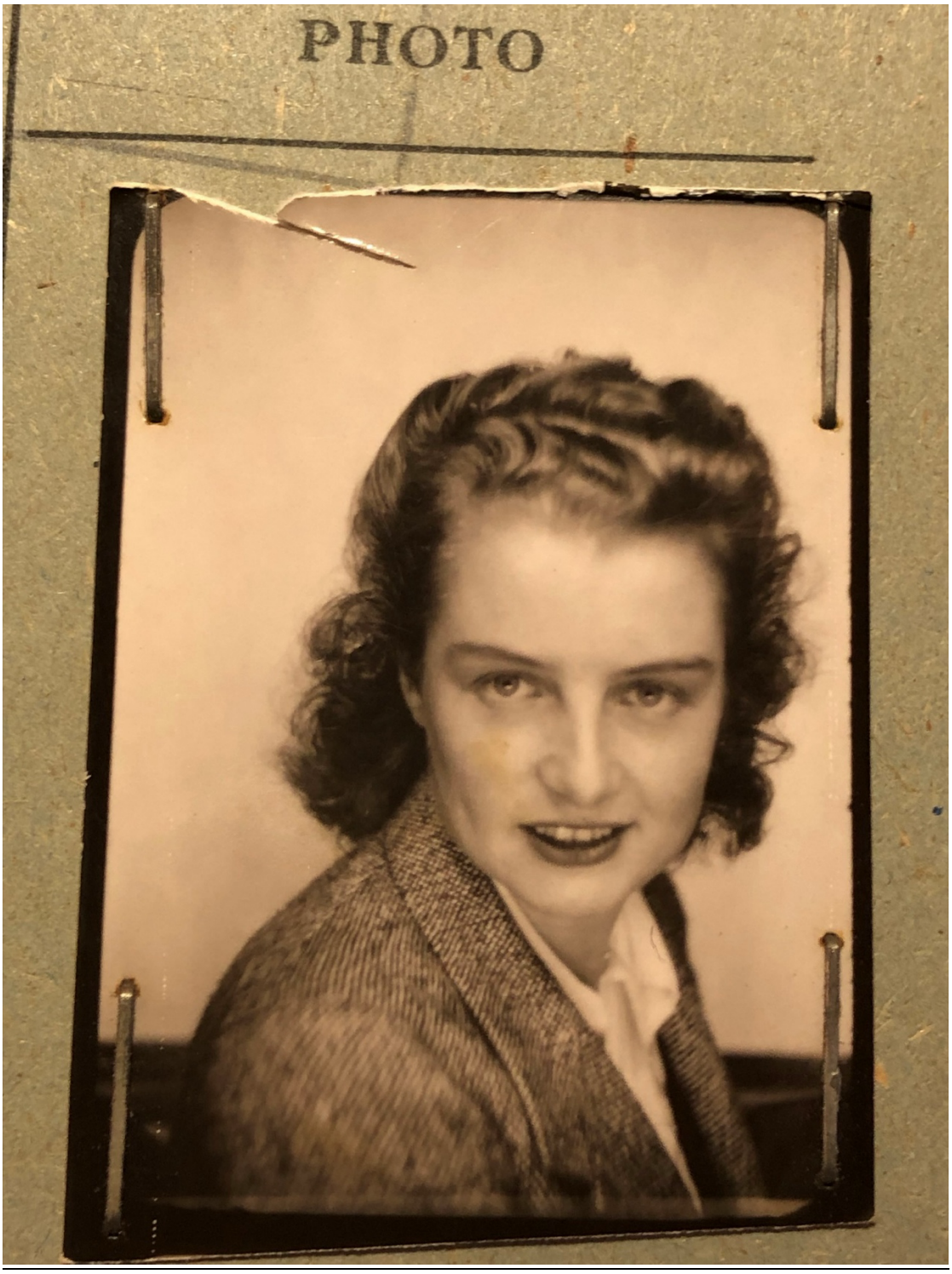

(Figure 1: Lucette Feraille in her military ID. Courtesy of the author)

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"The Fairy"

The reign of terror of the Gestapo worsened as the war progressed. As the Nazis prepared for the Allied invasion, Chateau Bonrepos-Riquet, a castle built in the seventeenth century, and the eighteenth-century Chateau of Avignonnet were converted by the Nazis to serve as training schools for Waffen-SS officers who would lead the fight against the maquis, the rural guerrilla bands of the French Resistance.

