

## Pierre Pène's : War recollections, after heart attack.

Having had a heart attack on August 9, 1965, I was forced into a long rest period. My relatives, seeing how miserable I was in such idleness, advised me to write my memoirs, as soon as I could hold a fountain pen, and was authorized to work a little. My daughter Florence, in the USA with her family, was the most insistent. "It is your duty", she said.

I had often taken down notes, and was able to find some of them. They cover mostly the period after 1946, but I had written nothing during the most active period of my life, the war and the Resistance, for obvious reasons.

Almost convinced, I am yielding to my relatives and will attempt to gather my recollections.

I was in southern France, between the Côte d'Azur and Catalonia when ominous signs of war became clear: the pact between Germany and the USSR; then lists of the mobilized appeared on posters on walls, my number among them. I had to rush to Soissons and pick up my canteen, then rejoin my regiment, the Third Regiment of Colonial Artillery in Joigny. There, I met the commanding officer, and told him of my inevitable lateness. He was a solid colonial officer. We studied each other with some reserve, a normal occurrence in encounters between professional military officers and reservists. The mutual thoughts being something along those lines: "How will that 'colonel Blimp' behave ? Will he be difficult ?", and "Another one of those civilians, who probably does not give a damn, and thinks we are all idiots". The headquarters of the Group was in a café, which gave the situation a vaudeville character, and surprised Françoise when she telephoned.

I was in charge of the sixth Battery. It was the same number as that of the one I had arrived at, as a young officer cadet, in June, 1918, at the front. Our guns were ready: the celebrated but dated "seventy-five". A few days later as we were crossing the Vosges, we could not help but compare our 4 kms/hour average speed with that of the German tank divisions in Poland, doing 40 kms/hour.

We left toward the east on a very beautiful morning in early September. At the last minute, one of my gunners arrived, his face crumpled; he claimed he was having a heart attack, and did look ill; but there were so many fakers... Doubtful but not wanting to burden the battery with unnecessary problems, I left him behind.

We then were in a military convoy, learning only little by little where we were going: when we left, a message told me we were headed for Epernay; once there, another message told us our next destination. The most notable event was not an exploit: three of our horses had been poorly tied up, and were able to free themselves; they jumped from the moving train and galloped through the countryside; we were able to recover them, but wounded and unusable.

Slo...slo...slowly, with an average speed of perhaps 30 to 40 kms/hour, we arrived at a small station in the Vosges around 3 a.m. We had to unload, on a real military quay; everyone was very sleepy and my horse, as dumb as man's most beautiful conquest can often be, took fright, backed up suddenly, his two hind legs in the void; he was going to turn towards me and I moved back but was not holding him tight enough; he escaped and ran at full speed on the rails. A nearby operator asked "Who just broke his neck ?"; I answered: " It's the captain". He must have had a great opinion of my horseback riding abilities.

The damage was soon fixed, the animal was caught, and the group, re-organized, went to a small village where we rested for a few hours. For several days we kept moving slowly in this fashion towards our final quarters, where we spent two or three days. It was from there that we would go to the front line. Most of the peasants around us had served in the German army in their youth; they observed us closely and could not help but make silent comparisons. One day at last, at dusk, the time came to depart; the battery started moving, upon my command. On the afternoon of the next day, we passed through Bitche and got to Hamwiller, settling in the middle of a field against the slope. My horse gave me more trouble: my saddle, poorly strapped up, slipped around, and I had to walk the last 100 meters, next to my mount. We were less than three kms. from the frontier, the German village onto which we aimed our shooting was Kroppen; a little further we could see Deux-Ponts and Pirmasens where many separatists from Rheinland had been burned during WWI.

My assistant was a lieutenant, Brenier, very straight and loyal, true to his military education at St Cyr school. He was a precious help to me, especially for the paper work, inevitable even at the front.

As soon as we started positioning our guns, I was struck by several things: we had no flashlights; and yet we would need them if we were to ever plan our firings when in shelters, if those were to hold up, a doubtful assumption. Furthermore, according to the law, the mobilized troupes were supposed to arrive with brogans that they would have purchased. Many of my men, considering that answering the call to arms had been enough of an effort on their part, were there with on their feet, this one espadrilles, that other town shoes. There was only one way of getting them the proper gear: I had to buy it myself; so I called on my generous friends and in a few days, the sixty men in the gun battery were equipped, and we had flashlights with the appropriate batteries.

My men were aged between 25 and 35, looked vigorous, and their morale was good. The only day they became upset was the day when, accidentally, their meal arrived very late after we had changed position. One of the most active ones was the brother of corporal P. Peugeot, the first French victim of the First World War.

After several days, I was asked to take command of the battery next to ours: its captain did not get along with his officers and had poor control of his unit; I had probably made the opposite impression. I arrived there one morning, and met my personnel. My officers, whose names I have forgotten, were very young: a school teacher with progressive ideas but full of energy and very direct, and a sub-lieutenant in the professional army, handsome and also energetic, but insolent; I saw that I would have to bring him to heel.

My change of battery also changed my group. The new Major, Fedi, was deceitful and unpleasant; he had a relative working like me for the "Ponts et Chaussées", who snubbed him and he tried to take his revenge on me.

The battery was on the edge of a forest of tall, beautiful trees, which my men were very tempted to cut down. I had to prevent them from doing so for two reasons: first, it would be too bad; second, we needed them for our camouflage which was necessary, given the number of German planes flying over us. The woods were full of mushrooms, among which many very poisonous ones. I warned my troops and we had no accident.

It was at that place that we received our first shells. They fell in the forest

and their sound resonated for a long time, awakening in me old memories. Later, the shells fell closer to us, but they exploded poorly and I thought - erroneously, I was told - that they were gas shells. On October 15, alert, which would not be the last one: the Command Post has learned from reliable sources that after having vanquished Poland, the enemy was ready to attack us; we all got ready, but nothing happened.

Soon after that we were told to prepare new positions, on the German side of the Maginot line. Would Gamelin attack, since the previous piece of information had been false? We learned later, in occupied Germany, that at that time there were in front of us between Basel and Karlsruhe, only two German divisions. Despite the obstacles that the Rhine and the Black Forest presented, it would have been worth trying it, but Gamelin was neither Napoleon, nor Foch. Although one did not need have a great military mind to realize that the enemy across the border was at that time not very aggressive, not eager to fight, and that a French initiative would have perturbed him very much.

On that peaceful front, the men got drowsy but remained in good physical form; while the horses looked pitiful except for mine, now cited as models. Why were they different? I didn't know. I did watch their care and food, but other unit commanders probably did the same. One day, I was told I would be honored: my cavalry would be presented to the veterinarian of the division, a Major. Self-satisfied, I had the animals gathered and paraded in front of the VIP's but, horror! they had melted during the night, their coat was drab, what we had in front of us was a collection of ugly nags. I never understood what caused that disappointment. No one reproached me; that would have been unfair, since I was now at the same level of decrepitude as the others. But if I had expected compliments!

More alerts rang, becoming more trustworthy as time passed, but none materialized. Was the enemy trying to fray my nerves? Or did he have organizational problems that needed to be fixed at the last minute?

After each alarm, life came back to some normalcy, quietly, in the open air. Supposedly in order to maintain the morale of the troops, they were left to idle, their leisure activities got organized, they were given balls, the general (Corap) played a cup-and-ball game, no one, or almost no one got any training. It was only the winter, a very cold one, that was somewhat energizing, to the body and to the soul.

