



### Places filled with memory



The Mont-Valérien clearing is a poignant place of remembrance, located inside the fort. Today, access is made via a narrow dark deliberately designed to evoke the prisoners’ journey to their deaths. The site has not been altered since the war, and has been preserved in its original state to respect the memory of the events. The clearing was a .



perfect place to kill these soldiers and militants, both because of the forest, which protected the area from prying eyes, and because of its distance from habitations. No one knew what was going on behind this wall. Even today, it's hard to say how many resistants died there. In the clearing, a stele installed in 1959 gives an exaggerated figure of 4,500 shot and only mentions the notion of the Resistance. It is the fruit of a memorial consensus at the end of the Second World War. Serge Klarsfeld's work has made it possible to correct these errors. Gathered in a commission chaired by Robert Badinter, they established the nowknown list of 1,000 shooters, now inscribed on the “monument aux fusillés” (monument to the shooters) in the Mont Valérien fortress. At the firing range, an officer would announce in German the court decision condemning each future shooter. In small groups of three or five, the men were tied hands behind their backs to the posts, blindfolded if they wished so. The platoon then proceeded to the killing, sometimes in front of the comrades who would succeed them. The German officer delivered the final shot, and finally, a medical officer certified death



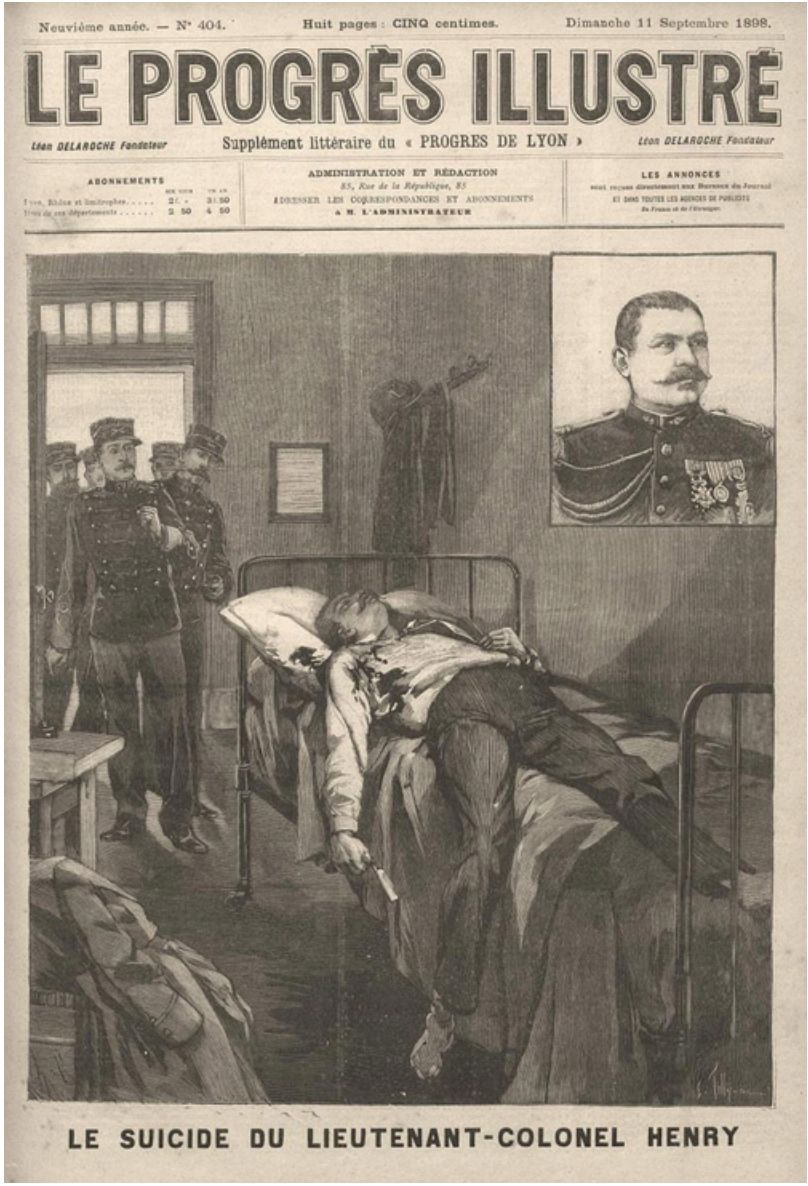
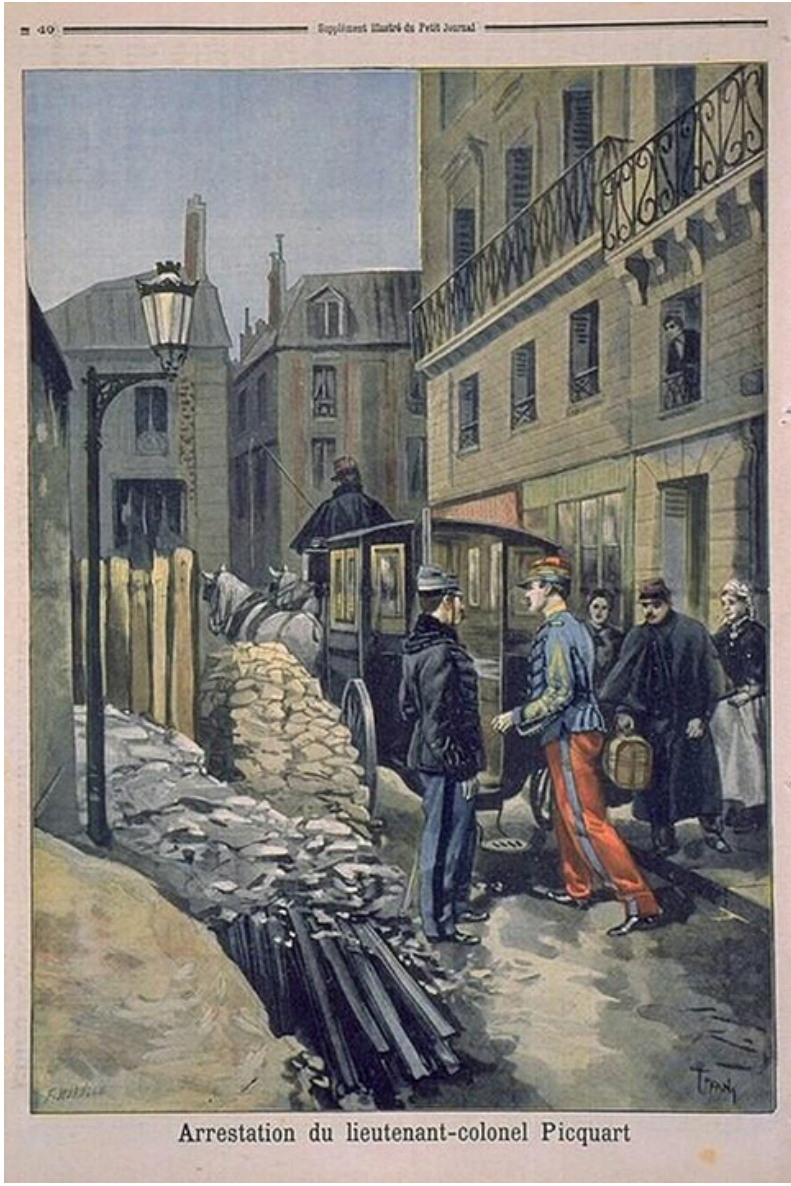
Opened in 2003, the monument, designed by sculptor Pascal Convert, takes the form of a bronze bell, which brings the community together with the call of the tocsin, the death knell and the victory bell. The names of the soldiers shot are engraved on the bell, in alphabetical order according to the chronology of their execution. The bell is a call to pay tribute to the victims of the conflict. This dedication is completed by a tribute to the unknown: “To all those who have not been identified”.



