

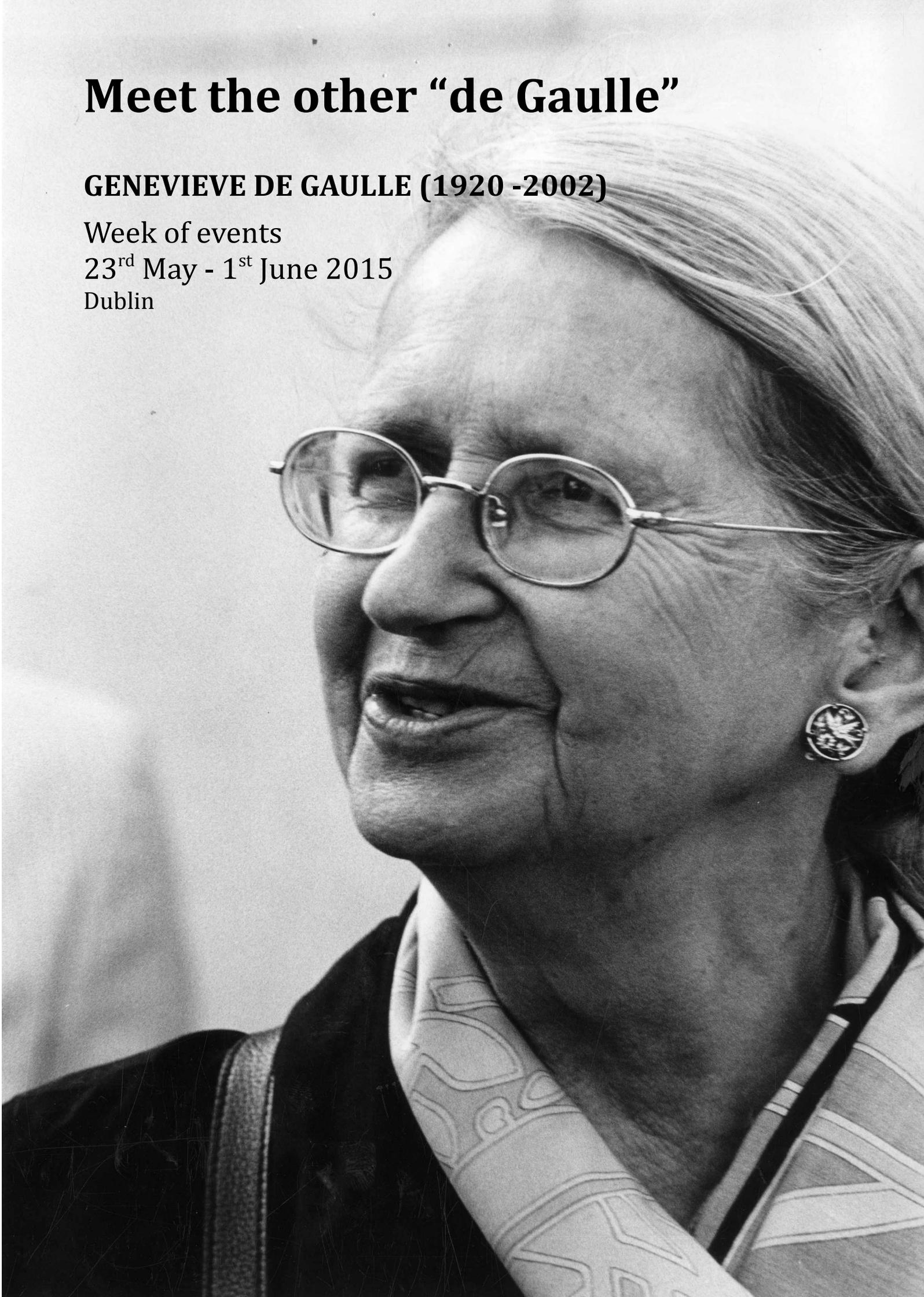
Meet the other “de Gaulle”

GENEVIEVE DE GAULLE (1920 -2002)

Week of events

23rd May - 1st June 2015

Dublin



Meet the other “de Gaulle”