After having spent a month and a half at the front, we were sent back across the Vosges for some rest, being replaced by a cavalry unit. In the early morning we arrived at a charming little mountain village: Petite Pierre. The next stop was at Kirrberg near Fenestrang, at the frontier between Alsace and Lorraine. I was billeted at the house of a Mr. Girardin who claimed to be a relative of Emile de Girardin (a 19th century journalist). Thanks to him my wife was able to spend a few days there, pretending to be one of his relatives, come to visit a sick friend. She could thus get an idea of my way of life. Our hosts were pleasant. He had served in the German army and one could feel he was a little surprised at the laxity of French discipline. Sagely, he concluded: "Each army has the discipline that it finds appropriate".

From Kirrberg we left by train, then on roads dangerously covered with ice to Ire les Prés, in front of Montmédy. We were no longer in direct contact with the enemy but near the Belgian frontier, with the Belgian territory between us and the German army. Things were ready for our battery, there was even a space

reserved for an anti-tank gun. I had trouble trying to imagine the duel between a well protected and very mobile tank and a stuck-to-its-place gun, protected only by very thin shields.

It was from there that I was commandeered as an instructor to the camp at Mourmelon. There I found in the Major an alumnus of Polytechnique, my school. I have kept few memories of that part of my military life; I know only that the cold was terrible, and our lodging very uncomfortable; we tried to manage with it as best we could.

From there I went briefly to my unit that was still at Iré les Prés, then I was sent to the headquarters of the First Army led by General Giraud. That officer, of great size and reportedly as great courage, did not seem to be cut for the role that Roosevelt later imagined to try and make him play.

We were stationed at Wizernes (Pas de Calais) near St Omer and I was supposed to oversee the roads; this seemed logical enough. That service was under the control of the Corps of Engineers with, at its head, a general who would have had a hard time trying to hide his Burgundian origins. His accent was really comical. During this phony war, we felt we were flogging a dead horse, instead of fighting. On our travels, we saw the construction of structures that were supposed to become prolongations of the Maginot Line. The design of some of them was astounding: two brick supports holding a very heavy slab of reinforced concrete: a real soldier trap: the brick supports would inevitably collapse under any shooting, and the slab crush its defenders.

Rumors flew freely at the mess: the Belgians didn't want us to enter their territory; therefore, when the Germans attacked, we would be obliged to advance towards them instead of being able to wait for them in defensive positions. What a perspective, to have to beat the German army in open terrain !

The Norwegian campaign was going on, exhibiting the vigor and brutality with which the Germans fought it. Even though it ended with an Allied advantage, the main front had collapsed and we therefore had to back down hastily.

On the morning of May 10, 1939, early, we could clearly see German planes attack with machine-guns; the tracer bullets created brilliant fireworks which, from our distance, seemed harmless.

As we were moving toward Belgium and Holland, bad news reached us very soon. Our aim was presumptuous: it was to reach Breda, beyond Antwerp. For this purpose the Headquarters had selected the best troops from among Giraud's army, which was the wheeling flank. They were not only the best but also the most numerous, and best equipped; especially the First DLM (Mechanical Light Division), whose men looked to me as good as their equipment. They would fight well, although a little light against the "Panzer Divisionen". At that point we did not yet see the heavier armored divisions, among which the fourth which would be entrusted to De Gaulle at the end of the month.

We had gone through Antwerp and had crossed the river Escaut (Scheldt) when we were forced into a hasty retreat after the ninth Army (Corap) had collapsed in the Ardennes. Then came the rush southward; the whole population was like a raging torrent; first the civilians, many young men who looked very capable of bearing arms fleeing on their bicycles, all hoarding a red blanket, perhaps some signal.

For our protection during the retreat, the tunnel under the river Escaut (Schieldt) was mined; the German radio ridiculed our communiques, creating an abusive propaganda; as we were heading south, we found young children stopping us on the road, pointing toward the north. They should rather have pointed the right way to their king, who would resign a few days later.

The rush southward was as rapid as the northward march had been. The reverse gear was as good as the forward. We went through Abbeville all aflame and, crossing the Somme at Pont-Marie, barely escaped getting caught. It looked like Abbeville was burning all over, but I knew that in an agglomeration, if ten houses close together were burning, it looked like a general fire.

So, the most advanced German troops reached the sea just after we had passed, the allied forces were cut in two, the northern troops were encircled. If the chiefs had had some resolve, they might have tried to join together the two separate groups, coordinated. But the Belgian army capitulated and Weygand who followed Gamelin as General Commander of the Allied Forces was more concerned with order inside France than with winning the battle. He tried to resist on the Somme but De Gaulle, who had won on the Serre, was not able to control the bridgehead at Abbeville. An attempt of recovery on the Aisne did not succeed any better.

Later, in Germany, I was to meet the German general who had crossed the Aisne at Soissons. On the day preceding the attack, he had addressed his troops, warning them of the ferocity of the French when defending their soil: he remembered WWI. On the next day, his duly warned and morally armored soldiers crossed the river without any fighting, the French collapsing everywhere.

We were thus rushing south, Giraud had been captured since the first days of the debacle, and the communiqués from our Headquarters were more and more depressing: on the Cher, several divisions were encircled, even though the Cher is not a terrible obstacle ! And what was left of what one pompously called a division ? only a few hundred men. From one break to the next, all of them crossed as easily by us as by the enemy, we reached St Junien, in the Limoges area, around June 20.

General de Gaulle's call to resistance reached us; most of the professional officers ridiculed it, while it moved a good number of us reservists.

Lively arguments among the officers became open fights, between people of different backgrounds: veterans of WWI against younger ones, terrestrial troops against aviators. Although the latter had done a good job: I read later that the 300 French fighters with modern planes had shot down 900 enemy planes.

At our mess, presided over by Colonel Chavagnac, in civilian life an Engineer of "Ponts et Chaussées", suddenly appeared a brilliant reservist lieutenant, an architect in civilian life, whom we had never seen during action. I had seen something similar during WWI: as soon as the armistice had been signed, we had been followed by a lieutenant no one knew. Had he been sent officially ? Probably. Was he an opportunist, taking advantage of the general euphoria and disorder ? These last minute recruits, better at easy stories than with the cannon or the machine gun, being gay dogs and good pals, were accepted by all without much reserve.

We were demobilized, and the distinction between professional soldiers and reservists became imperceptibly deeper; none of us were proud of ourselves

and each group held the other one responsible. Some thought the nation was guilty as a whole. Others considered that the professional army had failed; the generals' strategy had shown no creativity, and their lack of a reaction when the enemy rushed westward without side protection caused and then precipitated the fall.

The population did not seem hostile towards us. Facing this massive exodus, civilians and troops mixed together, the reaction was that of being freed from a nightmare. The truncheon blow of the defeat had been so brutal that most French people had lost all national feeling. The very few who, like me, still had it, felt out of place in this shameful bustle.

On overloaded and slow trains which stopped for interminable periods in some stations, I finally landed, backpack on my back, in the station of Martres de Rivière, and continued by foot until Cier where I was reunited with Françoise and the children. The return of the warrior; but I returned neither "with, nor on top of" or rather, if I still had my shield, it was because I had run fast enough. My wife was courageous and shocked by the attitude of the local people whose motto was "Who cares what happens to the country, as long as our soldiers come back".