In one of their raids, the Gestapo managed to arrest in 1944 the commander of the local Resistance group, a man called Pouey whose alias was From Osso. In a confidential report dated September 12, 1945, and written by M. Rougier, head of the intelligence bureau, we learn that the Resistance recruited Lucette in January 1944 and charged her to find Pouey in the Nazi prison and help him escape. In his report, Rougier interviewed Francois Haran, the commander of the D*euxième Bureau* in Tarbes, the military intelligence agency, who told the story of Lucette's recruitment and actions.

When Mr. Haran recruited Lucette to the Resistance, he emphasized that her mission was dangerous, detailing the risks she would have to accept if she chose to undertake the task. If caught, he told her, the Resistance would not be able to help. Haran said that Lucette responded that "it did not matter to her to be killed to save a French person." She accepted the mission.

Lucette had to penetrate the Nazi headquarters and win their trust. The confidential reports state that Captain Martin was a Gestapo officer, head of the Bonrepos-Riquet school for Waffen-SS officers, and a specialist in the fight against the Resistance. Captain Martin was around thirty-five to thirty-eight years old in 1944, 1.72 meters tall, slightly hunched, with light brown hair, a bare forehead, and an elongated, lightly blotchy face. He had a vertical scar from his forehead to his chin due to a car accident. He was originally from Alsace, like many of the Das Reich division recruits stationed in southern France in preparation for the Allied invasion. The last time he was spotted by the Resistance was on August 10, 1944, as his team retreated through Dijon, in eastern France.

The report leaves many details unknown. But it is clear that Lucette was able to get into the castle and win Captain Martin's trust by becoming his mistress. Indeed, Martin trusted her enough to make her a Gestapo officer herself.

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Lucette was unable to save Pouey, though the documents do not tell us whether he was killed on French soil or deported. Throughout her time in the Nazi headquarters, she informed her commander, Haran, of all of her initiatives with Captain Martin. The report states: "Mr. Haran declared that he had nothing negative to say about her. Even if her initiative concerning Martin did not save Commander Pouey, she could not be considered to have committed any action against the resistance network of Tarbes. Mr. Haran concluded in his declaration [that Mrs. Ferraille] . . . acted on her orders and it was proper to absolve her of all charges."

Moreover, Lucette helped the French intelligence identify ten people who were members of Martin's team. One of them, a French citizen called Eugene Marty, a deputy to Captain Martin, was caught and detained by the French police in 1944.

The report concluded that no charges were to be brought against Lucette Ferraille, who entered the Gestapo on the orders of the Resistance and "never ceased to keep communicating with the Resistance." The report ends that "the person of interest was thus released."[18] A separate document, signed by Marie-Madeleine Meric (Foucade changed her last name after she remarried) on November 16, 1945, states that Lucette was indeed part of the Alliance network and had completed the missions that were assigned to her. Accordingly, she performed "a great service to the network, despite the delicate situation of her district."[19]

There is a document listing twenty-six members of Captain Martin's team in the archive. The information is basic, including physical attributes and limited personal information. The list was comprised mainly of men, but there were also a few women. The names included two North African Arabs, Russians, and Hungarians alongside French citizens. Some were undercover agents in the Resistance, pretending to be maquis. Lucette was able to add information about ten of them. The gang used to gather at a bar on Bayard Street in Toulouse.

Unfortunately, the reports in the archive do not tell us vital pieces of information: How did Lucette enter the Gestapo gang? How did she win their trust? What were her roles as a Gestapo agent? Did she meet the gang at the bar on Bayard Street?

After the war ended, Lucette was investigated on suspicion of collaborating with the Nazis. In her unpublished autobiography, Ruth devotes two pages to her arrest and questioning at Villa St. Joseph in Toulouse at the end of the war. She claimed that she was the victim of a plot by two

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Resistance fighters who were affiliated with the Communist Party. They tried to enlist Lucette to their group during the war, but after she declined, they adopted a vindictive attitude toward her. In her manuscript she stated that she was arrested for forty-eight hours, but the records show that her interrogation actually lasted five days. As noted, her lieutenant cleared her of all charges, and she was released after receiving an apology.

