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Title of LIA Project:	Identifying North Africans in the French Internal Resistance

For my leadership in action, I worked at the Mémorial du Mont Valérien and the Mémorial des Martyrs de la Déportation (Memorial for victims of Nazi Camps) in Paris. At Le Mont Valérien, there is currently an exhibition, informed in part by the research I helped contribute to during my summer research placement. My placement has been a continuation and showcase of the work of myself, previous scholars who did this project and of course, my supervisor Nina Wardleworth.



Me at The Mémorial des Martyrs de la Déportation

The memorials play a vital role in French and wider society having both been commissioned into memorials by Charles De Gaulle after the end of World War II. The exhibition specifically aims to highlight the contribution of colonial resistance members in the fight against the German occupation of France. There is little light shed on this topic thus far due to paternalistic imaging campaigns after the war where France sort to maintain the control of its Empire. Today, it is vital we memorialise these soldiers and, crucially, highlight the ways in which a 'blanchiment' (a process of making the French army seem more ethnically white) has affected the accuracy of the way we collectively recall history. These soldiers often faced discrimination and struggled to get their war pension after the war was over. Research and more importantly the transmission of this information, plays a vital role in how we start to correct these misdoings – not that we ever can fully. That was role doing my leadership in action; To transmit this information to members of the public in both French and English and contribute further to our understanding of this topic through work with the French Office of Veterans and Victims of War.

A great benefit of my leadership in action has been seeing the impact of the exhibition on various members of the public. Our memorials work closely with schools and young people to educate the next generations on the war and the memory of victims. Furthermore, we also work with the French scheme of “DPJJ” (La direction de la protection judiciaire de la jeunesse). This scheme works with young people who have been in trouble with the law or who have been identified at high risk of



The Exhibition at MV

offending. Some of these young people came to spend a few days with us to learn about jobs and places of high cultural importance. Initially, these young people seemed disengaged with the work. One told us that he hated history because there were too many books to read at school. We showed them the exhibition and the work we did to make it. This sparked a conversation amongst them about how their own backgrounds were from certain French colonies such as Morocco and Senegal. They started asking lots of questions about whether their grandparents could have been in the resistance and if the resistance members ever got justice. It was great to see how when we present history that is representative of all backgrounds and includes the experience of all groups of people, young people, even the most disengaged, can relate and find it more interesting. Too often we learn one narrative of history and people can feel disenfranchised from it all together. This experience for me highlighted the importance of the work as I am often faced with the question of why research about people in the past who are for the most part no longer alive, should receive funding and attention compared to perhaps more present-day work. The past and our understandings of history are paramount to making people feel connected to institutions and their countries. Making people feel as though them and their ancestors are represented in commemoration and in our national memory is something that can make people feel as though society is committed to dismantling racist and xenophobic ways of thinking.

This example demonstrates as well how I met two of my SMART goals – “Share the stories of individual soldiers so that young people can feel the effect of humanised testimonies” and “Gain an understanding of how much young people already know about the issue”. In the guided visits in which I conducted, I shared the stories of people I had researched last summer. I thought this was vital as history is too often about facts and figures when instead it pays more of a tribute to victims when you use their names and share their stories as well



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as being more engaging for visitors of all ages and knowledge levels. For example, in the Mémorial des Martyrs de la Déportation, which is a memorial for French people who were sent to Nazi Camps, I spoke about the testimony of Emile Sarfati, a man of whom I had researched in the archives last summer. He was sent to Buchenwald camp and survived but was left severely disabled. I spoke about his experiences and visitors seemed particularly moved by these parts of the tour because it made it feel more personal. I also had aimed to help the memorial sites expand their outreach as I aimed to do in another of my SMART goals. As the only anglophone there at the time, I helped translate education documents and brochures as well as helping some of my colleagues learn some English vocabulary which would help them explain to visitors the memorial. One thing I am