There was much talk of General de Gaulle who had gained prestige not only because of his call to resistance of June 18, 1940, but also because of his attitude after Mers el Kebir. Poor vanquished France, on whom everyone pounced now. Soon it would be Japan, and then Hitler who would tighten his grip more and more firmly. He considered, among other means of weakening us, creating a "Flemish state" composed of Belgium, Holland, and northern France down to the river Ailette. A great way to amputate the country of its richest regions ! When I later read Eden's memoirs, I was indignant to learn that President Roosevelt, our ally, the man whose name is that of one of our most beautiful avenues, had had a similar project.

Back in Soissons I started again to work as an engineer. My chief M. Boutet, too badly shaken by the shock of the defeat and invasion, managed to be sent to Mâcon and I was named to replace him at the beginning of January, 1941. Starting then, the general population was not pro-German. After the smiles of the beginning, the "correctness" so well appreciated by the bourgeois members of society, exactions had begun. The demonstration by young people at the "Arc de Triomphe" on November 11, 1940 had been savagely quelled. I began looking for ways to fight the occupying forces very early on, my first motivation being patriotic. That motivation would evolve into a feeling of shame when the Vichy government promulgated the texts against Jews.

André Boulloche, engineer of the "Ponts et Chaussées", son of the "Directeur des Routes", had no appointment, and was sent to my service; he gave me a contact that would permit me to enter his resistance group. I had to go to 67, rue de la Boétie and ask someone named Dacré for Lawrence's "The Seven Pillars of Wisdom".

Entering for the first time into an unknown building in order to make a contact of resistance is an emotional moment. Everything smacks of mystery and treason. Who knows ? who guesses and is ready to denounce ?

Dacré, who seemed to be carefulness personified, sent me to Blocq-Mascart who had the casualness of using an office in the "Kraft Durch Freude" building at the corner of Avenue des Champs-Élysées and Avenue Georges V. He was older than I, solidly built, with an obvious Jewish look, and the air of an

intellectual. What was our first conversation like ? Twenty-six years later, I don't remember well, keeping only the impression of a friendly cordiality. In his turn, he gave me some names, among which that of Deconink with whom I was to work until my arrest. That Deconink would lead me to Roland Farjeon, a handsome and elegant industrialist who lived rue de la Faisanderie and whose name in the Resistance would be Roland. We shall talk much about him later, alas.

My first missions were to gather all the information I could that might be useful to the Allies, and to organize in my department, the Aisne, a group of reliable and determined men. The framework was found quickly. As Chief Engineer of the Public Works, I was in charge of distributing all the travel permits, the famous "Ausweiss". Moreover, my staff, ordinary engineers as well as the TPE engineers, covered the whole department and had close contacts with the local people. I made discreet contact with those who seemed the most apt. In fact, they would all have liked to work with me, but some were timorous, others too old. It did not take long, however, to include a good number of them. Two out of the three "Arrondissement" engineers (Bertin and Bouilloche; the third, Bleux, was 70 years old), most of the TPE engineers, my faithful chauffeur Hombrouck, several workers of our repair shop...

Our profession, which made us travel extensively at the service of the occupying forces, offered us an excellent cover. Later, when we would have to find landing terrains, we would be in the best position for the task. At that point, we worked together with other civil servants, some of them with legal power, such as "gendarmes". During our travels, we saw much; what was of interest ? much. We received forms telling us the kind of informations needed, and many seemed so insignificant that I was very surprised. For example, every move of a general officer, for whatever purpose, had to be reported. If he went to visit his girlfriend, we quickly indicated it. How much harm a people who are under foreign occupation and hostile to it, can do even without using weapons ! and how much help the resistant fighter in trouble could receive, from the same people. I was to experience it when I later escaped.

So, our first mission was to gather information. Every week I went to Paris and gave it to Deconinck; it was easy for me; I could choose between the train or the car since, as the official dispenser of "ausweiss", I was authorized to cross several departments and get to the capital. When I drove through Soissons, I could visit with my family which was still there. In fact, the plans of a Flemish state north of the Ailette were beginning to take shape, and that area was under heavier control by the Occupier; the colonizing process started with the creation of an agricultural organization of that northern state, a sort of "Kolkhose" which included most of the rich territories where wheat and sugar beet were cultivated. The intermediary between the farmers and the German administration was my colleague the Director of Agriculture, and his partner a big, bilious brute who made his life miserable. Fortunately, he was of a calm temperament.

We soon became intrigued by some important work being done by the Krauts at the north entrance of the tunnel at Margival; several structures in reinforced concrete spread on the slopes, that reached halfway to the top. We knew the contractors: they also worked or had worked for us, so we could easily enough penetrate the area discreetly. We observed everything carefully and, as soon as we got out, drew a map as precise as we could of the whole project. Bertin was the best at this game. Thanks to him, we were able to send to London the exact and complete plan. I later had the unpleasant surprise, when I was arrested, to see the said plan spread on the desk of the policeman who

interrogated me in St Quentin; it probably had been intercepted and in letting me see it, the policeman wanted to unsettle me.

Every week, we sent more information; the members of the network grew accustomed to the task, and they got better at it, nothing escaped us, and everything was sent through the channels; and, as we saw, it could sometimes be intercepted.

Soon we had to get involved in some sabotage. We had not yet received any explosives by parachute, and this time again, we sought help from the Margival contractors; they were able to divert some of the explosives the Germans gave them and to pass them on to us. Some specialists also came from Paris, not to train us, but to handle themselves the most urgent or difficult acts of sabotage. This was how we met Robert and Mary. We were supposed to do everything we could to help them in their mission, which they accomplished: they destroyed the power station at Beautor. (Later, I was to meet them at meetings of "Compagnons de la Libération". Robert worked at the SDECE and Mary had become a quiet shopkeeper, selling watches). We took advantage of their presence to ask them questions and get some advice and, learning on the job, became good enough saboteurs; Bertin was the best at that also.

In that fashion we learned to gather and send information, to sabotage, and later to receive parachutings. We learned, in the shadows, under all the hardships of occupation, the tricks of the same trade as that of the professional spies of the "2ème Bureau". I was later to hear frequent criticism of the "imprudent behavior" of the resistants. The imprudent thing was to resist; as soon as one was committed, one was like a frail barque in a storm: no harbor where to rest; while professionals were backed up by their organization, we had with London contacts that were difficult and risky; there was no hope if we were caught of an exchange that could save our lives.

The heavy losses we suffered were certainly caused in part, especially at the beginning, by our lack of experience and our imprudence, but also by the true nature of our activity.

Our sabotage was aimed specifically at everything that could help the Nazi war effort, especially railroads, canals, and high tension electricity pylons. It was ironic for us engineers to set ourselves to destroy what we or our colleagues had carefully constructed before the war. That reminded me of the following scene in 1940: the meeting between an engineer who was busy building an overpass over a railroad and the officer who had come to sabotage and destroy it. Each one was telling the other: "Given the mission I have received, what you are doing is stupid".

