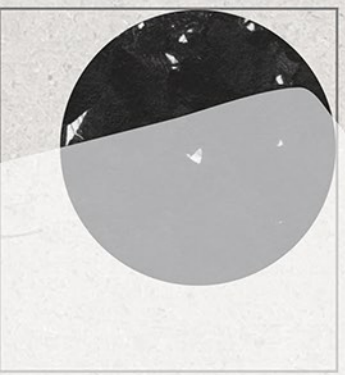
Gabriele Anderl, Linda Erker, Christoph Reinprecht
(eds.)

INTERNMENT REFUGEE CAMPS

Historical and Contemporary Perspectives



[transcript] Histoire

Gabriele Anderl, Linda Erker, Christoph Reinprecht (eds.)
Internment Refugee Camps

Histoire | Volume 192

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The rescue of Jewish children from Rivesaltes as told through the example of Vivette Hermann

Lilly Maier

Towards the end of May 1942, Vivette Hermann wrote a letter to her fiancé Julien Samuel. Hermann was a young Jewish woman who had spent the last seven months as a social worker in the French camp Rivesaltes, where she had worked to free all of the Jewish children interned there. In the letter, which was sent shortly before her departure from the camp, she wrote: "If you only knew what it costs me to leave Rivesaltes. It's kind of a part of me that I leave there."[1]

In this quote, we can see Hermann's reluctance to abandon a place that most of the other people staying there would have done almost anything to escape. She was not the only Jewish woman to venture voluntarily into an internment camp in Vichy France, but she merits special attention because of the crucial role she played in the liberation of over 400 Jewish children from Rivesaltes.

This paper is based on extensive archival research I conducted in France and the United States for my ongoing doctoral research into Jewish women in France who rescued or helped other Jews during the Shoah.[2]

Vivette Hermann's background

Vivette Hermann was a young Jewish woman who studied philosophy at the Sorbonne in Paris. In 1939, towards the end of the Spanish Civil War, she spent a short time as a volunteer in Barcelona, where she provided milk to local children. This was

1 "Si tu savais ce qu'il m'en coûte de quitter Rivesaltes. C'est un peu une partie de moi que j'y laisse": Vivette Hermann to Julien Samuel, 22 May 1942, Samuel Family Private Archive, copy in possession of the author.

2 Dissertation at the University of Munich, working title: "Between Rescue and Self-help: Jewish Female Rescuers in France during the Shoah."

her first experience of relief work.[3] With the approaching fall of Paris, she fled to the south of France in May 1940 to join her family. There she continued her studies in Toulouse.[4] The following summer, Andrée Salomon recruited her to work for the *Œuvre de Secours aux Enfants* (OSE; Children's Aid Society). Although French, Hermann spoke fluent German, which was one of the reasons why the OSE was interested in hiring her.[5] A few months later, at the age of just twenty-two, she voluntarily went into Rivesaltes to actively organise the liberation of the children on site. (Most of them were subsequently housed in French children's homes, although some were sent to the United States.) In 1942, the young woman married Julien Samuel, another OSE official, which is why she is known as Vivette Samuel in most scholarly research and her own published writings. However, she was still Vivette Hermann throughout her time in Rivesaltes, so I will refer to her as such.

Throughout this paper, I will put emphasis on Hermann's experience by quoting from her memoir *Sauver les enfants* (subsequently published in English as *Rescuing the Children*, with an additional foreword by Elie Wiesel), her unpublished 1948 report *Comme des brebis …* (*Like Sheep …*), which is partly based on a diary she kept inside the camp, a more polished version of the same diary that she published as a journal article in 1950, monthly reports she wrote for the OSE as well as her private letters that were made available for research by the family for the first time.[6]

History of the Rivesaltes internment camp

The *Camp de Rivesaltes* was located in the commune of Rivesaltes, near Perpignan, in the south of France. Founded in 1938 as a military base due to its strategic location close to the Spanish border, its official name was Camp Maréchal Joffre, in honour of the commander-in-chief of the French forces in the First World War.[7] The camp housed very different groups consecutively: initially, soldiers en route to the French

3 OSE France, "Histoire de l'OSE – les présidents et directeurs généraux: Vivette Samuel" <https://www.ose-france.org/je-decouvre/histoire/presidents-et-directeurs-generaux> (3 May 2021).

