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Summary of Oral History Interview with Etienne Raczymow—ENGLISH

Etienne Raczymow, born in 1925 in France; speaking of his childhood in Belleville (neighbourhood straddling 19th and 20th arrondissement in Paris); from a Jewish working-class family; speaking of his schooling; except for his grandparents (Hasidic), his family wasn't very religious; recalling his grandparents; speaking of his father—a tailor; going to synagogue; learning Hebrew; speaking of youths (Jews and non-Jews) fighting against fascism; speaking of beginning of the Resistance; vacations with other Jews of Belleville; September 3, 1939—with family on vacation; October, 1940—Jewish businesses required to be directed by an Aryan—several instances in Belleville; first round-ups beginning in May, 1941; speaking of his mother's wish to have him leave—borrowing money to send him to Lyon where there was family; family in Lyon had a soup kitchen; finding friends from Belleville in Lyon—renting a room with them; his French identification card stamped with a "J"; his sister arriving in Lyon; learning that Jews must wear the yellow star; his parents arrested in July, 1942; in May, 1943—leaving for Grenoble where he found several friends, including "Jacquot"; speaking of "underground" under direction of "Jacquot"; diverse missions under "Jacquot"—at 6 a.m., blowing up a gas plant; Étienne describing the function and organization of FTP (Francs-tireurs et partisans) and FTP-MOI (Francs-tireurs et partisans – main-d'œuvre immigrée); recalling the execution of three militia; speaking of an arrest by the French police; Étienne wondering how they could carry out so many 'actions' on the same day; describing missions under "Jacquot"—blowing up trains, and lengths they went to in order to avoid attacking passenger trains—near Chambéry; speaking of derailment of trains; recalling escapades of "Jacquot" and his group in 1943; recalling Grenoble; August 22, 1944, Germans left Grenoble; heading into the mountains to find German militia; recalling American soldiers speaking Yiddish; military police; Étienne's return to Lyon; travelling on bicycle; speaking of German prisoners of FTP (held by 15 young Jews) and telling them he was Jewish; recalling two Jews in Lyon that were from New York; recalling liberation; returning to Paris, to Belleville, with two others from Belleville; finding his father alive; finding his uncle, a sister coming from Lyon; his mother and grandparents were deported; October, November 1944—Resistance fighters coming back—finding that no one was left; finding a place to live; hundreds of mini-pogroms in the road; speaking of the "Pieds-noirs" from Algeria; trying to put his life back together; being treated like dogs in front of French bureaucrats; in October, November 1944, learning of everything—of the deportations; learning of his grandparents' fate—"they were too old"; memories of his family in Paris; having known his wife since he was young; speaking of his godmother; having neither money nor a job; being a member of Communist party; speaking of his mother-in-law; speaking of a Mr. Ash (M. Ash); still speaking Yiddish in Belleville; speaking of a Jewish doctor, from Hungary; speaking of his marriage and his first child being born in 1948; speaking of January 1, 1955; difficulties of "Jacquot" in becoming a naturalized citizen, even with numerous French honours; difficulty of speaking of his experiences with his children and grandchildren.....extremely difficult for Étienne Raczymow