The screams she heard in the corridors of the interrogation rooms of men and women tortured by the interrogators left a strong impression on her. Although she admits not all the people in the villa were guiltless, "those who professed to be administrating justice had adopted the methods of those whom they were supposed to have fought and driven out of our country." Her chief, she said, had played a heroic role in the Resistance. The Gestapo had caught him several times but had always managed to escape. He had been tortured and lost an eye but refused to torture others. "This experience of human beings descending to such levels of conduct had a deep affect on my mind. In my despair I came to doubt men's capacity for genuine progress," Ruth writes in her autobiography.[20] Her undercover membership of a Gestapo unit where brutal violence must have been a common sight may explain her profound revulsion for violence. However, it is worth recognizing that she later acted violently against others, including kidnapping a child.

The facts that Ruth spent five days under interrogation and that she vividly recalls in her autobiography the acts of torture she witnessed against others suggest that she may have been a victim of torture during this time spying in Morocco

In October 1944, by the end of the war, Lucette decided to move back to Paris. In January 1945, her mother and son also moved to Paris. She got a job, and she was delighted to be in Paris again, looking forward to everyday life. But within a few months, her mother became seriously ill, eventually dying at fifty-four. Ruth states that at her mother's funeral, two aunts accused her of "driving her mother to the grave" because of the terror she lived in during the war's years. Ruth remembers this episode as an experience that alienated her from her family. In response, she decided not to wear black, the color of mourning. After this incident, the gulf between her and her family grew, and in time, they became completely estranged.[21]

A classified document found in the military archives Service Historique de la Defense dated September 13, 1945, sparked my interest. At first glance, the contents seem innocent enough.

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The document reports that the Department of Aviation in the French government decided to hire Lucette as a copy editor—an unsurprising area of activity given her qualifications as a literature major from the University of Toulouse. Her admissions file includes a copy-editing test she performed to gauge her suitability for the profession. It is logical that the postwar French government would want to help former Resistance fighters by providing them with positions in the government bureaucracy, including the pension rights this entailed.

However, why was the unremarkable news that Lucette received a low-key job in the government regarded as "classified information"? An answer might be found in the archives.

When I visited Ruth's son's house in Jerusalem in 2018, I saw in the old photo albums a picture from a trip Lucette took in 1946 to Morocco. As far as the family was concerned, this trip was no more than a pleasant vacation in an exotic location after the stressful years of the war. The family was surprised to learn from me that the trip was not as innocent a vacation as the photographs implied.

It emerged that Lucette applied to become a member of the French secret service and counterintelligence; her appointment in the Ministry of Aviation was merely a disguise for her actual function.

Documents in her military files confirm that Lucette pledged on her honor to be loyal, to act in secrecy, and to not break French law. She was also required to swear that she was not a Communist or a past member of any Fascist organization, among many other details.[22]

A classified document in the archive dated September 4, 1946, states that Lucette was arrested in Meknes, Morocco, in June 1946, after she was seen together with Salvatore Collica, an Italian citizen born in September 1924 in Casablanca. The document defines Collica as an "Italian suspect" who was under surveillance by the Moroccan secret service. Accordingly, Lucette was arrested because of her relationship with Collica. The report determines that while Lucette claimed that Collica was simply a "date," "she was actually the mistress of this Italian man." Regarding Collica himself, the report states that he had recently been released from a concentration camp where he had been held since December 1942 "for his Fascist opinions and his anti-French behavior."

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On her arrest by the Moroccan police, Lucette submitted her identity papers. Among them was an order mission number, 520, delivered in Paris on June 14, 1946, by the Ministry of Armament, requiring her to go to Rabat to contact high-ranking civilian public servants and military personnel from Air Maroc, Morocco's national airline. Unfortunately, the report does not mention the purpose of the trip besides the "aim to resolve the situation."

The report also mentioned that Lucette met Jewish and Muslim acquaintances in the upper town of Meknes. The police found in her possession a French passport, the order of mission mentioned previously, an ID card issued in Tarbes, and a military ID card that says that she was recruited under the pseudonym "the Fairy." She also held an employee card from the Ministry of Aviation, which might explain her mission with Air Maroc, and a visa to Switzerland, which she had already used.

The investigation by the Moroccan services also discovered that Lucette had contacted rug and leather artisans to obtain an exportation license allowing her to export Moroccan rugs to France. From Rabat she traveled by bus to Casablanca, and she then planned to return to Meknes and on to Paris on a military flight.

