

The following review article (minus most of the footnotes) was written for a non-academic publication in the winter of 2014-15. For whatever reason(s), it was not accepted, though one reader suggested that what was missing was ‘a little more of the story proper’. However, as André Trocmé, the pastor of Le Chambon, wrote of French resistance to the German occupiers in a brief account of what happened there: ‘it is practically impossible to tell its story; for it consists of a multitude of courageous acts by individuals’.¹ Although the article has been updated to take account of more recent editions of one of the books and to reincorporate some material that was cut for reasons of length, there is still a lot more that could be said on the subject.

Memory Wars in the Massif Central

Neil Foxlee

The Greatest Escape: How One French Community Saved Thousands of Lives from the Nazis
by Peter Grose (Nicholas Brealey, 2014).²

Village of Secrets: Defying the Nazis in Vichy France
by Caroline Moorehead (Chatto & Windus, 2014; Vintage, 2015).

Weapons of the Spirit: 25th Anniversary Edition
directed by Pierre Sauvage (Chambon Foundation, DVD release date tbc).

‘It used to be said’, E.H. Carr observed in *What is History?*, ‘that the facts speak for themselves. This is, of course, untrue. The facts speak only when the historian calls on them: it is he who decides to which facts to give the floor, and in what order or context.’³ The central fact here is that, during the Second World War, a large number of Jewish and other refugees – many of them children – found safety three thousand feet up on the remote Plateau Vivarais-Lignon in the eastern Massif Central, in and around the predominantly Protestant commune of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon (population c. 3,000).⁴ Estimates of the number of Jews involved have ranged from five hundred to five thousand, though not all at one time, while many were passing through on their way to Switzerland. Whatever the precise number, this is one of the most remarkable cases of Holocaust rescue on record – a fact recognised by Yad Vashem in 1990, when it departed for only the second time from its usual practice by awarding the title of Righteous among the Nations collectively to the inhabitants of Le

¹ André Trocmé, ‘Report on Nonviolent Resistance in the District of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, Haute-Loire, France during the War 1939-1945’ (unpublished manuscript, written 1953), <http://www.satyagrahafoundation.org/report-on-nonviolent-resistance-in-the-district-of-chambon-sur-legion-haute-loire-france-during-the-war-1939-1945/>.

² The US edition has been retitled *A Good Place to Hide: How One French Community Saved Thousands of Lives in World War II* (New York: Pegasus, 2015). A new UK edition under this title is due to be published in 2016.

³ E.H. Carr, *What is History?* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), p. 11.

⁴ Strictly speaking, the term ‘Plateau Vivarais-Lignon’ is anachronistic: at the time, the area was simply known as *le Plateau* or *la Montagne*.

Chambon and its neighbouring communes.⁵ Some fifty Chambonnais and a further thirty or so other inhabitants of the Plateau have also received this honour individually.

If the central facts of the story (apart from the numbers involved) are clear, however, things after that are less straightforward. The first full-length English-language account – there have also been several in French – was Philip Hallie's *Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed: The Story of the Village of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon and How Goodness Happened There*,⁶ published in 1979. Hallie's book drew heavily on the unpublished memoirs of Le Chambon's charismatic pastor, André Trocmé, who undeniably played a very important role in the rescue operation, but who wrote from a pacifist perspective and was absent from Le Chambon for nearly a year, first in a detention camp and then in hiding elsewhere. When Hallie's book was translated into French, its errors, omissions and alleged misrepresentations were severely criticized. Some former *maquisards* and *résistants* in particular took great exception to the way in which they, other individuals and certain episodes had been depicted or ignored, and what they saw as self-aggrandisement on Trocmé's part.

In *We Only Know Men: The Rescue of Jews in France during the Holocaust*,⁷ published in 2007, Patrick Henry acknowledged the weaknesses in Hallie's account, but concluded that the criticisms of Hallie (and Trocmé) were ultimately unfair. Where Hallie had erred most, he argued, was in unintentionally giving the misleading impression that Trocmé, his wife Magda and assistant pastor Edouard Theis dominated a rescue operation centred exclusively on Le Chambon. Trocmé and Theis may have been the catalysts for much of what happened in the area, Henry suggested, but the rescue mission was a collective effort involving not just the other Protestant pastors on the plateau and their congregations, but also other religious groups, non-believers, Jewish self-help organisations, external relief agencies and a host of people from all walks of life, from farmers to boy scouts (pp. 9-10). This, in essence, is the truth Caroline Moorehead claims to have uncovered in *Village of Secrets*.

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After her earlier success with *A Train in Winter*, the reviews for *Village* were unanimous in their praise. Among other things, the *Financial Times* lauded Moorehead's 'insistence on accuracy' and, like the *Sunday Times*, talked about her book setting the record straight, while the *Guardian* described it as 'rigorously researched and well-balanced'.⁸ To borrow a phrase

⁵ The only other community to be honoured in this way is the Dutch village of Nieuwlande, whose 117 inhabitants took the decision to hide at least one Jewish family or Jew in each household during the Occupation.