Our acts of sabotage took us also to the power station of Beautor that we rendered as ineffective as we could. We destroyed the southern entrance of a tunnel by the canal of St Quentin. At Hirson, doctor Freinel, a surgeon, was involved, and at Vervins Merlin, an insurance agent, planned many train wrecks; he pushed his artistry quite far: the day a big German cannon was stuck to the ground after a train derailment he had caused, he managed to have the train that had come to help derail also, and to witness the catastrophe. Dromas was active at Chauny; amputated as a result of a war wound, he had a very hard time escaping from the Gestapo agents who were pursuing him through the town after an attack of his. This was a great show of energy on his part, and also proof that he had enough accomplices in the town of Chauny.



It may have been near the end of 1942 that the BOA ("Bureau d'Operations Aériennes") was created with the purpose of reconnoiter and prepare clandestine landing terrains. We criss-crossed the region which, fortunately rather flat, offered many possible choices; we picked out several spots near Laon, Marle, and Montcornet. Our teams got organized, carefully learned the rules, and the first weapons began arriving; some were surprising, such as the Albion handgun; talk about being discreet ! True enough, if one is caught carrying weapons, it does not make much difference whether it is an Albion or a Parabellum.

We very much wanted to practice the use of these weapons; we selected an underground limestone quarry near Coucy le Château as the spot to do it in. It was also close to a German camp and we felt a bit queasy when we fired our first shots. Nothing happened and we kept at it, careful not to attract attention by too many comings and goings. We also received some plastic explosive and could do more sabotage. We attacked pylons, canals, railroads, tunnels. We were very careful and as far as I know, no one got arrested before 1943.

We had some scares, caused not exclusively by the enemy. One of us heard from a friend that his resistance group was led by someone he had never heard of. We got worried, asked about that guy, and wanted to check whether he seemed reliable. We would eliminate him if he seemed dangerous. One morning Bertin arrived, quite shook up: "I have heard of a resistance group led by someone named Taille". - "I am Taille" I answered. "I did not tell you because it is an old name I no longer use. Now, my name is Perico". - "Ah, I am relieved !"

Eventually, as a side activity, we helped allied airmen who had been shot down to escape. I have two recollections related to this. One was of a British aviator, extremely angry that we did not send him immediately back to London; I don't know what he had been told before leaving, but he must have imagined that in every large town there would be an obvious and active "office for the repatriation of shot down allied airmen". Another time, as I was driving through the town of Laon with an English aviator sitting next to me to, a German officer with whom I had a work relationship came towards me, in his full uniform; wanting to scoff at him, I introduced the Britisher, under a false name; the poor guy thought I was betraying him, and turned snow white; he was, much more than the German, the victim of my joke.

Organizing the escapes caused many problems for us. At the end of 1943 the Allied leaders, especially Churchill, seemed to become quite agitated, and got carried away. We were repeatedly asked to quickly recruit more active members, as if it had been an easy task. In a heavily occupied country, one had to be very careful, and could not recruit openly. It was indispensable to watch possible members for a while before sounding them out. Urged and pushed, we became less prudent, some traitors entered the resistance groups and wrought havoc.

Around the same time, the end of 1943, we received an order that was even more strange: to send, in uncoded language, the names and addresses of trustworthy people who might be willing to shelter airmen who would be parachuted in German controlled territory. We protested violently. The order was reiterated. We protested again, but the order was maintained. With an aching heart, we obeyed, and I sent a list of several of my TPE engineers. Of course, bad luck struck, the list was intercepted, and my engineers arrested in the middle of December, 1943: Jacquemot, Berlemont, and Salvy.

Fortunately, they were not mistreated, and their regulations not too severe. They were able to meet and prepare a coherent defense together, and

were freed after a few weeks.

This blunder coming from London brings another event to mind: the failed parachuting in the middle of September, 1943; a dozen or so members of the Resistance had landed, each due to get to a known shelter (among them were Boulloche and Rondenet, called Jarry in the underground), but Gestapo agents were waiting for them. The chief, an aviation group captain, swallowed his pill of cyanide, seeing that he would be arrested; Jarry, rushing to land in the hope of escaping, broke his foot; Boulloche did not ask for details and was able to escape. It became clear that the Gaullist people in London were infiltrated by enemy agents; their weapons were treason, or insane orders.

Meanwhile, I had been given control of the department of Ardennes, besides Aisne; this brought me in closer contact with Point, A.S. chief in the Ardennes. A nice hairdresser whom I already knew, he was to have a tragic end; He was named police officer after the Liberation, and was doing his job as best he could in his department; when a new law declared that such a position required some university titles which he did not have, he could not stand the thought of being kicked out of a job he loved, and committed suicide.

On October 15, 1943, I had an appointment with Roland Farjeon at the corner of rue d'Anjou and Bvd Malesherbes. I arrived, and saw three men with their right hand in the pocket of their trench coat. One of them came to me, and asked: "Are you Taille ? " - "Taille, who is that ? what do you mean ?" - "We are here in the name of Dufaure." Dufor was Roland Farjeon's undercover name; luck would have it that the German, whose French was otherwise perfect, pronounced it as "Dufaure", unlike the name of Dufor, so widespread in my beloved Pyrenées. I understood right away. "I don't know any Dufor; I have a date with a woman." Then I pretended to wait for my supposed girl-friend, while I was holding an attaché-case full of compromising documents. Never in my life had time passed so slowly; it was not difficult for me to feign the impatience of a man who has been stood up. At last, a century later, I left with long steps so as not to look as if I were hurrying; I changed metro lines several times in a section of Paris where the net is fortunately quite dense, and arrived at the restaurant where Bertin and Boulloche were waiting for me. We later learned that Farjeon had been arrested on October 13, and all his appointments including mine had been written, uncoded, in his note-book.

I was to be arrested later, April 4, 1944, and heard the Germans say: "Er ist bleich" (he is livid); this paleness would at that time bring my downfall; in those two similar circumstances, I reacted very differently. What caused that contrast ? health ? atmosphere ? fatigue of the moment ? It is really difficult to ever say "In such a case, this is how I would behave".

There were more and more signs, some barely perceptible, that danger was closing in. When my engineers were arrested in December, 1943, I went to St Quentin, to query about them at the Gestapo office. I was treated correctly; my request was normal: I was pleading for members of my personnel. But at the end of our interview, the S.S. officer felt compelled to tell me: "The Resistance in the department is very well known to us; we know its chiefs; we don't arrest them yet, so that we can watch what they are doing."

I felt very relieved when I stepped out of that S.S. lair. I often noticed that I was being followed. I did not know that my employees were being treated so well; I feared that one of them, yielding to torture, might give me away; Some people pretending to be insurance agents making special offers came to look for

me at my apartment in Boulogne, but it was obvious that they were not who they pretended to be. Their German identity was patent.

Everything was leading me to hide, to become totally immersed in a clandestine existence. I had to make this move acceptable to the administration, and officially asked for a long-term leave in Savoy. I did this in the nick of time: I had barely been gone a week when the Krauts invaded my office at Laon, pillaging it, remarking on my taste for leather.

