What's in a Street Name? by David Gray

A couple of weeks ago my wife Mandy and I, took a short break in Paris. One day, sitting at a table on a street corner outside a restaurant I noticed a street sign on the wall across the road (below). The sign read 'Rue Yvonne Le Tac'. I thought in that moment I would ask 'Google' who this lady was and it led me on a journey through some of the best and the worst aspects of the Second World War.



Yvonne Le Tac (August 22, 1882 – December 23, 1957) was a French schoolteacher, headmistress, and a decorated World War II Resistance member.

Key Details

Education Career: She worked as an elementary schoolteacher and later became headmistress of the local girls' school at No. 7 Rue Antoinette (now **Rue Yvonne Le Tac**) in Montmartre, Paris, advocating strongly for girls' education and emancipation.



World War II Resistance: Operating under the pseudonym **"Noir-Orange"** as part of the **Overcloud** network, Yvonne (left), used her holiday home in Saint-Pabu (Brittany) as a crucial transit point for Allied escapees and Royal Navy boats. She smuggled weapons hidden beneath seaweed in a wheelbarrow and helped transport agents.

Imprisonment and Survival: Arrested by the Germans on February 7, 1942, she survived imprisonment in several concentration camps, including **Ravensbrück**, **Lublin-Majdanek**, and **Auschwitz-Birkenau**, before being liberated and returning to France.

Honors and Legacy: She was awarded the **Médaille de la Résistance avec rosette**. A street (Rue Yvonne Le Tac) and a college in the 18th arrondissement of Paris (below) are named in her honour.



Family: She was the mother of Joël Le Tac—a prominent journalist, WWII resistance fighter, Compagnon de la Libération, and politician—as well as Roger and Yves Le Tac.

The **Overcloud resistance network** was a clandestine Free French and British intelligence operation established in the autumn of 1941. Pushed into motion by Yvonne Le Tac's son, Joël Le Tac, the network was designed to gather intelligence,

distribute communications, and organize maritime escape routes between occupied northern France and the United Kingdom.

The Le Tac family home at the Kervigorn point in **Saint-Pabu, Brittany**, served as the geographic heart of the network.

Chronology of Operations (Autumn 1941 – February 1942)

October 1941 (The Insertion): Joël Le Tac and a radio operator, Alain de Kergorlay, crossed the English Channel from Britain by boat. They arrived on the northwest coast of Brittany using two canoes lashed together as an improvised catamaran to safely transport a heavy, highly sensitive British radio transmitter.

The Family Mobilisation: Upon landing, Joël, his brother Yves, and their mother, Yvonne, integrated local resisters to fully establish the Overcloud network across northwest Brittany. Yvonne assumed the code name **"Noir-Orange"** (Black-Orange).

Sea Exfiltrations & Maritime Flotillas: Yvonne's home became a safe house for Allied agents, downed airmen, and escapees. She would personally harbour these individuals before paddling them out in canoes to meet Royal Navy clandestine sea flotillas waiting off the coast.

Smuggling Weapons via Seaweed: When the British attempted to parachute weapons to the network, some drops went awry. To recover and redistribute weapons, Yvonne put her everyday identity as an "ordinary" 59-year-old grandmother to use. She smuggled arms, ammunition, and intelligence documents past German patrols by burying them under piles of heavy seaweed (*goémon*) inside a standard farm wheelbarrow.

February 1942 (The Gestapo Crackdown): The network's radio transmissions drew the attention of German direction-finding services, and a wave of arrests crippled Overcloud. Yvonne was arrested on **February 7, 1942**, alongside her sons. Despite brutal interrogation, she remained silent, shielding remaining sub-circuits before she was ultimately deported to Nazi concentration camps.

Imprisonment and Repatriation

Yvonne Le Tac was liberated in January 1945 by Soviet troops after being abandoned by her German guards during a death march.

Her path to freedom and her eventual return home unfolded in several stages:

The Death March: As the Red Army advanced westward through Poland in January 1945, the Nazi SS began evacuating the **Auschwitz-Birkenau** camp. Yvonne was forced into a group of prisoners driven out on a brutal "death march". As the front lines collapsed, the German guards fled and abandoned the prisoners, leaving them to be found and rescued by the entering Soviet forces.

Recovery in Poland: Weakened by years of harsh labour, starvation, and typhus across three concentration camps, she was taken to a forced labour camp turned recovery centre in Katowice, Poland, where she stayed from February to mid-March 1945. She was then transferred to a hospital in Kraków for medical treatment.

Repatriation via Odessa: Once she recovered enough to travel, she was repatriated by the French authorities via the Ukrainian port city of Odessa. She boarded a ship to Marseille, France, arriving back on French soil on June 4, 1945.

Upon her return, she was reunited with her family, including her sons, who had remarkably also survived the war and Nazi captivity.

Remarkably, **all of Yvonne Le Tac's sons involved in the Overcloud network survived the war**, despite enduring brutal interrogations and being deported to Nazi concentration camps under the harshest categories.