⁶ New York: Harper and Row, 1979, though I shall refer to the Harper Perennial edition (1994).

⁷ Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2007. Moorehead makes no reference to Henry's book and only includes its French translation in her bibliography.

⁸ Sue Gaisford, 'Village of Secrets: Defying the Nazis in Vichy France, by Caroline Moorehead', *Financial Times*, 24 July 2014, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/7811907e-05b8-11e4-8b94-00144feab7de.html#axzz3Hr7gcOWi>; Matthew Campbell, 'Village of Secrets: Defying the Nazis in Vichy France by Caroline Moorehead (Chatto)', *Times*, 13 July 2014, http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/culture/books/non_fiction/article1431938.ece; Elizabeth Lowry, 'Village of Secrets: Defying the Nazis in Vichy France by Caroline Moorehead', *Guardian*, 15 August 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/aug/15/village-of-secrets-defying-nazis-vichy-france-caroline-moorehead-review>. *Village* received an equally warm reception in the US. The *New York Times Book Review* said that Moorehead had performed a great service by 'unveiling the real lives behind the myth', while *Publishers Weekly* described the book as 'deeply researched' and – like the *Wall Street Journal* – as 'the definitive account'.

from Moorehead's foreword, however, there was one problem: all was not quite as it seemed. After *Village* was shortlisted for the Samuel Johnson non-fiction prize, the *Sunday Times* reported that some of the people Moorehead had approached while researching her book were up in arms at what they saw as its many inaccuracies and misrepresentations.⁹ The fiercest of Moorehead's critics was Pierre Sauvage, the US-based documentary maker responsible for *Weapons of the Spirit*. In a detailed critique, Sauvage described *Village* as 'riddled with mistakes and distortions ranging from the relatively trivial to the major',¹⁰ a verdict which he reinforced by posting a seemingly exhaustive catalogue of errors on his Chambon Foundation website.¹¹

Even this, however, didn't include the multiple mistakes in the two sentences of *Village*'s opening paragraph:

In the spring of 1953, *Peace News*, a fortnightly magazine aimed at America's pacifist community, carried an unusual story. It was about a half-French, half-German Protestant pastor called André Trocmé who, between the arrival of the Germans in Paris in May 1940 and the liberation of France in the summer of 1944, helped save some 5,000 hunted communists, Freemasons, resisters and Jews from deportation to the extermination camps of occupied Poland. (p. 9).

Moorehead goes on to argue that the version of events presented by the *Peace News* article – based on a report by Trocmé – is a myth, but the account she gives of it here is misleading, to say the least. *Peace News* was not 'a fortnightly magazine aimed at America's pacifist community', but the official newspaper of the British Peace Pledge Union, while the Germans did not arrive in Paris in May 1940, but on 14 June. As for the number of those rescued, the article cites a Jewish relief agency as stating that overall, more than two thousand Jewish refugees stayed temporarily in the area.¹² There is no mention of Trocmé or anyone else helping to save communists, Freemasons or resisters.

Moorehead compounds these errors by going on to claim that the *Peace News* story provided 'a perfect weapon in the struggle to find meaning for the Vichy years, by minimising collaborators and celebrating resisters' (p. 9). This is nonsense: by the mid-1950s, there was no 'struggle' to find meaning for the Vichy years, because a mythical account of those years was already firmly established – the myth of a nation united in resistance that had been promoted by De Gaulle from the Liberation on. The idea that an article in an obscure British pacifist newspaper would provide useful propaganda for French postwar nation-rebuilding is laughable. As the article itself suggested, the reason why it had taken so long to tell the story

⁹ Dalya Alberge, 'Row over prize book's "errors"', *Sunday Times*, 2 November 2014, http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/news/uk_news/Arts/article1478576.ece, also available at http://www.chambon.org/moorehead_sundaytimes.htm.

¹⁰ 'Does *Village of Secrets* falsify French rescue during the Holocaust?', *Tablet*, 31 August 2014, <http://tabletmag.com/jewish-arts-and-culture/books/186652/moorehead-le-chambon>.

¹¹ 'Pierre Sauvage on *Village of Secrets* (ctd.) – supplementary information', http://www.chambon.org/moorehead_mistakes.htm.