I first hid in Boulogne, at 60, rue de la Tourelle, in a maid's room where we had been storing dry goods to avoid famine; a small cot was enough; then I spent some time at a publisher's; at an old lady's, Madame Barbu; at the apartment of Pierre Turbil's, a contractor, rue du Sommerard. There, I worried the maid when she saw me, one afternoon, burning a large amount of compromising papers. I finally ended up in a blue collar lodging that I rented rue Amelot. This became my headquarters during the several weeks before my arrest; that was where I would hide for a few hours at a time some papers, some cash: a million in new bills that I was to distribute to my several agents. Since I was no longer functioning as an engineer, all my time was now available for my resistance work. I ran from appointment to appointment, sent orders, proclamations, received some. Foolishly, I sometimes took the risk of going rue de la Tourelle to kiss my wife and children. We had planned a warning system to let me know from the street whether the way was clear or whether I risked finding an unwelcome visitor upstairs. One evening, I did something even more dangerous, and stayed there. Madame Babu (at whose place I was staying at the time), very lucid despite being in her eighties, took fright; she went through the papers I had left in my room and hid those she thought were the most compromising, leaving behind sabotage manuals that had looked to her like innocent calendars.

My Resistance affiliation was with the O.C.M. ("Organisation Civile et Militaire"), a non-political group. True enough, it included a large proportion of bourgeois types, even upper middle-class but there was no exclusiveness, and there were among us some good working class comrades. In January, 1944, I became a member of the executive committee of the OCM by cooptation; soon after, I was asked to take on responsibility for the P. region (Paris and adjoining departments). Above me at headquarters was Rol Tanguy, of the FTP's. I had under my command several men of note: Le Percq who became the first Finance Minister after the Libération; Lefauchaux, alias Gildas, who would become CEO of the Renault factory; the Colonel de Margueritte stayed by my side and I told him everything so that he could replace me without a hitch if I was arrested or killed.

We kept close contact with Rol Tanguy of the FTP (Franc Tireurs Partisans) and we tried to coordinate our attacks. We were not all that trustful of each other, however: when we were, very seldom, brought into one of their communist lairs, the extreme precautions they took were almost comical; we ourselves were sometimes tempted to blame a communist act of treason when one of ours was caught. When I was arrested, my comrades wondered whether I had been a victim of treason. It was not the case.

One day, Rol, as headquarters head, brought me a call to Parisian insurrection, written by the Communist Party. They wanted the population of Paris, which was unarmed and not organized, and had been underfed for several years, to rebel against the powerful German occupation forces. Just stating the problem showed how unreasonable it was; Carrying on that order would have led the most courageous inhabitants of the capital to be massacred; it was so insane that I am still wondering whether that project did not hide some manoeuvre... but

which ? to send the middle classes to the front line, so as to eliminate them ? to pressure the non-communist groups into refusing to collaborate, thus keeping for themselves the heroic role ?

I did not hesitate long, kept the paper in abeyance, and never heard of it again. The Parisian insurrection was to take place much later, in August, 1944, under much better auspices; the army of Gal Leclerc and the American armies were there by then, lending their material and moral support. It is clear from the experiences at Warsaw during WWII and Budapest in 1957 that a popular insurrection in a large city can only fail without the support of a foreign army.

Life was getting harder and harder for the population of Paris. We were lacking for food, the shop windows looked miserable; I saw it clearly after the war, when I went to Switzerland for the first time. The mood was growing more and more morose in public spaces, and in the metro, Germans got more openly taunted. They, in their turn, were becoming more and more brutal, losing their cool. I often saw Mairesse, a St Quentin M.D. who had also gone underground. He was as enthusiastic and tenacious as a young student. He suddenly disappeared one day, I did not know how; I briefly caught a glimpse of him in a corridor at Fresnes prison; he died in the terrible train of July 2, 1944. I had to be the one to tell his wife of his death in 1945. It is one of the worst memories of my life: that young woman rebelling against destiny, rejecting everything, blaspheming against the Resistance; nothing could comfort her.

My liaison agent was a 22 year old student, Jacques Briffault. He transmitted my orders to my agents; he was arrested at the same time as I, and died in a camp.

Around late March, Jacques Briffault told me several times: "I have seen your false I.D. under the name Moreau. It is not very good. I'll have to see to it". At that time, in the Resistance, one had several identities; one was based on official papers corresponding to a real person; the other was used in the relationships we had with each other, so as to avoid using our real names. This was how my false I.D. was under the Moreau name, which would be a cover in case of a roundup. It could even be verified: there was a Mr. Moreau, somewhere in France with the same papers. On the other hand, for my underground comrades, I was in turn Taille, Perico, and then for a short time Portet.

Jacques being insistent, we set a date for 4/4/44. We met at 9 a.m. at the métro station Sèvres-Babylone and rapidly went toward the Catholic Institute at rue d'Assas. As we entered the small courtyard we saw on our right the concierge in her loge looking at us with bulging eyes and Jacques thought he saw men besides her. We quickly climbed up to the second floor and on the landing, found ourselves faced with three men brandishing pistols. We turned around to find three more, as threatening, standing behind us. I would lie if I said that I got scared. I thought: "If they took the trouble to come in such force, it means they don't want to kill us right away".

They put cuff-links on us, and immediately pushed us into a black Citroën, in front of pedestrians who didn't notice anything, or didn't want to see anything. A policeman rudely stopped the car. Our French chauffeur was outraged that his German masters be bothered. The policeman had to let us go when the Gestapo agent showed him his red card. Rue des Saussaies, in an office, we were frisked, and then the brutal questioning began. The leader of the team spoke French to perfection. Bearing the S.D. (Sichereits Dienst) insignia, he was assisted by a big brute and an elephant. They tried to make me confess that I was Dardenne. I did

not understand what was going on and could easily have been exonerated if I had not been carrying that damned attaché-case full of compromising documents, among which a list of our last acts of sabotage. I also had a large amount of cash: more than 800,000 francs. I declared that I had earned it on the black market but all I got for that explanation was a few punches in the face. Well, I thought, my lies should not be too flagrant. Things got clarified: I was not Dardenne and only bad luck brought me into a trap that had been set for him. but I was a good catch, as proven by the papers I carried.

The scene changed: I was separated from Jacques and sometimes I was put, alone, in a room called "Bereitschaftszimmer"; out of it, I passed in front of the concierge of the rue d'Assas building; not vindictive, she helped me put my béret back properly; the Kraut had pushed it down on my head grotesquely, and I still had my hands handcuffed in my back. Now, I was questioned rudely about my activities; I was beaten and fortunately could still stand it; I was made to kneel down and was kicked in my stomach, but I soon found a method: when the blow came, I let myself fall, which reduced the impact.

Dissatisfied with me, my torturers decided to get to the next step: they took me to a maid's room on the floor above, to semi-drown me. We all knew that the first day one was arrested was bound to be the toughest: the Germans wanted to learn the organizational chart of the group, and the addresses of its chiefs. One day later, alerted by the prisoner's absence, the comrades would already have changed addresses.

So I was roughly pushed into the small room upstairs where I was told to undress and then, with my hands handcuffed in my back and my feet tied together with a leather strap, I was splashed with cold water. This was April 4, it was not very warm. I was made to sit on the edge of the tub, my back to the water; there were three or four men, I don't remember. I remember their chief, tall and thin, speaking French perfectly; I was told later, under caution, that his name was Rudi de Merode, and that he really was French. He was saved at the Libération when he escaped to Spain for obscure purposes of secret services ? his helpers were German; one rather short and stocky, the other elephantine. With a typically Germanic sentimentality, the latter lamented, at the end of the session, the fact that my wrists were bloody because of the handcuffs ! "So, will you speak ?" Rudi asked. I did not answer. I was thrown backwards into the water; I struggled, I suffocated, and when they saw that I was on the point of losing consciousness, they pulled me out and shook me, and I came to. The game was repeated once, or twice, or three times, I don't know any more; my thoughts got confused, my returns to consciousness were more and more foggy, and I was afraid of losing self-control. Would it not be better to say something, a false but believable bit of information while I was still lucid, rather than to wait until I lost all control and said something that could do harm to my comrades ?