Joël Le Tac (The Leader)



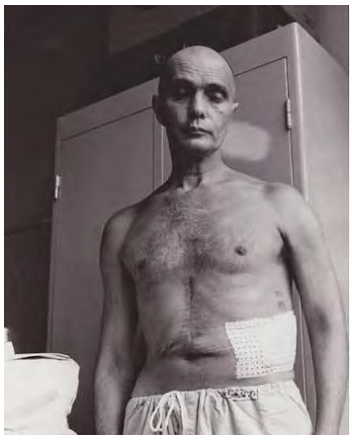
Joël Le Tac was the mastermind behind the Overcloud network.

The Camps: Following his arrest on February 5, 1942, in a Gestapo trap, he was designated as a **Nacht und Nebel** ("Night and Fog") prisoner—a classification intended for high-value resisters who were to be vanished into the camp system and worked to death in complete secrecy. He was sent to **Natzweiler-Struthof**, followed by **Dachau**, **Neuengamme**, and **Gross-Rosen**.

Survival and Liberation: In January 1945, during the brutal evacuation of Gross-Rosen via the "convoy of death," he was remarkably the only survivor of a railcar containing 100 people. After working in the tunnels of the Dora labour camp, he was finally transferred to **Bergen-Belsen**, where British troops liberated him on April 15, 1945.

Post-War: He returned to France with the rank of Captain, was named a **Compagnon de la Libération** by General de Gaulle, and went on to have a prominent post-war career as a journalist, UN combat volunteer in the Korean War, and a Gaullist politician.

Yves Le Tac



Yves worked alongside his brother and mother to build up the maritime escape routes in Brittany.

The Camps: Arrested in Paris shortly after Joël, Yves and his wife, Andrée (who was also an active Overcloud member), were subjected to the same harsh interrogations. Yves was deported to **Natzweiler-Struthof** on the exact same transport as his brother on July 8, 1943.

Survival and Post-War: He survived the brutal camp pipeline alongside his family. Upon returning to France in May 1945, Yves entered public service and became a prominent **Socialist politician and deputy**.



The family's patriarch, André Le Tac (Yvonne's husband), (left), was also arrested and survived the camps. The entire family's survival across multiple Nazi concentration camps remains one of the most astonishing stories of the French Resistance.

Andrée Le Tac's Role in the Overcloud Network

Andrée Le Tac (née Boulloche) [no photo is available] was the wife of Yves Le Tac, and played an indispensable operational role within the Overcloud intelligence structure. Like her husband and brother-in-law, she operated with immense courage and suffered severe consequences for it.

Parisian Intelligence Hub: While Yvonne Le Tac handled maritime exfiltrations on the rugged coasts of Brittany, Andrée was heavily involved in managing the network's expansion into Paris. She helped coordinate communications, intelligence gathering, and safe housing for underground agents traveling between London, Brittany, and the capital.

Arrest and Torture: When the German direction-finding services closed in on the network in early 1942, Andrée was swept up in the Gestapo crackdown alongside her husband and the rest of the Le Tac family. She was subjected to brutal Gestapo interrogations, yet she maintained absolute silence regarding the network's remaining sub-circuits and contacts.

Deportation and Resistance Aftermath: Along with Yvonne Le Tac, Andrée was deported into the Nazi concentration camp system. She survived the gruelling conditions of the camps alongside the rest of her resilient family, returning to France in 1945 to see the Overcloud network recognized as one of the earliest and most vital maritime intelligence pipelines of the Free French forces.

The Nacht und Nebel ("Night and Fog") Directive

The **Nacht und Nebel** (NN) decree was a highly secret, chilling directive issued by Adolf Hitler on December 7, 1941. Its core objective was to eliminate any civilian resistance in occupied Europe through immediate, terrifying erasure.

Under this order, captured resistance fighters, political activists, or anyone helping the underground were bypassed by typical military court procedures. Instead, they were secretly transported across borders directly into the heart of Nazi Germany. The "Night and Fog" label meant that prisoners were to vanish entirely into the camp network; the Nazi authorities strictly forbade any notification regarding their arrest, whereabouts, or eventual execution. For families and the public, these individuals had simply ceased to exist, creating a devastating psychological weapon of terror.

For the Le Tac brothers, Joël and Yves, being designated as "NN" prisoners meant they faced intensified interrogation, forced labour meant to work them to death, and complete isolation from the outside world.

The Le Tac family certainly carried out their duties of resistance and survived to tell their stories. Thousands of others performed similar deeds of heroism, and some also survived to talk about it after

final victory was achieved. Many however, never had the opportunity, and can only be remembered as unknown participants in the fight for freedom and justice.



Plaque outside the school where Yvonne Le Tac was Headmistress. The plaque reads:

"To the memory of the students of this school deported from 1942 to 1944 because they were born Jewish, innocent victims of Nazi barbarism and the Vichy government.

They were exterminated in the death camps.

More than 700 of these children lived in the 18th arrondissement.

Let us never forget them.

January 27, 2005"

Yvonne Le Tac in later years



Sources

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