especially proud of was that I lead an outreach project with English Speaking Universities in Paris (E.g. London Institute in Paris, Columbia University Paris Campus etc) to invite them and their students to our memorial. I built strong connections with various professors and aided new links between my company and the English-speaking community – something which would have been difficult for my French colleagues. This helped the exhibition be seen by a wider community and forge new research links with other professionals. These connections are now all kept on a new anglophone database which I created with the help of another colleague and can be used in the future even after my placement. I feel as though I have now made a lasting impact on the memorial and hence the wider community. I also had aimed to continue my work in the archives to unearth more untold stories of marginalised colonial soldiers in my SMART goals before my LiA. I worked closely with one of my colleagues who oversees the memorial’s work in the archives and together we went to the military archives in Vincennes as well as the deportation archives in Caen in Normandy. We worked on a project of unearthing the stories of those who were killed at Le Mont Valérien (which was a site of execution during WWII) and made sure to preserve the evidence we had. This experience helped me become a more informed ethical researcher.

As far as developing myself as a leader and as a person, I feel this experience was completely transformative. I was able to work as part of a dynamic team and be given responsibility whether it be in being trusted to lead visits with groups of fifty people at a time or lead an outreach project. I believe I worked collaboratively and across boundaries as I had to work in an entirely French team and be able to express my thoughts, opinions, and knowledge despite language barriers as well as cultural ones. I was able to communicate effectively and articulately to build lasting relationships and networks with people through our mutual passion for the subject. They taught me so much in terms of how to run a site of such size and cultural gravitas as well as historical knowledge I did not yet know. During my time there, I learned so much information that I was able to present to members of the public including political figures such as ambassadors and members of French Parliament. It required emotional intelligence to deal with a sensitive subject matter. Talking about concentration camps and execution is clearly an emotional topic so I had to balance the need to convey knowledge whilst also allowing people to process harrowing topics. Often finding the line between being informative and being empathetic is hard as you don't want to overload people with information that trivialises such human topics but equally it is important to educate people as that is what prevents these atrocities from happening again. In these difficult and confronting situations, I was able to better understand my own leadership style; My form of leadership relies on building strong connections and encouraging participation by all members of the team. I believe everybody had a unique perspective on the issues we were dealing with – some people had family connections, some were French or like me, English, some had come from strong academic backgrounds and others were not. Everybody's perspective helped highlight a new facet of the job and different ways of doing things and in a subject that is so open to conversation and emotion, this made the discourse all the more rich.



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The LiA helped me continue my exploration of the topic about Colonial Soldiers in the French Resistance of which I had been actively engaged in, not just during my summer of research, but also throughout the year. I was lucky enough to have presented my research at The Undergraduate Conference of Research at the University of Leeds as well as the Undergraduate Research Experience for the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Cultures. It was a great experience to speak to people who often had no prior knowledge about the French Resistance let alone colonial soldiers within it. I believe that it helps you better understand a topic when you are made to explain it to people because you must see it through their eyes



Me and my supervisor - Nina

for the first time. It is also very helpful to hear what questions it makes people have after your presentation so you can better adapt your talk to be fully explanative. Another example of this during my LiA was I was conducting a tour with a group of Americans, and I was explaining how there was many French Victims of German Occupation. I could see they seemed very confused, so I slowed down to ask. They told me that they didn't know France had been occupied during WWII. For me I had forgotten having lived for so long in Europe and knowing French history, that this may have been knowledge a non-European did not know. This helped me reassess my approach and better build tours in the future that catered for many people. This type of empathy and seeing things from others' perspectives is what makes me feel as though I am a stronger leader.

Furthermore, during the year I also attended the Posters in Parliament event with a fellow scholar from the University of Leeds. There we presented our research posters to of course other students, but also to MPs and policy makers. This was an incredible opportunity to showcase what we had done as well as inform very important people on the matters which were pertinent to us. Creating discourse between student researchers and policy makers, helps show what young people can do as well as inform people with the ability to make things happen, about pressing, underrepresented topics such as my own. In attendance was people such as Ben Bradshaw, Anneliese Dodds and of course, Alec Shelbrooke who had kindly aided in sponsoring the event in Parliament. This event really increased my confidence and helped me feel as though I was doing something important and impactful. It was great to see how research could engage such conversation and materialise from theory into policy and real world change.