So I pretended to give in. Rudi took a notepad and carefully wrote down my very spurious confessions. They knew the real names and the aliases of several comrades, such as Blocq-Mascart and Piette. They wanted me to describe them: I described the face of one with the body of the other, and the general appearance of a third, and if they could figure it all out ! Despite my pitiful state, I enjoyed the game, and was happy to learn later that my arrest did not lead to any other.

"Where do you give your appointments ?", asked Rudi, using the familiar "tu", which I did not have the courage to protest against. "All sorts of places". "Where do they show on your note-book ?" - "I write down only the times, and

I remember the places". In fact, the times I wrote down were advanced by two hours. "What do you do when you miss an appointment ?" - "I have a rain check". - "And if you miss the rain check ?" - "In the French Resistance, we don't miss two appointments in a row." He seemed satisfied by that pompous, grotesque and stupid answer; that made me think that he was not very discriminating, and made me doubt that he was French. He started again: "I see an appointment at 2 p.m. Where is it ?" - "At the Montparnasse station." - "Let's go then". We barely had time; I had to hastily get dressed and, pushed and hit, stumbled down the stairs. We got to the station. Rudi: "Look and see if you find your friend and if you are making fun of us, you'll be in trouble." I felt quite calm, since my appointment was really two hours later, 400 meters further. I still pretended: "Wait, wait, it looks like him; no, I was mistaken". Rudi grumbled. We waited for a half hour and then I was taken back rue des Saussaies. Relief: could it be the end ? Rudi left me saying: "You did not tell us anything; we shall start again to-morrow." - "I have already said all I knew". - "Enough". I had shivers down my spine because if they were to verify what I had told them...

They had not lied, the comedy started again: from "Bereitszimmer" to questioning, I was in the care of other hands, just as unpleasant. Suddenly, I got depressed: what shall I do if they start again to-morrow ? My system could work only if the questionings were not matched up with one another, if they remained separate. Where was my lucky star ? Was Fate abandoning me ? I felt I now knew what Hell was like. It was those confinements, those sounds of bolts getting locked before the unknown: "Was I consistent ?" and opened towards another, more frightening unknown: "What can happen ? what tie-up, what confrontation might confound me ? what new humiliations, and brutal treatments will I have to suffer ?"

As the afternoon passed, we came under the watch of men wearing the same uniform, but looking less harsh; we were surprised to be in front of human beings; we then found out they were Italians. One recollection: a young and handsome Frenchman, nattily dressed, came in. A brute in a German uniform rushed toward him, thinking he was a prisoner. The young man stopped him with the gesture of a man feeling totally at home. Another lackey ! How much French blood was on his hands ?

As we were waiting for the police van, we were put in a large room at the end of the corridor to the left of the rue des Saussaies entrance; there were many bales of hay. Jacques Briffaut was there, who told me of his aborted escape. We all knew that the first day was the best one for an escape: one is transferred from service to service, not yet integrated into any unit, no one is really responsible for you yet. Jacques had had, like me, the idea of fooling the Huns and managed to get driven to St Germain des Prés, pretending to have an appointment. He was placed, alone, in the middle of the square. and thought that was a good opportunity; a good runner, he fled, was shot at and missed; he was going to make it...when a stupid Frenchman who was pushing a cart full of wood threw it against him, taking him for a criminal. He fell, was caught, beaten, and taken back to rue des Saussaies.

We were in the same police van on our way to the prison of Fresnes. It was night already, and there was much pandemonium, several vehicles having arrived; large police dogs were running around behind their masters, the guards. Jacques and I were separated and were never to meet again, since he died in deportation. Before dying, he was reported to have said that he had been happy and proud to work with me. I barely dare accept this honor.

In the same cell as I was the concierge of the Catholic Institute rue d'Assas. He did not seem to be more vindictive than his wife towards the klutz who was responsible for his arrest. The first night was hard; however, my heart seemed to function properly despite the water-planing experience but I kept thinking of the future session of torture that I had been promised for the next day.

My life as a prisoner started. I was put in a different cell on the fourth floor with a strange fellow who I thought might be a stool pigeon. An inveterate liar, he claimed to be at the same time a communist and a free mason, which did not seem compatible. (After my escape I went to an address he had given me and found communists who created a very good impression. He may have been genuine). He sounded to me as he was trying to label himself in the way most hateful to the Germans, in order to ingratiate himself to me.

The food was ignoble and insufficient; the windows were nailed shut and opening them would lead one to be taken into a punishment cell with only water and bread. We were taken outside every 10 days, for 15 or 20 minutes. It is easy to imagine the smell in a cell twelve by eight feet in which two, then three, and later four men were crowded, without any fresh air intake. Because to the supposed stool pigeon were added first an Alsatian, and then a Parisian factory worker who seemed to sincerely wonder what he was doing there.

One communicated with neighboring cells through the water pipes. Next to us were 3 Anglo-Saxon aviators who had been shot down: strange respect for the Geneva Convention on the laws of war ! our wardens were men who had been declared unfit for military service because of head wounds therefore they were all mildly crazy: another proof of the Nazis' sadism, leaving prisoners in the hands of semi insane people, without any chance of appeal.

When evening came, messages were exchanged out loud through the closed windows. (Night fell, prisoners fell asleep, a sleep interrupted with nightmares, and long periods of insomnia while they were trying to prepare their questionings. But the messages had left an appeasing aura of courage, fervor, and determination). "So and so wants so and so to know that he has not given away any bit of information." "The comrades of rue X have escaped." The word "comrade" then implied "Communist", a dangerous label. In the police van, once, two communists were with me: a man in one of the small cages, a woman in the central corridor. They were talking together, ending every sentence with "camarade", as if to show off their status. This scene had much grandeur.

For several weeks, I never received a package, I later understood why: the Germans refused to give any piece of information to my wife who was running from prison to prison in her attempt to find out where I was. That was part of the psychological torture imposed on the resistant section of the population, as well as on the prisoner.

The announcement made by the torturer of my first day did not pan out: I was interrogated several times, I saw dear Rudi again, but the only violence I had to suffer was verbal. He often said: "What do you care ? since you will be executed in any case". (One day, a secretary who heard him say that looked at me with eyes filled with compassion; she was moved more than I). I did not react. Whoever knew what could happen ? I would begin to worry when they tied me to the stake. Despite my anxious nature, Rudi's gross jokes did not move me. Perhaps they were too gross.

Days passed, monotonous. The news we heard from the outside were greatly enhanced; despite that, one could sense that the Allies were advancing. When there was an air raid, all the German personnel went into shelters leaving us to our own devices: the Marseillaise then burst forth. It sometimes resounded even when the wardens were around; then they made us shut up with loud boot kicks in the doors. One day, in the underground corridor, I found myself a few yards from Roland Farjeon whose carelessness had almost made me get caught on 10/15. I did not express anything; it was the rule: we must never recognize each other, so as to avoid dangerous confrontations. And yet he came towards me, smiling, hand stretched out. How could I avoid shaking it ? I was puzzled and worried by his attitude, which I would understand only later.