Since we already know that Lucette had become Captain Martin's mistress during the war to spy on him, and we also know that she was recruited to the French Secret Service by 1945, it seems clear that Lucette's mission in Morocco was to spy on Salvatore Collica, an Italian Fascist and someone who was regarded as a suspect by both the French and Moroccan secret services. She appears to have had another mission regarding Air Maroc, and this may have been the background to her employment by the French Ministry of Aviation.

Another interesting and recurring pattern is her interest in international trade. The documents noted that she planned to open a business of importing rugs and leather—a field of activity that can provide a perfect cover for spies, particularly since it requires frequent travel in and out of a given country.

The assignment in Morocco lasted seven weeks, much longer than originally planned. Meanwhile, her son stayed with people who were paid to take care of him, but after his mother disappeared for a much longer time than expected, without making contact or paying them for the

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additional period, they assumed she had abandoned her son and began to take steps to remove him from their charge.[23]

The French archives do not yield any other information regarding further secret operations. In her autobiography, Ruth tells us nothing about her mission in Morocco, confining herself to recalling that she soon became tired of her job as a copy editor at the Ministry of Aviation. She was interested in finding more exciting venues for herself that offered intellectual and spiritual meaning, but at the same time, she also sought opportunities in the business world. It is possible that her secret service episode ended quickly on her resignation from the government position, but there is nothing in the records to confirm or disprove this hypothesis. The thrill of adventure and the adrenaline that comes from secret activities would end for a while—until she was recruited to kidnap Yossele Schumacher fifteen years later.

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(Figure 2: Lucette Feraille's military ID card)

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Conclusion

To sum up, Lucette Ferraille emerges as a character constantly swimming upstream—an independent woman in a conservative society, a rebel, even. She was very loyal to her causes. She was willing to undertake life-threatening missions for France's independence and well-being, fighting for freedom. However, she was not loyal to the people in her immediate environment. She rid herself of men around her, including her husband, and betrayed her lovers. Later we will see that when her lofty ideals clashed with her son's well-being, she put principles above people. It is also clear that she was not shy about using her sexuality as a weapon. All the intelligence documents emphasize her elegance and beauty—tools she used to her advantage. She put herself in dangerous situations, but she knew how to emerge from them with the upper hand, probably by using her looks and intelligence to talk herself out of complicated situations. Another point worth noting from this period is her dislike of Communists, which will play a crucial role in the Yossele affair.

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[1] Quoted in Max Hastings, *Das Reich: Resistance and the March of the 2nd SS Panzer Division through France, June 1944* (London: Michael Joseph, 1981), 9.
[2] Gordon Williamson, *The Waffen-SS (1): 1 to 5 Divisions* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2003), 3.
[3] Hasting, *Das Reich*, 10–11.
[4] Paul Mons, *Afin que nul n'oblie: En France la Das Reich fit la guerre aux civils* (Brive, France: Ecritures, 2004), 16–24.
[5] Williamson, *Waffen-SS*, 19–20.
[6] Lynne Olson, *Madame Fourcede's Secret War: The Daring Young Woman Who Led France's Largest Spy Network against Hitler* (New York: Random House, 2019), 21–22.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Olivier Wieviorka, *The French Resistance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).
[9] Olson, *Madame Fourcede's Secret War*, xx–xxi.
[10] Ruth Blau, "To Our Righteous Genius Rebbe," n.d. (1965), Ruth Blau's Folder, Itzhak Davidson's 'Eretz Israel' Private Collection.
[11] Ruth Blau, *The History of Yossele Schumacher* (Brooklyn: Copy Corner, 1993), 29–30.
[12] Margaret C. Weitz, *Sisters in the Resistance: How French Women Fought to Free France 1940–1945* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1995), 44–57.
[13] Ibid.
[14] I hold a copy of her graduation diploma from the University of Toulouse.
[15] Asher Cohen, *The Shoah in France* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1996).
[16] Blau, *History*, 32–33.
[17] File 3213–423, Service Historique de la Defense, Paris, France.
[18] N.2146/SM in file 3213–423, Service Historique de la Defense, Paris, France.

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[19] File 3213–423.
[20] Blau, *History*, 43–44.
[21] Ibid., 40.
[22] Her interview is dated December 7, 1946, file 3213–423.
[23] I learned this from Nechama Davidson, Ruth's granddaughter, in a private conversation. Nechama recalls her father telling her of it.

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