Reflecting on the time before my LiA, I was worried about the impact of language and cultural barriers. Whilst the language was something that proved incredibly hard, I think I now view it as a positive challenge rather than a hinderance or a barrier. Me being English helped the memorial in many ways whether it be aiding in Anglophone Outreach, producing

brochures in English, or doing tours. Similarly, my French language skills were hugely improved upon during the full immersion in a French office. There were some cultural differences – some more trivial than others. For example, in French there is two words for ‘you’; One for more formal interactions with bosses and one for friends and people of equal standing to you etc. I struggled to know which to use and worried I was offending somebody by using the more informal but also worried I was sounding way too proper in casual settings if I used the more formal version. Small things like this make you worry about small interactions that you



The Rugby World Cup in Paris!

otherwise wouldn't have thought twice about in your native culture. These experiences made me more resilient, and I also learned (as simple as it sounds) just to ask if I'm confused. Nobody was offended because they knew it was not my first language and they were happy to explain. Small cultural differences and 'shocks' also were the things that made my Leadership in Action so enriching – hearing classic French songs and being taught funny slang by my colleagues. I feel like a more informed, culturally empathetic person because of the experience. I feel like I have so many more experiences and stories to tell just from one small placement. As I am now going on to do my year abroad in France, I feel better prepared and more confident. Cultural difference is not something to worry about or shy away from – it is something that adds to our experience and helps us bond with people



Le Marais

we otherwise wouldn't. This understanding helps us be better leaders too who aren't afraid of creating different, integrated teams made up of a diverse range of individuals.

Looking to the future, I have gained more insight into what I would like to do because of this experience. Whilst I cannot say what specific career I want, I hope that I can work in an area that encompasses multicultural teams. Doing a language degree, I feel a new appreciation for my subject and that French is not just about grammar or verb endings; It is subject about people and how they live. In the past, I never would have thought “When I am older, I will work in a memorial” but life gave

me an unexpected opportunity to do something, and I ended up loving it. I feel from this experience and after Laidlaw as a whole that leadership and development is a lot more about saying “yes” to things than it is saying “no”. I now feel less apprehensive about taking on new challenges and putting myself in uncomfortable positions. I feel like I can lead a team ethically and confidently. I have learned that confidence is also the ability to ask questions and accept the vulnerability that comes with doing things outside your comfort zone.

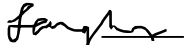
Project Leader

Please comment on your scholar's LIA period, what you consider to be your scholar's strengths and which leadership attributes (please refer to the leadership attributes below) you feel your scholar has demonstrated and is particularly skilled in. You could also identify areas which the scholar can develop further.

I was lucky enough to see Lizzie during her LIA period and can attest first hand to how this period has led to an increase in her confidence and a deepening of her understand of how to lead with empathy, compassion and drive. She has worked very hard to take on a range of new opportunities and task, many (if not all) of which would have felt very much outside her comfort zone. She has become even more attune to the cultural competences needed to work in a sensitive environment such as these two war and genocide memorials and to explain their importance to a wide range of publics in terms of age and nationalities.

I received excellent feedback from her placement supervisors that praised her willingness to work as part of a team, her excellent ideas of how to widen the museums' reach to Anglophone visitors and her ability to adapt to the wide variety of tasks that the placement involved. She is an excellent ambassador for Leeds and the Laidlaw program.

Keep saying Yes to the opportunities out there Lizzie and keep working to use History and Languages to make a difference in the world!

Signature of Scholar  Date: 25.09.2023

Signature of Project Leader N.A.Wardleworth Date: 25 / 09 / 23