Mont-Valérien was also home to a prison that played a key role in the Dreyfus Affair. Built at the end of the 19th century, the prison had a highly carceral structure typical of the French army, designed for the isolation, security and control of prisoners. It was housed in an austere stone building adjoining the fort's facilities. The architecture was characterized by thick walls, narrow corridors and small, isolated cells with poor lighting. The cells, with reinforced doors and massive metal latches, were designed for total isolation, sometimes even soundproofed. Although the prison has been demolished, archives and eyewitness accounts, particularly those relating to the Dreyfus Affair, reveal its heavy-handed, repressive atmosphere, emblematic of the rigid judicial and military apparatus of the Third Republic. I



In 1896, for example, the prison took in Colonel Georges Picquart, who realized that Dreyfus had been wrongly convicted. Because he wanted to reveal the truth, he was dismissed, then arrested in 1898. He was briefly incarcerated at Mont-Valérien before being transferred elsewhere. His detention was above all political, to silence him at a time when the army was trying to hush up the scandal.



Finally, the prison is also the site of the strange death of Commandant Hubert-Joseph Henry. He was imprisoned on August 31, 1898 for forging the document used to defend the official version of Dreyfus's guilt. When this lie was discovered in 1898, he was arrested and imprisoned in a cell at Mont-Valérien. But the following day, August 31, after drinking half a bottle of rum, wandering around and writing a last letter to his wife Berthe, Henry lay on his bed and cut his throat at 3 p.m. with a razor that had been left in his room...

Thus, Mont-Valérien is not only a place of remembrance for the Resistance, it is also an important witness to the struggle for justice and democracy, from the Dreyfus Affair to the Liberation.