4 Ibid.

5 Vivette Samuel, Rescuing the Children: A Holocaust Memoir (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), 29.

6 Vivette Samuel, Sauver les enfants (Paris: Levi, 1995); Samuel, Rescuing the Children; Samuel, Comme des brebis … (Chatou: 1947–8), Mémorial de la Shoah, 3.18216; Vivette Samuel, "Journal d'une internée volontaire," Evidences 14 (1950): 6–12. Many thanks to the Samuel family for their generosity in granting access to Vivette's correspondence.

7 Joël Mettay, L'Archipel du Mépris. Histoire du Camp de Rivesaltes de 1939 à nos jours (Canet: Editions Trabucaire, 2001), 33.

colonies, then refugees from the Spanish Civil War.[8] From 1941 on, Rivesaltes served the new Vichy government as a state-run internment camp for refugees, political opponents such as freemasons, communists and trade unionists as well as Sinti and Roma, and Jews, many of whom were deportees from Baden and the Palatinate.[9] At first, the new arrivals were still outnumbered by the Spanish, but from July 1942 onwards (non-French) Jews were in the majority.[10]

Officially classified as a *Centre d'hébergement* – which loosely translates as "shelter" – the camp has usually been described as an internment camp in post-war France.[11] However, many historians have taken issue with this classification and have repeatedly pointed out the similarities of the Vichy camps to concentration camps run by the National Socialists.[12] For instance, the French historian Joël Mettay went so far as to call Rivesaltes "an antechamber of Auschwitz."[13]

Within the camp system in the south of France, Rivesaltes was considered a "model camp" as well as the "family camp," and the majority of children interned in Vichy France were sent there with their parents.[14] It spanned 600 hectares and could accommodate up to 20,000 people in barracks that were constructed in a much more permanent way than the barracks in other French camps.[15] Yet, the supply situation and the level of hygiene were catastrophic from the very beginning, and many of the internees died. In November 1940, a report by the International Red Cross described widespread malnutrition, an "invasion of rats" and an unusually high mortality rate for children and the elderly.[16] (In theory, the internees should have received the same rations as the civilian population in the south of France, but reality showed a different picture.) Follow-up visits in 1941 and 1942 found that conditions had deteriorated, despite the best efforts of several relief organisations to alleviate the internees' suffering.[17]

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8 Roger Barrié, Mémento chronologique du Camp de Rivesaltes, 1923–1965 (Perpignan: Musée Mémorial du Camp de Rivesaltes, 2010), 27.

9 Charles B. Paul, "Introduction," in Samuel, Rescuing the Children, xxiv; Christian Eggers, Unerwünschte Ausländer: Juden aus Deutschland und Mitteleuropa in Französischen Internierungslagern 1940–1942 (Berlin: Metropol, 2002), 14.

10 Mettay, L'Archipel du Mépris, 39–40.

11 See, for example, the official website of the Rivesaltes Camp Memorial: <https://www.memorialcamprivesaltes.eu/en/history-rivesaltes-camp-memorial> (3 May 2021).

12 Eggers, Unerwünschte Ausländer, 14–15; Paul, "Introduction," xx; Mettay, L'Archipel du Mépris, 26.

13 Mettay, L'Archipel du Mépris, 26.

14 Stephanie Corazza, "The Routine of Rescue: Child Welfare Workers and the Holocaust in France," unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto (2017), 41; Eggers, Unerwünschte Ausländer, 92–3.