CHILDHOOD

Geneviève de Gaulle was born in the Gard region, in 1920. She was the niece of the French General, Charles De Gaulle (who became French President). At the age of four, she lost her mother: *“The most tragic for me at that time, was the death of my mother. I was the oldest; I felt that I had to be next to my father (...) I remember the sorrow of my father, a sorrow that a little girl of four and half years old understood very well.”*

She grew up in Sarre, an area between France and Germany, supervised by French Administration: *“For us living in Sarre, was like living in exile, to the extent that as I got older, I felt like we were intruders in the area. But my Father loved his job and had to make a living. I remember that terrible year, 1938. The tragic death of my younger sister, just a year younger than me, hurt me a lot.”*

A BIG STEP IN HER LIFE: THE RESISTANCE

Geneviève de Gaulle’s fight begins during the Second World War once Maréchal Pétain, then French Vice Prime Minister, declares in a radio broadcast on 17 June 1940 that France has ended hostilities against Germany. *“I could not accept this language (of defeat), I realised that we weren’t fighting, I began to see a total defeat. I believed that this was something I could not tolerate, I felt consumed as if by fire. I think I took that internal decision to resist, come what may, as I was listening to Pétain talking on the radio.”*

“We only had one right, and that was to resist.”



From 1940 to 1943 Geneviève de Gaulle’s commitment to resistance grows. From acts of what might seem isolated modest resistance , she then engages in organised resistance networks:

“I ripped down posters, cut out little Crosses of Lorraine, the symbol of ‘France Libre’, took down a German pennant attached to a bridge at Vilaine, and started to hand out pamphlets in the Métro.”

RAVENSBRUCK

In July 1943, she is arrested in a Parisian library where she had to collect some secret messages. On 30 January 1944 she is deported with other French women to the Ravensbrück camp. There, Geneviève and her comrades find other ways to resist, ways that help them to survive.

“Faced by this horror, our only weapon against humiliation was fraternity and solidarity.”

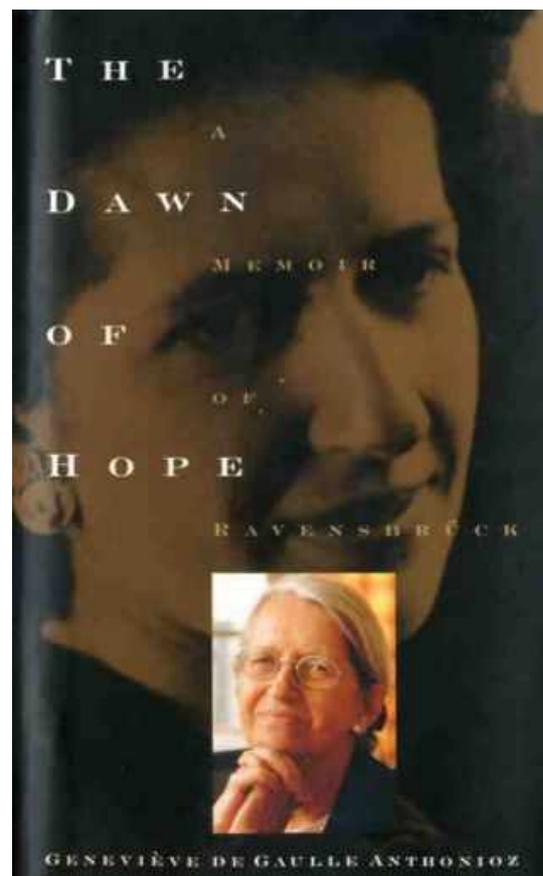
“We were very close, when one of us weakened, and had no strength to react, the others took turns. It was like a chain. You can’t let a chain break. We became physically degraded very quickly. For example, when trying to reach a tap to get some water became a trial of strength, you eventually gave up. Nevertheless, together we refused to let ourselves be completely broken. This fight had taught us a lot. We really tried to keep a clean appearance. It was a constant fight for dignity. In this battle against humiliation and, worse still, destruction, I found what is most beautiful in my fellow human beings.”

It is in a Swiss village that father and daughter reunite on 20 April 1945 : *“We fell into each other’s arms, an extraordinary moment!”*

“I had gone through the worst life can offer, that which I don’t have any cause to recall.”