¹² 'André Trocmé and the French Nonviolent Resistance to the WWII German Occupation', *Peace News*, 29 May 1953. Although Moorehead gives no reference for the article, it was republished in November 2014 on the website of the Satyagraha Foundation for Nonviolence Studies (<http://www.satyagrahafoundation.org/andre-trocmé-and-the-french-nonviolent-resistance-to-the-wwii-german-occupation/>). Also available on the same site are two related and previously unpublished pieces: the aforementioned report by Trocmé on which the article was based (see note 1 above) and a complementary piece by his wife Magda (<http://www.satyagrahafoundation.org/french-nonviolent-resistance-during-world-war-ii>).

of Le Chambon was because it was ‘a different kind of story, about a different kind of resistance. There were no official historians willing to record it’. Not only did it not fit in with the official Resistance narrative, it also risked raising the question of Vichy anti-Semitism and complicity in the Holocaust (topics to which, to her credit, Moorehead gives ample coverage).

The rest of *Village* is similarly marred by careless mistakes. In the original UK hardback edition, at least twenty proper names were misspelled or otherwise given incorrectly, and many mistakes remain uncorrected in the most recent editions: thus Burns Chalmers becomes ‘Burners Chalmer’ (p. 124), the ‘celebrated’ French writer André Chamson becomes ‘André Chansom’ (p. 70), Württemberg becomes ‘Wurtenburg’ (p. 282), and so on. Two people long dead (Léon Eyraud and Marguerite Roussel) are credited in the acknowledgments as having told Moorehead their stories (p. 357), while Michael Marrus is described as the ‘late co-author’ (p. 326) of Robert Paxton’s *Vichy France*, when he is very much alive and it was *Vichy France and the Jews* they wrote together. Albert Schweitzer – rather than Albert Einstein – is identified as the president of the Jewish relief agency Œuvre de Secours aux Enfants (p. 42). And so on.

On his blog, rival author Peter Grose, whose book *The Greatest Escape* covers much of the same ground as *Village of Secrets*, diplomatically suggested that poor or non-existent copyediting and fact-checking were to blame for Moorehead’s multiple mistakes (and uninformed reviewers for not noticing them).¹³ The most charitable explanation, perhaps, is that the errors stemmed from a race to get Moorehead’s book out before Grose’s. Having started her research a year after her rival, Moorehead must have discovered early on that someone else was already working on the same story, but in the UK at least, the hardback of *Village of Secrets* was published three weeks before *The Greatest Escape*.

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Errors are one thing, misrepresentation another. Moorehead responded to the *Sunday Times* article about the row by writing an opinion piece for the *Guardian* (now included as an appendix in the US paperback edition of *Village*).¹⁴ Instead of addressing the criticisms levelled at her book, however, she described how she had been warned by local historians that the subject was a ‘hornets’ nest’ and that ‘a particular group [...] had appropriated the story, forged [*sic*] their own version of events and would consider no other’. According to Moorehead, this version of the story, centred on the pacifist Trocmé and the ‘goodness’ (Moorehead’s quotation marks) of the Plateau’s inhabitants, had been put forward by books and films in the 1970s and 1980s. Despite Moorehead’s use of the plural here, it’s obvious from her afterword that she had just one book and one film in mind: Hallie’s *Lest Innocent Blood*, whose subtitle refers to how ‘goodness’ happened there, and Sauvage’s 1989 documentary, the first film to be made on the subject, and in which he twice described what happened in Le Chambon as a ‘conspiracy of goodness’. According to Moorehead, the spread of this version of events left other rescuers in the area feeling left out.

¹³ ‘A Good Old Literary Row’,

http://www.petergrose.net/Peter_Grose/Blog/Entries/2014/11/20_A_good_old_literary_row.html.

¹⁴ New York: Harper Perennial, 2015. ‘Caroline Moorehead on *Village of Secrets*: “I received warnings”’, *Guardian*, 15 November 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/nov/15/caroline-moorehead-village-of-secrets-defying-the-nazis>.

The ‘local historians’ that Moorehead referred to, on the other hand, clearly belonged to one of the warring factions of the region’s Société d’Histoire de la Montagne, an organisation long riven by internal strife. In 1990, the Société had held a colloquium in Le Chambon to try and clear the air and give everybody the chance to speak.¹⁵ As Moorehead put it in the original UK hardback edition, ‘[a]ll those neglected by Trocmé, Hallie and Sauvage [...] were heard’ (p. 334)¹⁶ – specifically three Resistance leaders (Léon Eyraud, Pierre Fayol and Jean Bonnissol), the *maquisards*, the inhabitants of the surrounding villages, the other pastors, the Catholics, the farmers who hid the children and the (now adult) children themselves. Quite a list.