15 Eggers, Unerwünschte Ausländer, 92.

16 Mettay, L'Archipel du Mépris, 21, 45.

17 Ibid., 45; Eggers, Unerwünschte Ausländer, 442.

The Jewish internees (refugees and deportees alike) initially lived within the main camp, but in April 1941 most of them were transferred to a separate section (*Îlot B*) on the pretext that this would allow them to celebrate Passover in accordance with Jewish dietary laws.[18] This newly created "camp within the camp" was in a poor structural condition compared to the rest of the camp, had no electric light and was furnished with unhygienic double bunk beds.[19] Moreover, no milk was dispensed there, so the children had to walk a kilometre to *Îlot J*, wait in line for hours for their daily rations, then trek back to *Îlot B*. Many of them decided it was not worth the effort, which led to dangerous numbers of severely undernourished children in the camp.[20]

NGOs at Rivesaltes

International non-governmental aid organisations, such as the Red Cross, tried to alleviate the internees' suffering by sending *internés volontaires* ("voluntary internees") or *assistants résidents* ("resident social workers") to the camps in the south of France: doctors, nurses and social workers who lived inside the camps to offer assistance to the interned.[21] All of these voluntary internees were paid, and they enjoyed certain privileges within the camps; most importantly, they were free to leave at any time.[22]

Another NGO that was active within the camps was the OSE. Originally a Russian Jewish-relief organisation, it now ran several children's homes for Jewish refugee children in France.[23] For the Jewish social workers sent by the OSE, the situation was much more uncertain and dangerous than for those from other (foreign) organisations. After all, American or Swiss relief workers could be confident that they would be allowed to leave the camps whenever they wished, irrespective of political developments in Vichy, but for the French Jewish volunteers, it was like going into the proverbial lion's den. Who could say what would happen to them if the Vichy government, with its increasingly anti-Semitic tendencies, suddenly changed course?

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18 Mettay, L'Archipel du Mépris, 63–5; Eggers, Unerwünschte Ausländer, 93–4.

19 Ibid.

20 Eggers, Unerwünschte Ausländer, 16–17.

21 Corazza, "Routine of Rescue," 109.

22 For example, the OSE instructed its workers to leave the camp every five weeks, and rented a room in the city of Rivesaltes so that they could occasionally wash themselves properly and sleep in a real bed. See Samuel, Rescuing the Children, 49.

23 For more about the OSE's work, see: Lilly Maier, Arthur und Lilly. Das Mädchen und der Holocaust-Überlebende (München: Heyne, 2018), 55–131.

In 1941, the German authorities requested the Vichy government to force all Jewish organisations to join the newly created *Union Générale des Israélites de France* (UGIF; General Union of French Jews), which was, in effect, a single *Judenrat* (Jewish Council) for the whole of the south – and later all – of France.[24] So, in 1941, the OSE had to disassemble and was forced to join the UGIF. Within the UGIF, the OSE took over the third section, *Santé* (health); they organised food distribution and medical programmes and continued running children's homes.[25] At the same time, the OSE was a member of the Nîmes Coordinating Committee, a coalition of twenty-five French and international NGOs that the American Donald A. Lowrie of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) had founded in 1940 with the aim of boosting relief efforts in the French camps.[26] Other members included the Quakers (American Friends Service Committee), the Unitarian Service Committee, *Secours Suisse aux Enfants* (Swiss Relief for Children; the children's aid branch of the Swiss Red Cross) and the *Comité Inter Mouvements auprès des Évacués* (Cimade; Committee for the Movement of Refugees).[27] The Nîmes Committee was able to focus the efforts of its member organisations and negotiated on their behalf with the Vichy authorities to gain access to the camps.[28] Once inside, the NGOs fought against hunger by distributing milk and food, worked to improve sanitary and health conditions, started kindergartens and schools, and provided psychological as well as medical assistance. Even more importantly, they worked to secure the liberation of as many internees as possible, especially minors.[29]