In 1987, during the Klaus Barbie trial, Genevieve de Gaulle testifies about her experience in the camps, the horrors which she had witnessed and the crimes which had been committed. *“We had discovered to what incredible depths Nazism could go: a complete destruction of man in all his dignity, all his rights, all for the benefit of a privileged system, a 'Master race'.”*

In 1998, more than 50 years after her deportation, she recounts these horrific experiences in her book ***The Hope of Dawn***



NEW COMMITMENTS

On 29 May 1946, Genevieve de Gaulle marries Bernard Anthonioz. They will raise 4 children.

Genevieve de Gaulle and her deported friends decide to create 'The Formerly Deported and Imprisoned of the Resistance'. *"For us, the survivors of the deportation, there was a very strong feeling that if we had survived it was to bear witness, a duty to our comrades who had died. Of course we have always looked to defend the rights of our comrades but it seemed more important to us to testify to that which had been our fight and to continue to be of service to our country..."*



JOSEPH WRESINSKI

In 1958, Geneviève de Gaulle meets Joseph Wresinski, founder of ATD, who, for the previous ten years, has been the chaplain at the “camp for the homeless” at Noisy-le-Grand. He brings her to the camp to see the reality of life there. From this moment onwards, Geneviève de Gaulle cannot stop comparing the life of the families in this place with what she had lived in the camp at Ravensbrück:

“There is no doubt, the expression which I read on the faces of the men and women was the same as that which I had long read on the faces of my fellow deportee comrades at the Ravensbrück camp. I read the humiliation and despair of human beings struggling to preserve their dignity.”



This visit was a decisive moment for Geneviève and she decides to work alongside Wresinski, and to fight to improve the living conditions of the inhabitants of the camp. With ATD volunteers, she fought on behalf of the inhabitants for the right to a home, most notably in a campaign called “From shanty town to a decent home”.

“Joseph Wresinski came to meet me. From there we entered an “igloo” amongst the poorest. And he said to the man and the woman there, ‘This is Madame De Gaulle. She wants to get to know you. Could you give us a small coffee?’

I realised later that Wresinski asking them this was their honour. He did not see them as beggars, but as people who could offer something.”

“I never realised that there was such a level of marginalisation in one section of the population. This marginalisation, this rejection suffered by the families, seemed to me a great injustice. Opposition to this was why I had fought in the Resistance and during the deportation. We had struggled for the dignity of every human being and for their rights and value to be recognized. I came to discover a world apart, a world that had nothing to do with the one that I frequented daily. I never imagined such distress. Hundreds of men and women living crammed one on top of the other in the mud, yes, in the mud.”

In 1964, she becomes chairperson of the Board of ATD France. Her work will be crucial in the fight against illiteracy lead by ATD during the 1970s.



ATD conference - 1976

A NEW LAW AGAINST POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

After the death of Wresinski in 1988, Geneviève de Gaulle agrees to succeed him as a member of the French National Economic and Social Council. For ten years, she fights for a new legislation against poverty and social exclusion to be adopted in 1998 by the French Government and the Parliament.



“What will become of our democracies if they head for the horizon of the year 2000 carrying extreme poverty in its bags? With all my friends in ATD, I think that it's disgraceful of France and the Western democracies to keep the poorest out of democracy, to confine them to soup kitchens and other emergency measures, to leave them at the mercy of an administrative management logic. Like all of us, they have the right to democracy, and, if they are entitled to it, there cannot be a question of accepting that the action and the reforms are driven by the tools of democracy. And the first of these tools is the law.”

Genevieve de Gaulle's speech in front of the French Parliament, April 1997



“On this evening of 9th July 1998, after the final adoption of the new strategic law against poverty and social exclusion, I am remembering everything that I have learned from poor people. Overcoming with them the most difficult of times, having to dig deep within myself, I am indebted to them for teaching me that the secret of hope is fraternity.”