Leaving aside the fact that neither Bonnissol nor Eyraud was present at the colloquium – Bonnissol was otherwise engaged,¹⁷ while Eyraud had died in 1953 – how far is this accusation of neglect justified? Not very, to put it mildly. To begin with, both Hallie and Trocmé explicitly denied they were doing the work of historians: writing from an ethical and a non-violent standpoint respectively, they were only concerned with the Resistance and the Maquis insofar as their activities impinged on the rescue operation. Nevertheless, Hallie emphasised Eyraud’s role as a bridge between rescue and resistance activities in Le Chambon (pp. 178, 185), while Trocmé referred to his friendship with both Eyraud and Fayol, whom he praised for his ‘great nobility’ of character.¹⁸

As for farmers and the other villages mentioned by Moorehead, Patrick Henry quotes from a letter written by Trocmé when he learned that he was to be awarded the title of Righteous Gentile by Yad Vashem: ‘Why me and not the host of humble peasants of the Haute-Loire region, who did as much and more than I did? [...] I can only accept the Righteous Gentile medal in the name of all those who stuck their necks out and risked death for their unjustly persecuted brothers and sisters’ (pp. 22-23). And after insisting that the award ceremony should be held in Le Chambon, not in Switzerland where he was then living, Trocmé wrote to the Israeli Consul General in Paris: ‘The ceremony should be held at the town hall so as to bring together all those who helped shelter and save Jewish refugees during the war. The inhabitants of the neighboring villages [...] should also be invited’ (p. 23). As Henry writes: ‘These letters alone refute the ill-founded charges regarding the so-called propensity in André Trocmé to exaggerate the role he played in the rescue mission on the plateau.’ As regards Catholics – whom Hallie does in fact mention (p. 185) – Moorehead herself comments at one point that stories of Catholic rescue on the plateau were ‘rare’ (p. 235).

¹⁵ The proceedings of the colloquium were later published in Pierre Bolle (ed.), *Le Plateau Vivarais-Lignon: Accueil et Résistance, 1939-1944* (Le Chambon-sur-Lignon: Société d’histoire de la montagne, 1992). Henry describes this 700-page volume as ‘our greatest single source of knowledge regarding the extent and nature of rescue work on the plateau’ and ‘our best source for moving beyond the legends into a true history of the plateau from 1939 to 1944’ (*We Only Know Men*, p. 8). Despite mentioning the colloquium, however, Moorehead does not refer to the proceedings or include them in her bibliography. (The proceedings of a later colloquium, published in 2005, are wrongly attributed to Pierre Bolle, the editor of the earlier volume.)

¹⁶ In subsequent editions, this passage has been changed to ‘All those previously neglected...’ (p. 334). Since the only previous accounts Moorehead specifically mentions are by Trocmé, Hallie and Sauvage, however, the implication remains clear.

¹⁷ Bolle, *Le Plateau Vivarais-Lignon*, p. 565.

¹⁸ See Richard Unsworth, *A Portrait of Pacifists: Le Chambon, the Holocaust, and the Lives of Andre and Magda Trocmé* (Syracuse University Press, 2012), pp. 204-5. For Moorehead’s misrepresentation of Hallie, see the appendix to this article.

Sauvage, who was the first to interview many of the people involved, has particular reason to feel aggrieved at the accusations made or uncritically repeated by Moorehead. (Through his Chambon Foundation, he supplied eleven of the photographs used in *Village*.) Described by Moorehead merely as ‘a filmmaker who happened to have been born on the plateau’ (p. 333), Sauvage was in fact born to Jewish refugees in Le Chambon while France was still under German occupation: he is thus, ironically, one of the rescued children now grown into adults whom Moorehead incorrectly says he also neglected. As Sauvage has pointed out, his film also includes appearances by Fayol, the late Léon Eyraud’s family, a Catholic rescuer explicitly identified as such (Marguerite Roussel), farmers who hid Jews (such as Henri and Emma Héritier) and two Jewish former refugees, Joseph Atlas and Peter Feigl, who were children at the time.¹⁹

Before the US edition of *Village* came out, Sauvage used his lawyer to secure several changes to the three pages in which he was mentioned. These included the claim of neglect already mentioned, and, most notably, the inaccurate and unqualified allegation that three key players in the story had accused both Hallie and Sauvage of being ‘revisionists’ (p. 333, Moorehead’s quotation marks; see below.) Despite Sauvage’s protests, the similarly unfounded and unqualified assertion that his film had been described as a ‘mutilation of historical truth’ remains unchanged in the two US editions. This damning phrase, however, is a garbled version of a passage taken, out of context, from a joint letter which was sent to Hallie in 1987 about a lecture he had given in the US the previous year.²⁰ The letter strongly disputed Hallie’s claim that the Wehrmacht commander for the area, Julius Schmähling, had done his best to protect Jews on the plateau. The version of the facts that Hallie was spreading around was, the letter asserted, ‘*une véritable mutation* [NB: not ‘mutilation’] *de la vérité historique en son contraire*’ (‘a veritable transformation of historical truth into its opposite’). Sauvage – who was not mentioned by name – was only referred to at the end of the letter as the maker of a recent film on Le Chambon who might have been influenced by Hallie’s assertions.