At the beginning of 1941, over 3,000 children – 300 of whom were under the age of three – were interned in Rivesaltes alongside their parents.[30] About 350 of these children were Jewish.[31] The Nîmes Committee's *Commission des Enfants et des Vieillards* (Commission for Children and the Elderly) reported that the children in the Rivesaltes camp were both malnourished and suffering from a range of diseases and other medical conditions, including skin fungi, mucosal anaemia, protruding eyeballs, tooth decay, swollen lymph nodes and rickets.[32]

After intensive lobbying, the Nîmes Committee received permission from the Vichy government to liberate children under the age of fifteen from the internment

24 Corazza, "Routine of Rescue," 6.
25 Samuel, Rescuing the Children, 32–5.
26 Ibid., 34.
27 Mettay, L'Archipel du Mépris, 53.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
30 Eggers, Unerwünschte Ausländer, 298. OSE reports from February 1941 and 17 March 1941, Mémorial de la Shoah, CMXXI-12.
31 Eggers, Unerwünschte Ausländer, 298.
32 Ibid., 299.

camps, as long as the committee bore all costs.[33] I want to stress that this was a legal way of liberating the children. The organisations had to seek and receive the parents' permission, provide and pay for shelter for the liberated children (usually in children's homes) and, most importantly, obtain authorisation from whichever local prefecture was the intended destination for each child.[34] At first, the Vichy authorities only sporadically granted release, but their attitude changed after most of the infants interned in Rivesaltes died in an epidemic in September 1941, and the conditions in the camp continued to deteriorate.[35]

The liberation operation was extremely expensive: Vivette Hermann writes that it cost the OSE 5,000 francs to pay for lodging and food for three months, which was the required guarantee sum to liberate a child.[36] By way of comparison, just two years earlier (before the German occupation), the cost of a whole year's care in one of the OSE's children's homes had been 5,600 francs.[37] Another report by the OSE states that it was also quite expensive for the receiving children's homes because they were obliged to quarantine every new arrival.[38] Within the Nîmes Committee there were often discussions if liberating the children was worth it or if they should focus their energies on helping the internees within the compounds of the camp. The money needed to free one child could be used to help at least four inside.[39] The OSE and Swiss Aid were the two NGOs that most strongly believed that the liberation of the children had to be the priority of the Nîmes Committee. Joseph Weill, the OSE's representative on the Nîmes Committee, argued that the operation benefited not only the freed children but also their interned parents, as the latter would be able to take better care of themselves (and maybe even escape) once relieved of the responsibility of looking after their children.[40]

All of the NGOs understood the importance of maintaining good working relationships with both camp officials and the Vichy government. The camp authorities had the power to revoke access to the camps, so the relief organisations instructed their workers to abide by the rules and work within the system.[41] In fact, Vivette Hermann's predecessor, Charles Lederman, was ordered to leave Rivesaltes follow-

33 Samuel, Rescuing the Children, 34.
34 Ibid.; Eggers, Unerwünschte Ausländer, 447–8.
35 Eggers, Unerwünschte Ausländer, 447.
36 Samuel, Rescuing the Children, 49.
37 Ernst Papanek, "Financial Report 1939," in One Year Children's Houses, New York Public Library, Ernst Papanek Papers, Box 41.
38 "Rapport sur les conditions d'internement et de vie des enfants juifs," Mémorial de la Shoah, Fonds Lublin, CMXXI-12.
39 Samuel, Rescuing the Children, 34.
40 Ibid.
41 Corazza, "Routine of Rescue," 116.

ing reports that he had overstepped his duties and encouraged internees to escape.[42] The OSE felt that replacing him with a young woman would help to appease the camp officials.