Little by little we got used to one another in the cell; we might have been a tad imprudent if there was a stool pigeon among us. Around the end of May, I was taken out of my cell and driven around, through Senlis then to St Quentin. There, as a "Bereitschaftszimmer" (preparatory room) all they had was a closet; when they locked it, I felt I was suffocating and started to struggle, but soon realizing that no help would come and that it would be harmful for me to panic, I made efforts to calm down; when necessary, one can adjust to strange things.

One problem was on the interrogators' minds: how to get the code used to communicate with London; one day along that route I was taken to a room where there were several men, among them a young guy looking very British, the look of a spy; he questioned me about the code and without lying, I could say that I did not know it, I did not even know the whole Morse alphabet. They did not seem very convinced and kept bothering me about that code for a while. It was too bad, when really guilty of all capital sins except one, to be suspected of that one also.

In one of the jails I went through, my cell-mate was a young communist, a kitchen-boy in civilian life; we talked of our jobs, were both aware of risking death, and were very preoccupied of what our attitude would be at the last minute. How could we be sure of keeping our dignity at the supreme moment ? He replied "in singing the Marseillaise". The poor man died in a deportation camp.

So there I was in the closet in St Quentin. I got out of it in reasonable shape and was led into an office; the man seated in it had pitiless greyish-blue eyes; in front of him were spread all the plans and documents about the German headquarters at Margival, which we had had such a hard time putting together. I could have done without that preamble but the questioning was not too harsh. The house in which I was being interrogated would be visited by me three times, in very different circumstances: the first time, as the chief engineer of Public Works, come in December, 1943 to protest the arrest of his TPE engineers; then now as a prisoner; later at last, as a "Commissaire de la République" visiting Americans; that was when we discovered on the walls of the basement, traces of many capital executions.

Back to Fresnes, I was pleasantly surprised to find myself in the same cell as before, and with the same men. Thinking about it, that is what makes it plausible that there was a stool pigeon among us. The one I tend to suspect now was, in fact, the one I confided in; had the first one in the cell with me seemed trustworthy ? or had I had the irresistible need to confide in someone ? The month of May was for us one of birthdays; two of my children were born in May: Annette on the fourth, and Olivier the ninth; on those days, I reminisced of past celebrations, family gatherings and, naturally, shared it with whoever was there. Then I was gripped with a sensation of danger, of an irreparable fault committed, and, as a result, of the need to escape. That would be the only way to put an end



to all that had happened since April 4, to destroy for good the spider web that was slowly being woven around me. And what joy it would be for myself and my family to be reunited again ! For the first time at the end of May, I had news from them: a package was waiting for me, full of family mementoes, when I returned from St Quentin.

The Russians were still advancing but "radio Fresnes" multiplied their successes a hundredfold. There was as yet no second front: there were more and more frequent passages of squadrons of planes overhead, on their way east, and also towards the Paris area; we heard in the distance the dull explosions of the bombs and rejoiced, then immediately thought "let's hope our families and our friends will be spared". I was also concerned with the lack of food my family must face; my relations in the rich department of Aisne had permitted me to help them with that for a while, but how did they manage now that I was locked up ? did they at least have some money ? did they get any of my salary ?

And then one day I was again taken out of Fresnes and, through Paris, was driven to Senlis into a large isolated house that had been converted into a prison at the edge of town towards Compiègne. I did not know yet that this was a great step for me towards freedom. On the ground floor was the guardroom; on the second floor the guards' sleeping quarters; on the third floor and the basement, prisoners' cells. During the first days, we were kept in the guardroom, and slept handcuffed to our beds. The soldiers guarding us did not seem hostile; some of them, leftists, compared us, sympathetically, with Schlagetter, a German patriot the French had executed in Rheinland after WWI. One of them was furious one day, finding that our food rations were insufficient. And yet, in comparison with Fresnes, it seemed to be the "Tour d'Argent". Among us was the colonel Donnet of the Corps of Engineers; celebrated among all military personnel for his courage, he had been arrested while sending messages to London, roughed up, then sent to Senlis. He was a member of the "Pas de Calais" O.C.M. which had been racked with treasons. Donnet was a colorful man, tall and strongly built, very vigorous, somewhat peasant looking. We were able to exchange a few words during some meals taken together, or as we were herded towards our weak shelters since there, unlike at Fresnes, we were sheltered during air raids.

One day, Roland Farjeon appeared, dashing as usual, very handsome and self-assured. He shared a cell on the third floor with Henri Simon, while we were in the basement. One morning, I was brought to take his place while Simon was taken away. He disappeared without leaving any trace, probably assassinated at the edge of a wood.

As soon as we were reunited, we talked of escape; Roland who had, since his arrest, flirted with the Germans, flirted much too much, was feeling a change in the atmosphere since D-Day. Our questioners, fervent Nazis, were predicting the complete failure of the landing but the poor soldiers of the Wehrmacht who were guarding us, less and less enthusiastic as their country was weakening, had given us some newspapers. We thus knew that at least in one spot, the Allies were holding their position; so Roland, informed, was changing attitude; from June eighth on, he was determined to escape. (Roland however, never stopped playing the game for the Germans at the same time. Coming back one day from a questioning about my five engineers who had been arrested December 13, 1943, I told him, happily: "I know at least five that they won't get". These words were immediately repeated to my questioner, Dr. Schott who told it to my wife, at Fresnes, several days later. Who told him ? It could be no one but Roland). He approached Robert, the interpreter, a German married to a French woman, who was a salesman for Bols liqueurs in Paris, and also felt the wind turning.

Roland and I were locked up on the third floor, at least 25 feet high, since the floors had high ceilings; the barred windows were our only hope of an escape passage. On June 8, we attacked with the sharpened handle of a fork the embedding of one of the bars. Surprise: the mortar, unbelievably weak, immediately gave way; the French workers who had installed the bars had messed up the job thinking that French people would be incarcerated there and the Germans, so conscientious, so punctillious, had checked it rather carelessly.

During the day, very careful not to be spied on through the judas, we exposed one bar, took it out for a minute, then put it back, and replaced its embedding with bread mixed with mortar dust we gathered from the floor. We each had one sheet; we cut them in long strips which we tied together so as to make a solid rope which we hid under our mattress on our last day. If we were lucky, our preparations would escape our wardens' attention. It had to be easier to escape from Senlis than from Fresnes. Now, there was no material obstacle on our way to freedom, except the guards; but they lacked conviction, and we thought we should be able to pass between two of their rounds. However, those were at irregular intervals, and we could not see them from our cell; we could only hear them when they were close.

The evening of June 9, "T" time set at midnight, we realized at the last minute that there was another danger: the electric wires right next to the vertical line of our window; we would have to be careful not to get electrocuted.

At midnight we quickly took the bar off the window; we were in stockinged feet (we had hung our shoes with their laces behind our necks) and sweaters (the night was cool). Roland said: "You are the elder, you'll give the signal". We then agreed that if one of us had an accident on the way down, the other one should try his luck on his own. We tied our home made rope to a remaining bar. The time seemed propitious but we could have no certainty about that; we knew only that the patrol had just passed. So it was only by guesswork that I gave the signal, and Roland went down apparently without a hitch since I heard nothing.