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The man behind the letter, and most of the criticism of Trocmé, Hallie and Sauvage repeated by Moorehead, was Oscar Rosowsky.²¹ (Ironically, Rosowsky’s name is omitted from the acknowledgements for *Village of Secrets*, although the source notes credit an interview with him and a document from his private archives.) A Jewish refugee who had arrived in Le Chambon in late 1942, Rosowsky played a crucial role by forging thousands of false identity papers there for both other refugees and the Resistance. After the war, he would also play a key part in helping to put Le Chambon on the map, in certain circles at least. It was Rosowsky who, in 1951 – two years before the Trocmé-inspired *Peace News* article –

¹⁹ See ‘Pierre Sauvage on *Village of Secrets* (ctd.) – supplementary information’, http://www.chambon.org/moorehead_vs_weapons_spirit.htm.

²⁰ Letter from Magda Trocmé and others to Philip Hallie, 1 December 1987, in Magda Trocmé et al., ‘Le Mythe du commandant SS protecteur des Juifs’ *Le Monde Juif* 130 (April–June 1988), pp. 61–69 (61–64). Ironically, the letter was wrong about Schmähling’s status: he was an officer in the Wehrmacht, not the SS. For Hallie’s view of Schmähling, see his chapter ‘The Story of Major Julius Schmähling’, in Carol Rittner and Sondra Myers, *The Courage to Care: Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust* (New York: New York University Press, 1986).

²¹ Ironically, Rosowsky’s name is omitted from the acknowledgments for *Village of Secrets*, although he is cited (p. 356) as the source for the information about the controversy – which he initiated – surrounding Hallie’s lecture and Sauvage’s film.

published the first article on what happened there, in the Jewish newspaper *Droit et Liberté*.²² (The article paid a heartfelt tribute to Protestant rescuers in the area, and claimed that eight thousand false identity papers had been forged there, a figure which he would later reduce to five thousand.) And it was Rosowsky who, in a 1977 article for *L'Information juive*²³ – two years before the publication of Hallie's book – launched an appeal for Jews rescued in Le Chambon to come forward. The appeal was widely republished in the international Jewish press, leading, in 1979, to the unveiling of a memorial plaque in the village and the story being picked up by national newspapers in France. (As an internet search will readily confirm, Moorehead's claim – since corrected – that the plaque 'carried the names of 144 grateful Jews' (p. 332) is incorrect: in fact, this was the number of people who responded to Rosowsky's appeal.)²⁴ Neither Trocmé nor Hallie, however, mentioned Rosowsky in their accounts, for the simple reason that they weren't aware of his existence: for security reasons, Rosowsky hadn't made himself known to Trocmé at the time.²⁵ This could only have led to Rosowsky feeling that the story had been appropriated by them and that his own role had been ignored.

In 1986, Rosowsky had seen a work-in-progress version of Sauvage's documentary *Weapons of the Spirit*, which features an interview with Rosowsky himself. In this early (but not the final) version, Sauvage's film also included an interview with a witness who claimed that a meeting between Trocmé and Schmähling had resulted in the Wehrmacht officer agreeing to shield the Jews in the area from his Gestapo and SS colleagues. Rosowsky was outraged at what he saw as a whitewashing of Schmähling, whom he held responsible, among other things, for a Gestapo raid on Le Chambon which resulted in the deportation and in most cases the deaths of a score of Jewish and other students.

When, in 1988, Rosowsky learned of plans to give a preview screening of *Weapons* at a Holocaust conference in Oxford, he organised another joint letter. Allowing Sauvage's film to be shown, the letter protested, would 'favour the spread of revisionist theories [*thèses*]' and risk 'a fabrication of History regarding the "Final Solution"'.²⁶ (This was the source of Moorehead's claim, in the original UK hardback edition, that '[e]fforts were made to have Sauvage's film banned from certain festivals [*sic*]' (p. 333) and that Sauvage was accused of being a 'revisionist'.)²⁷ Thus it was that Sauvage joined Trocmé and Hallie on Rosowsky's list of *bêtes noires*, and that the three of them became in turn the object of Moorehead's would-be iconoclasm.

²² 'Il y a des hommes sur terre. Rencontres de Juifs et de protestants au pays cévenol.' *Droit et Liberté*, 26 January (as O. Rossowski) and 2 February 1951.

http://archives.mrap.fr/images/e/e4/FRGNQ_P0095_1950_060_003.JPG;

http://archives.mrap.fr/images/3/3f/FRGNQ_P0095_1950_061_005.JPG.

²³ 'Le sauvetage des Juifs en France occupée – 1942-1944: Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, un "Danemark" en France', *L'Information Juive*, n° 275, October 1977.

²⁴ See: http://www.ajpn.org/images-comms/1219002466_chambonplaque.jpg.