Vivette Hermann in Rivesaltes

Vivette Hermann entered Rivesaltes on 3 November 1941 at the age of twenty-two. Her first impressions are recorded in her memoir:

> The gates went up as we showed our passes. A French flag waved at the entrance of the vast camp. […] The paths between the blocks were deserted when suddenly some children came to meet us. Dirty and in rags, they painfully advanced on the stony soil, wrapped in gray blankets. They carried rusty cans – they were going over to Swiss Aid to get a warm drink. This was the reality of the camp. Two worlds faced each other: I, well dressed, wearing a red, close-fitting garment I had knitted during the summer […], good shoes with crepe soles […]; the children all bent over and shivering in their dirty blankets. What a contrast from the very beginning between the places I came from and the destitution of the camp![43]

Hermann was acutely aware of her position as a "voluntary internee," which at once allowed her access to the camp administration, but also brought her to a position of trust and respect among the regular internees. "The internees trust us because we share their hard life," she wrote to her parents less than a week after her arrival.[44] At the same time, Hermann often felt ashamed for her privileged situation. For example, just ten relief workers shared a barrack that housed sixty internees anywhere else in the camp:

> There certainly was no comfort in that place. There was but a single source of water, most often frozen, a washbasin, and a pitcher. But we were given the opportunity of taking care of our needs in a bucket, while the internees were obliged, day and night, to go to the sanitary tubs rattling in the wind. Very quickly, I thought of myself as privileged.[45]

Hermann was often overcome by a sense of shame as she reflected on these disparities and struggled to define her place within the camp system. Hermann's main ob-

42 Samuel, Rescuing the Children, 29.

43 Ibid., 36. The date of her arrival is given as 3 November 1941 in her memoir but 4 November in her journal. See Samuel, Comme des brebis, 24.

44 Vivette Hermann to her parents, Rivesaltes, 8 November 1941, in Samuel, Rescuing the Children, 38–9.

45 Ibid., 37.

jective was to help the internees and it seems that she believed being seen as "one of them" would create a feeling of trust that would help her do her work. However, in many ways, it was the fact that she was *not* a regular internee, but instead a representative of an outside NGO, that put her in a position where she had the power to help. In her memoir, written decades after the letter to her parents, Hermann comes to a more nuanced description, both in regards of seeing herself as a part of the group of resident social workers in Rivesaltes as well as in the group's relation to the internees: "We were the link between them and the camp's administration, and also between them and the outside. Our function as intermediaries reassured them. Moreover, they saw us live with them and share their hard existence to some extent. This solidarity brought us closer."[46]

Hermann was shocked by the appalling conditions she encountered in Rivesaltes: "The supply of water was inadequate, and there was no central sewer for drainage. The smell of human decay pervaded everything. Clothing was shredding into rags. Rodents lived in the camp, and malaria had become endemic."[47] With no formal training as a social worker, her very first day in the camp left her feeling powerless and overwhelmed: "Nothing prepared me for this task except a sincere desire to help the men, women and children who are suffering behind the barbed wire."[48] To help her cope, she often reflected on a piece of advice from the OSE physician Joseph Weill: "Look into misery the way a doctor looks into a patient's illness."[49] This maxim features prominently in all her writings.

While in Rivesaltes, Hermann coordinated the liberation of the camp's interned children. Her responsibilities included convincing the parents to grant permission for their children's removal from the camp, preparing the children for the separation and overcoming a host of administrative hurdles during negotiations with the camp authorities.[50] Preliminary discussions with the parents revealed a sharp contrast in attitudes towards the programme depending on the background of the internees: whereas the majority of Spanish parents were against it, the Jewish parents – especially the German and Austrian deportees – jumped at the chance to save their children.[51] In her diary, Hermann quotes "all the [Jewish] women" in her packed waiting room pleading, "*Nehmen Sie mein Kind weg*" ("Take my child away").[52] Every parent

46 Ibid., 46–7.

47 Ibid.

48 "Rien ne m'a préparée à cette tâche, si ce n'est un désir sincère de venir en aide à des hommes, des femmes et des enfants qui souffrent derrière les barbelés": Vivette Hermann diary entry, 3 November 1941, in Samuel, Comme des brebis, 24.