WE MUST SIMPLY BE JUST

"Heroism... I don't like that word. People need role models, so we invent hero for them. But life is not like that. Life is having courage in certain circumstances and in front of others who, on the other hand, have missed out on it. I was deported to Ravensbrück in a convoy of 1000 women, who came from all backgrounds with all sorts of political convictions. Young girls, old women, communists, anarchists, royalists... We had one thing in common: we had, at a given moment in our lives, refused the unacceptable. We were not there as heroines of war. But we were - I demand the term - members of the resistance. Still today, the unacceptable is at our door: racism, torture, extreme poverty. Deep down, between the resistance and that which I do within All Together in Dignity (ATD), there is a common development: the refusal of the unacceptable. Because to accept that families are destroyed by poverty and social exclusion is to accept something horrible. I don't believe that we must look to have a great life or a great destiny. We must simply be just."

THEY KNEW GENEVIEVE DE GAULLE

"Geneviève de Gaulle impressed me with her behaviour. You felt her integrity, someone who cared about others. She spoke a lot of her desire to communicate. [...] Working with her was straightforward. She had very clear ideas. She listened a great deal."

Geneviève TARDIEU, ATD permanent volunteer

"She spoke of her life, we talked about ours. She knew that I had a disabled child and would ask about her. We also shared a lot when her husband was ill. She was simple. You wouldn't have guessed the woman's importance."

**Marie JÄHRLING,
inhabitant of the homeless emergency camp**

"Geneviève de Gaulle epitomises the fraternity of the Resistance, for mankind, within the deportation. In the aftermath of the war, she devoted her life to the poor, the forgotten, the homeless and the marginalised. She was able to answer the call of General de Gaulle."

President Francois Hollande, 21 February 2014



With French President Jacques Chirac
at the Elysée Palace on 16 February 1998



With Pope John Paul II at the 17 October
Human Rights and Poverty Stone in Paris
(1997) – Visit www.17october.ie

The “Geneviève De Gaulle week” in Dublin

On 27th May 2015, the remains of Geneviève De Gaulle Anthonioz, the niece of General de Gaulle, will be placed in the Pantheon in Paris with three other people for their role as leading members in the French resistance Movement during the Second World War.

From 25th May to 1st June 2015, All Together in Dignity Ireland (ATD) and some of its partners are organising a week of events highlighting the life and commitments of Geneviève De Gaulle. This special week will be dedicated to making her more widely known and an opportunity to explain the role she took as former President of ATD France for 35 years .

- **Monday 25th May –1:00 pm to 2:00 pm** : Presentation of Geneviève De Gaulle (in English) – at the History Group held by - [Lourdes Youth and Community Services](#) (LYCS), Lower Rutland Street, off Lower Sean Mac Dermott St, Dublin 1
- **Tuesday 26th May 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm** : A Geneviève Anthonioz De Gaulle’ gathering for members and friends of ATD Ireland (in English), held at the All Together in Dignity office, 26 Mountjoy Square, Dublin 1 – Presentation of “active citizenship” will be given on both: Geneviève De Gaulle and the Irish activist [Inez Mac Cormack](#), founder of [Participation and Practice of Rights](#).
- **Wednesday 27th May 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm**: Presentation of the documentary in French ‘Geneviève De Gaulle and active citizenship’ shown on Arte TV 1998, by Alain Lasfargues and Michel Anthonioz (70 min) at the [Library of the Alliance Française](#), 1 Kildare street, Dublin 2
- **Thursday 28th May 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm**: Workshop « Geneviève Anthonioz de Gaulle » with students from [Lycée Français d’Irlande](#) (in French), at the Lycée Français d’Irlande
- **Thursday 28th May 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm**: Panel discussion ‘Active citizenship in 2015 : what does it mean?’ with the participation of the French Embassy and Mary Murphy, NUI Maynooth, member from the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, held at the Information Office of the European Parliament, 43 Molesworth Street, Dublin 2
- **Monday, 1st June 2pm start**: A group of women will take part in the [IVH Women’s Mini Marathon](#) in Dublin carrying a banner inspired by the involvement and the legacy of Geneviève De Gaulle.



From the 12th to 29th May, as part of this week’s initiative, [the Library at the Alliance Française](#) will present a selection of publications and films to discover Geneviève Anthonioz De Gaulle.

ATD Ireland is thanking for their support:



as well as the Irish MEPs: **Mairead McGuinness & Marian Harkin**

www.atdireland.ie