²⁵ As Rosowsky explained in a 2010 interview, this was so that neither of them, in the event of being arrested, would know about the other's activities. See Marianne Ruel Robins, 'A Grey Site of Memory: Le Chambon-sur-Lignon and Protestant Exceptionalism on the Plateau Vivarais-Lignon', *Church History* 82: 2 (2013), pp. 317-352, note 101, available at <http://www.readperiodicals.com/201306/2974653661.html>. Like Moorehead, Robins adopts a demythologizing approach, but it is beyond the scope of this article to discuss the issues she raises.

²⁶ Letter from Raymond Aubrac and others to Nitza Spiro, 27 May 1988, in Magda Trocmé et al., 'Le Mythe du commandant SS protecteur des Juifs' *Le Monde Juif* 130 (April-June 1988), pp. 65-68.

²⁷ In subsequent editions, this has been changed to 'An effort was made to have Sauvage's film banned from an event'. The allegation that Sauvage was accused of being a 'revisionist' has been dropped.

There had been talk of *Chambonisation* and the Schmähling controversy at the 1990 Le Chambon colloquium, and when a second colloquium was held there in 2002, there was further dissent. Rosowsky and other disaffected parties organised a round-table discussion from which members of the non-violent Trocmé camp were excluded. This in turn led to the round-table contributions being excluded from the proceedings of the colloquium, and their being eventually published in a separate volume, partly subtitled ‘The Forgotten Voices of History Speak’.²⁸ At this second colloquium, the son of the popular local doctor Roger Le Forestier, who had been murdered by Klaus Barbie’s Gestapo in Lyon, angrily produced the 1953 *Peace News* article – the same article which, in her foreword, Moorehead presents as the source of the myth she seeks to demolish. Apart from the article’s focus on Trocmé’s side of the story, Rosowsky was particularly outraged by the article’s claim that the German commander for the region (i.e. Schmähling) had told the local pastor (i.e. Trocmé) that when Le Forestier was arrested, he gave such a powerful witness for the non-violent nature of resistance in Le Chambon that it persuaded the Germans to spare the region.

Thereafter, Rosowsky’s obsession with Schmähling tipped over into a full-blown conspiracy theory. In a long and rambling video interview given in 2006, Rosowsky claimed that – along with Trocmé’s (still unpublished) autobiography, which he claimed to have read in 1976 – the *Peace News* article was part of ‘an international ideological and political plot’ to exonerate (*dédouaner*) ‘good’ Germans in the context of German rearmament during the Cold War.²⁹ He alleged darkly that there were American religious sects who had set up in Le Chambon and who had a base in France:³⁰ you were dealing with people who weren’t joking (*‘Là on a affaire à des gens qui rigolent pas’*). Rosowsky died in November 2014. It’s a nice irony that, in her *Guardian* article, an experienced author like Moorehead should have indirectly accused her critics of having ‘forged their own version of events’, after accepting what the former forger Rosowsky said about Trocmé, Hallie and Sauvage at face value.

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By coincidence, Peter Grose’s *The Greatest Escape* begins with the story of how, after his father had been arrested, the teenaged Rosowsky forged identity papers to rescue his mother from an internment camp and then took her to Le Chambon. Thereafter, Grose – an Australian with two previous Second World War books to his credit – concentrates on telling what he obviously sees as a rattling good yarn, trying to take in all its various aspects and personalities. In an author’s note, he writes that all the previous accounts of the story struck him as incomplete: ‘Jewish writers saw it through the prism of the Holocaust. Protestant writers saw it as a proud moment in the history of Protestantism in France. The champions of pacifism saw it as vindication of their beliefs’ (p. 309). Everything he read and every documentary he watched ‘seemed to fall short of telling the full story’ (though he also says he watched Sauvage’s *Weapons of the Spirit* fifty times or more).

For Grose, trying to tell ‘the full story’ means giving equal coverage to two aspects of it which previous accounts had tended to keep apart, non-violent rescue and armed resistance.

²⁸ Société d’Histoire de la Montagne, *Les Résistances sur le Plateau Vivarais-Lignon, 1938-1945: Témoins, Témoignages et Lieux de Mémoires, Les Oubliés de l’Histoire Parlent* (Polignac: Roure, 2005).

²⁹ ‘Mémoires de la Shoah: témoignage d’Oscar Rosowsky’, Part 3, ‘Après la guerre’, chapter 32, <http://grands-entretiens.ina.fr/consulter/Shoah/Rosowsky> (transcript available under ‘Entretien’).

³⁰ *ibid*, chapter 34.