49 Samuel, Rescuing the Children, 38, 47.

50 Ibid., 44.

51 Ibid., 46.

52 Samuel, "Journal d'une internée volontaire," 8.

who enrolled in the scheme had to sign an official declaration that they were entrusting their child to the care of the OSE or the UGIF to be placed in a children's home or to allow emigration to the United States on a *Kindertransport* (children's transport).[53]

Hermann had regular meetings with the camp commander David-Gustave Humbert, whom she described as very friendly and "always correct" in his dealings with the relief workers: "His qualities as a human could not be denied […] yet he appeared to be indifferent to the drama taking place around him."[54] The camp commander's office had to send all the applications for liberations, transfers, visas, etc. to the prefectural office handling the case, usually in Perpignan. The entire process was very lengthy and arduous – beds in children's homes often had the be reserved for months until all the papers arrived. By the time the liberation orders finally came, children had oftentimes been sent to other camps or had fallen ill and were not allowed to leave the camp for quarantine reasons, so the whole process had to be started all over again.[55]

Nevertheless, Vivette Hermann eventually managed to evacuate all of the Jewish children from Rivesaltes. Several convoys left the camp in the autumn of 1941, and a further fifty-five children were liberated in January and February 1942. Seven more had been granted permission to leave but were too ill to travel. A census taking shortly after showed that a total of ninety-eight Jewish children remained in the camp.[56] In a later report, Hermann explained that three groups of children were still to be liberated because the OSE had yet to receive authorisation for their release or had not submitted the requisite forms. Additionally, "some children […] for the moment still refuse to leave."[57] Interestingly, Hermann writes that the children refused to go and not that their parents refused to give permission. This speaks to a larger problem and typified the parents' and children's contrasting attitudes to their separation. In the beginning, Hermann and the OSE organised reunions and visits of the liberated children to the camp, but these were often traumatic for all parties. Oftentimes children did not want to leave again or could not handle how their parents had deteriorated since their departure.[58] So, the OSE soon stopped these visits. Instead, Vivette Hermann was able to negotiate with the camp authorities that the parents of the liberated children receive passes to visit them in the children's homes or to say

53 Parental forms, Dossiers 01589 and 01255, OSE Archives. For more on the French–American Kindertransport, see: Maier, Arthur und Lilly, 150–208.

54 Samuel, Rescuing the Children, 40.

55 Ibid., 43.

56 Centre d'hébergement de Rivesaltes, Bureau OSE, K 43, "Rapport d'activité du mois de Février 1942," Mémorial de la Shoah, OSE (II)-47.

57 "quelques enfants qui pour le moment refusent encore de partir" (original emphasis): report by Vivette Hermann, 1942, Mémorial de la Shoah, OSE (II)-55.

58 Samuel, Rescuing the Children, 51–2.

goodbye to them at the train station if they were on their way to the United States.[59] This proved to be much less distressing for all concerned.

Hermann was usually meticulous about following every rule to the letter. However, in February 1942, she inadvertently liberated a child over the age of fifteen. Her perspective on this incident changed over the years: In her published diary, she writes of a cunning fifteen-year-old named Joseph J. who made himself a year younger when she talked to him (thereby taking the matter of his rescue into his own hands); in her memoir, she puts the blame on herself.[60] Either way, the OSE was furious and concerned that Hermann might have jeopardised the whole operation. Fortunately, though, neither the camp authorities nor the local prefecture noticed the error. As a result, Hermann – with the blessing of the OSE – started to falsify ages deliberately, which enabled her to liberate about a dozen extra adolescents.[61]

By the end of May 1942, Vivette Hermann's work at Rivesaltes was finally done. The OSE's next report from the camp declared: "There are no more children who want to leave."[62] Over the course of just seven months, Hermann had managed to free all 400 willing Jewish children from Rivesaltes.[63] Shortly before her own departure from the camp, the OSE organised a party for the mothers of the liberated children, which happened to fall on Vivette Hermann's birthday. I want to close with a longer passage from the letter to Hermann's fiancé that I quoted before:

> Miss Mazour [*sic*] was at the camp, coming to pick up our last convoy of children. To mark the occasion, a party was organised last in the synagogue for all parents who have children in OSE houses … The turnout was impressive […] [Dr Malkin said:] "I don't want to forget to tell you that today is Miss Hermann's birthday. Let us wish her to marry and to be as good to her children as she was to your children." There was such thunderous applause that I started to cry.[64]

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59 Ibid., 56. See also: "Rapport d'activité du mois de Février 1942," Mémorial de la Shoah, OSE (II)-47.

60 Samuel, Rescuing the Children, 55; Vivette Hermann, journal entry, 10 February 1942, in Samuel, "Journal d'une internée volontaire."

61 Samuel, Rescuing the Children, 55.

62 "Il ne reste plus d'enfants qui veuillent partir": Centre d'hébergement de Rivesaltes, "Rapport du mois de Juin [1942]," Mémorial de la Shoah, OSE (II)-54.

63 Samuel, Rescuing the Children, 44.

64 "Mme Mazour [*sic*] était au camp, venue chercher notre dernier convoi d'enfants. En cet honneur une fête avait été organisée hier soir dans la synagogue pour tous les parents qui ont des enfants dans les maisons OSE … Le nombre fut imposant […] « Je ne veux pas oublier de vous dire qu'aujourd'hui est aussi l'anniversaire de Melle Hermann. Souhaitons-lui de se marier, et d'être aussi bonne pour ses enfants qu'elle le fut pour vos enfants ». Ce fut un tel tonnerre d'applaudissements que je me suis mise à pleurer": Vivette Hermann to Julien Samuel, 22 May 1942, Samuel Family Private Archive, copy in possession of the author. "Miss Mazour" was Germaine (Jenny) Masour.

Outlook

Notwithstanding Vivette Hermann's departure, the OSE's work in the camp was far from over. In the summer of 1942, mere months after Hermann had left the camp, Rivesaltes did indeed become an "antechamber of Auschwitz" when the Vichy authorities started arresting Jewish families and deporting them to the German-run Drancy internment camp, from where they were sent to Auschwitz.[65] Following the internment of scores of Jewish children at Rivesaltes – often under the pretext of family reunification – the OSE and other NGOs stopped abiding by the rules and resorted to increasingly desperate and usually illegal tactics to save the children from deportation.[66] At the same time, the OSE clandestinely started to close its children's homes. With the help of the Jewish Résistance in France, they hid around 2,000 children under false names in French families, on farms and in monasteries. Some of the older teenagers subsequently joined the Résistance themselves. A further 1,000 children were smuggled over the border to Switzerland by the OSE.[67]

Vivette Hermann – after her marriage to Julien Samuel in an OSE children's home in Couret in October 1942 now Vivette Samuel – went to work for the OSE in Limoges and later Chambéry and was involved in organising these illegal rescue attempts. After the war, Samuel earned her diploma in social work and remained with the OSE for the rest of her working life. She oversaw the organisation's successful implementation of many modern social work practices, such as case work, and became the OSE's director general in 1979.[68]

65 Samuel, Rescuing the Children, 76; Eggers, Unerwünschte Ausländer, 447–9.

66 Samuel, Rescuing the Children, 84–96.

67 Katy Hazan and Serge Klarsfeld, Le Sauvetage des enfants juifs pendant l'occupation, dans les maisons de l'OSE, 1938–1945 / Rescuing Jewish Children during the Nazi Occupation: OSE Children's Homes, 1938–1945 (Paris: OSE / Somogy Éd. d'Art, 2009), 32–6; Katy Hazan and Georges Weill, "The OSE and the Rescue of Jewish Children, from the Postwar to the Prewar Period," in Resisting Genocide: The Multiple Forms of Rescue, edited by Jacques Semelin et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 256.

68 OSE France, "Vivette Samuel" <https://www.ose-france.org/je-decouvre/histoire/presidents-et-directeurs-generaux> (3 May 2021).

Figure 1: Vivette Hermann

Source: Fonds OSE/CDJC, Mémorial de la Shoah, Fonds Vivette Samuel.