(Compared, however, with the activities of the extraordinary American SOE agent Virginia Hall, who sported a wooden leg she called Cuthbert, a list of the local resistance's actions in the run-up to Liberation 'is hardly the stuff of wartime derring-do' (p. 219), as Grose himself admits.) Separate chapters are devoted to the Swiss connection and to the role of couriers and *passeurs* (people-smugglers) such as Pierre Piton, a boy scout who ended up as a Resistance fighter. Grose comes up with a real scoop by finding a witness nobody had interviewed before: Catherine Cambéssédès Colburn, who as a fifteen-year-old schoolgirl carried messages and suitcases full of money all over the region for the Resistance. The fact that her best friend at school, the Trocmés' daughter Nelly, only learned about this when she read Grose's book underlines the necessary secrecy involved in both rescue and resistance activities in the area, and the consequent difficulty – or impossibility – of telling the 'full' story, especially so many years after the event.

Grose adopts a balanced approach in dealing with the major controversies surrounding the story, suggesting that Hallie got a lot right as well as a lot wrong. He assesses (at some length) the various estimates that have been given of the numbers of people who found refuge in the area, concluding that one of Rosowsky's figures – 3,500 Jews, plus 1,500 STO draft-dodgers and *résistants* – is probably about right (p. 268). Realising the danger of privileging Le Chambon at the expense of all the other villages on the Plateau, he nevertheless points out that Chambonnais represent by far the largest number of officially recognised 'Righteous Gentiles' in the area.³¹ Similarly, while he acknowledges the importance of many other figures (especially Charles Guillon, the village's former mayor), he attributes a special role to Trocmé, arguing that it was his involvement at the beginning that set everything else in motion. Without sharing Trocmé's pacifism, he concludes that in practice, his non-violent approach must have saved innumerable lives, by not provoking Vichy and German retaliation.³² On the question of whether Schmähling and the Vichy Prefect Robert Bach turned a blind eye to what was going on, Grose notes that only thirteen per cent of Jews in the *département* where Le Chambon was situated were arrested and deported, as opposed to twenty-two per cent in France as a whole (p. 271). He decides, however, that the major factor protecting the area was geography.

Where Hallie and Sauvage talk about goodness (a concept Moorehead seems to have problems with), Grose talks about human decency. Noting that there are an estimated eleven million refugees in the world, he contrasts their treatment by governments with the hospitality Jewish and other refugees were shown on the Plateau. (La Cimade, a Protestant relief organisation which played a vital part in the rescue operation, is still active today, working with both refugees and migrants.) *The Greatest Escape* contains a few minor textual errors and badly needs an index, but overall it provides an engaging, even-handed and reliable account, which has no polemical axes to grind and often lets its witnesses speak for themselves.

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³¹ See <http://www.ajpn.org/departement-Haute-Loire-43.html> for further details.

³² The *Peace News* article itself (see note 11), using Trocmé's own words, stated: 'It is difficult to say if the Maquis protected the nonviolent groups, or if the latter saved the Maquis in Haute Loire from the tragic fate of the Maquis in the Vercors [...].'

As Grose reveals, it was a friend's recommendation of Sauvage's *Weapons of the Spirit* that first alerted him to the story. Sauvage's documentary is a small masterpiece and the best answer to Rosowsky's slurs (on both occasions that I've seen it in a cinema, it received a round of applause at the end). *Weapons* is invaluable for combining iconography of the period – contemporary photographs, newsreel footage and, in this new edition, even some home movie sequences – with 1980s interviews with rescuers and survivors. Most have since died, making the film an irreplaceable record.

Weapons is, above all, a heartfelt tribute by Sauvage to the community which he understandably feels saved both his and his parents' lives. If the film singles anyone out, it is not Trocmé (who had died in 1971), but the peasant farmers Henri and Emma Héritier, who provided a base for Rosowsky and his forging operations, and who befriended Sauvage's parents. Standing awkwardly and self-consciously in front of the camera, their simplicity speaks for itself. Asked why they kept on sheltering Jews when things began to get dangerous, Emma Héritier replies 'I don't know. We were used to it' – and then looks down. Her unwillingness to think that she was doing anything special is echoed by other rescuers. Roger Darcissac, the headmaster of the local state school, says that it all happened very simply and that people didn't ask themselves why they were doing it: 'It was the human thing to do.' Georgette Barraud, who ran a boarding house which took in Jews, explains that she helped them simply because they needed to be helped: 'It's the normal thing to do.' And Magda Trocmé plays down her husband's role, stressing that although he had influence, he didn't know everything. If they'd had an organisation, she says, they would have failed: 'it was a general consensus'.

Despite the deeply personal motivation for his film, Sauvage provides ample historical context. On the one hand, he includes details of Vichy's anti-Jewish legislation, shots of French internment camps and documents of deportations. On the other, he stresses the importance of Protestantism in Le Chambon, emphasising the inhabitants' folk memories of the persecution of their Huguenot ancestors, and showing how the local newspaper regularly featured relevant Biblical quotations. (Some of the interviewees also quote from the Bible to explain their actions.) Although Sauvage describes Le Chambon as the operation's 'nerve-centre', he also acknowledges the role of the surrounding villages and relief organisations like la Cimade, whose founder Madeleine Barot refers specifically to Le Chambon as one of the main places she sent Jewish refugees. Sadly, *Weapons* is little-known in the UK, where it has never been shown on television and has only received one-off cinema screenings. One can only hope that, when it is released, the new twenty-fifth anniversary edition DVD will gain the wider audience that it richly deserves. Given that Moorehead herself, in email correspondence quoted by Sauvage, described the film as 'extremely good', it would be a travesty if the defamatory remarks that she repeats put anyone off seeing it.³³

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Although neither Grose nor Moorehead does much to put the story into the broader context of Holocaust rescue, there have been a number of academic studies in this area, some of them specifically citing Le Chambon. Most famously, in their book *The Altruistic Personality*:

³³ http://www.chambon.org/moorehead_vs_weapons_spirit.htm (end).

Rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe,³⁴ Samuel and Pearl Oliner concluded that Holocaust rescuers were above all empathetic, having absorbed an ethic of caring from their families: whether religious or not, they tended to believe that all human beings were of equal value. Looking back at his research in 2001, Samuel Oliner made the point that several studies had shown that compassion and empathy are most effectively taught through stories.³⁵ Perhaps, in the final analysis and however it is told, it is the broad, exemplary story of what happened on the Plateau that matters, rather than the details.

Appendix: Moorehead on Hallie

For Moorehead, Hallie's *Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed* is 'the basis of the myth that endures in some places to this day' (p. 332). She accuses Hallie of giving the impression that Trocmé, 'the "soul of Le Chambon", acting more or less single-handedly, so infused his parishioners with his belief in non-violence that his presbytery became the centre of the rescue operation' (p. 332). (In fact, the description of Trocmé as 'the soul of Le Chambon' was not Hallie's, but came from a refugee he quotes (*Lest...*, p. 45).) There can be no doubt, however, that the pastor's presbytery did become *one* of the main centres of the rescue operation. Thus Patrick Henry quotes part of a letter which, he says, Trocmé probably wrote in February 1943: '[T]his past summer we were able to help out about sixty Jewish people who had taken refuge in our home [...]. Normally, in the summer, my dining room has been transformed into a waiting room (10-15 people a day). Now that's the situation all year round' (p. 22; Henry also mentions two other centres of the operation.)

As for Trocmé acting more or less single-handedly, Hallie gives due credit – as did Trocmé himself – not only to Trocmé's wife Magda and his assistant pastor Edouard Theis, but also to other rescuers. '[I]t is misleading to think about Trocmé as an isolated leader' (p. 98), Hallie points out, emphasising later: 'It is tempting to make the Trocmés all-important in the story of Le Chambon, but it is wrong to do so. [...] It was the houses, the homes in Le Chambon that made a village of refuge work' (p. 175). And reporting a conversation with Magda Trocmé, Hallie writes: '[Trocmé] had not created this little Huguenot community. It used its own deep resources to help the refugees. He had inspired it, but he had not made it what it was, the way [Madeleine] Barot and the others had made the Cimade' (p.195). (The Cimade was a Protestant youth organisation, largely run by women, which provided relief for refugees all over France and of which Barot was secretary-general; Hallie makes several other references to their work, on pp. 176-7, 190, 195, 200, 232-3 and 250.)

Barot features in a related criticism Moorehead makes of Hallie's book. 'There is little or no mention', Moorehead claims, 'of Madeleine Dreyfus, Joseph Bass, Mme Déléage [*sic*], Miss Maber or Madeleine Barot, or of any of the other important villages, Mazet, Tence or Fay. The Darbyists are nowhere to be seen. [...] [Léon] Eyraud, the Maquis leader whose calm authority prevented many of the young men from performing foolish actions, never features at all' (p.332). It's certainly true that Hallie doesn't mention Dreyfus, Bass or Mme Deléage,

³⁴ New York: The Free Press, 1988 (new edn 1992).

³⁵ Samuel Oliner, 'Ordinary Heroes', *Yes! Magazine*, 5 November 2001, <http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/can-love-save-the-world/ordinary-heroes>.

scarcely refers to other villages and is unfairly dismissive of one of them, Le Mazet-Saint-Voy (to give the village its full name). As a glance at the index to Hallie's book confirms, however, there are multiple references to the English schoolteacher Lesley Maber (pp. 174, 175, 211, 236 and 254), Léon Eyraud (pp. 178, 185 and 188) and to the Darbyites (pp. 24, 32, 95-98 and 182-3). Indeed, Hallie specifically states that the Darbyites 'would become an important part of the rescue efforts of the people of Le Chambon, constituting as they did almost one-third of the Protestant population of the region' (p. 95). He also notes that many of the farms which sheltered children and sometimes whole families were owned by the Darbyites, whose beliefs gave them a 'special sympathy' for Jews (p. 182).