Then came my turn to slide down the sheets; as I passed in front of the second floor windows where the guards slept, I thought I saw, I saw, the light being turned on: "I thought: we are getting caught, we have to hurry". I hurried so well that I let go of the sheet rope at about 15 feet from the ground, toppled over and fell, mercifully into a bush, in front of the window of the guards. Still no reaction; it is hard to believe because I am sure that I screamed a long yell of anger and disappointment. Roland, seeing me fall at his feet, ran away as per our agreement; I immediately got up, did not bother to pick up my shoes that had fallen down, and ran after my comrade so as not to find myself alone and wounded, since I was beginning to feel my wrist; it was dislocated and fractured but such an accident when very recent does not impair one, and I was able to put my weight on it in order to climb to the other side of the low wall enclosing the property.

We walked along the main road, that ground being easier on the stockinged feet of a walker such as I; that way, we also could see the convoys, even though they used very dim lighting. It seemed no one was after us. We later learned that our wardens, miffed that we had escaped, had, the next morning, spread our mattresses in the sun as if to dry them, telling the other prisoners: "Farjon and Pène tried to escape, but we caught them, and shot them, and they died on these mattresses". How childish !

I told Roland that I saw the light being lit when I passed the window; he answered that it was already lit when he had passed there. He also said he had not heard the loud scream I was sure I had let go of as I fell, thinking of all the dire consequences of my accident, my brain functioning at insanely full speed. One should never believe even the most sincere witnesses !

Our walk along the road was not without some frights: a gust of wind pushed a tin can: was it not a gun being loaded ? when watchful dogs started barking furiously at Verberie, we decided that we should walk around the village; but I could not climb over a wall by myself, my wrist getting heavy; Roland gave me a hand. When we got back on the main road after Verberie, we could see at a distance on the straight road, visible against the light of the rising sun, several shapes blocking it; some workers were bicycling back from there and we asked them who those people were, and what they were doing: "They are Germans, and they are checking papers." Rather scared and not wanting to face such a situation tired as we were, we threw ourselves into the woods to our right. After a long detour through the forest we came across a woodsman whom we felt we could trust: "You can guess what we are", we said - "Yes" - "Where are the Germans in the town of Croix St Ouen ? Are there patrols ? Is it possible for us to reach the Farjon factory ?" - "Yes, it is on the edge of the town." It did not take us too long to get there and Roland was immediately recognized and made a fuss over. We were very tired, my wrist felt very heavy, a worker who was a first-aid nurse made a splint for it, we were fed and could rest a little, and a truck was prepared that would drive us to Paris.

It was a truck carrying charcoal; three men climbed into it: the CEO, the chauffeur and an assistant. One of us asked "Do you think we can make it through ?" The chauffeur answered: "We must put ourselves under the protection of Notre Dame de Boulogne." It is true that the Farjon factory had seen its beginning in Boulogne sur Mer. We were both put in a very large container under lots of bags full of charcoal; it was agreed that when we went through a police control, they would knock on the container to make us be quiet.

We drove through Chantilly, considered to be a safer road. We could breathe easily in our container and were happily singing; then the truck stopped, there were knocks against the container, we held our breath. "What was going on ?" The truck left again, and again we screamed our joy. The rest of the trip was easy and we got out of our hiding place at a very quiet place on the boulevards circling around Paris, in front of the gas plant.

That was when the race from shelter to shelter began, everyone trying to get rid of our compromising personages as quickly as possible. One gave us a meal, another a pair of shoes, but my feet were quite bloody after that long trek in my socks and I was so sore that I could barely move. We each went our own way and would not see each other again. I finally reached my last haven: Dr Morax's, at Ave Pierre Ier de Serbie. A renowned ophtalmologist, he was not afraid of keeping me at his place, quickly dressed the scratches my hands had suffered in my fall, and called the surgeon Funck-Brentano.

That was when I learned that all my relatives had been arrested.

What could I do ? My first thought was to give myself away in exchange for their freedom but Morax immediately dissuaded me: "They will take you, and keep your family also". Tired, I hesitated, wavered, and then agreed that he was right, but felt very guilty to be responsible for having led my wife and children towards god-knows-where. They might be paying for things they were not guilty

of ! Were my reasons for getting involved in the Resistance pure ? Might they have been tinged with the least bit of a vague ambition ? a wish for glory ? Honestly, I thought my actions had not been influenced by any selfish interest.

Dr. Morax's apartment was not the best of refuges: Madame Morax, a Jewish Egyptian woman of outstanding beauty, in danger for two reasons, had left the Ave Pierre 1er de Serbie only a few days before. One morning, while I was walking through the large apartment, I heard the chambermaid, a trustworthy woman, thoughtful and smart, discuss with several men. I almost showed myself, but thought better of it, fortunately. They were French policemen come to pick up Mme Morax. The chambermaid swore by all the gods that her boss' wife was not there and the policemen did not rummage through the apartment. Were they soft towards resisters ? did they feel the wind turn ? In any case, they did not show much aggressiveness.

Paris was at that time thronged with refugees from Normandy; the streets were filled with poorly dressed evacuees who had left hastily and were walking aimlessly. It made it easier for outlaws of my ilk to avoid being noticed in the crowd. I could not stay at Dr. Morax's forever; first so as not to compromise him too much, and also for security's sake: I would have ended up attracting some curious attention in his neighborhood. I had to find other hiding places but it was not easy. One person who had put me up three months before thought he would be much more endangered taking in an escapee. This was faulty reasoning: in both cases, he was risking deportation and death, but I could not persuade him. (There was a price on my head: photo I.D.'s face and profile, with finger prints, were distributed, in front of my sister, to plainclothes policemen who immediately left on the hunt. I was always on the lookout. I couldn't get into a place without checking whether there was a face there that I had seen before and how I might eventually escape; I never laughed again, I no longer knew how to laugh; I noticed that later, after the Libération, when I started laughing again).

I was able to find some shelters: a friend of Héléne Franckel who lived near the canal St Martin; a colleague of my brother in law's, Mr. Maroteau; some kind blue collar brush makers who housed me at Chennevières. How ashamed I am that those recollections are so vague ! those people whose name I have now forgotten saved my life !

Paris was vibrating with passion. Every few minutes, one could hear a gun shot; a man, a woman, would fall, and be taken away in a handcart. It was by accident that I was there one day to see the rebellion at the police headquarters. On another day, it was the Grand Palais which was burning, with its reserves of several millions tons of sugar. A tank, attacked by FTP's more ardent that thoughtful, had reacted and its fire had ignited it. "Feldgraus" were shot at from afar, and often reacted angrily; when they started shooting, the crowds dispersed like rats. Barricades were erected on some streets, disparate and often ridiculous, very easy for any tank or even armored car to knock down. The most important result of these skirmishes, of this guerilla, was to create in the occupier a feeling of insecurity which shook and paralyzed him. Lost in a mass of 5 million hostile and excited Parisians, the few thousand Germans, tossed about like corks in the ocean, were swinging between dull resignation and murderous rage.

While I was getting reacquainted with Paris, my family were struggling with dire problems. On the morning of June 10 some Germans and probably among them my main interrogator, Dr. Schott, went to awaken the household. Yells, screams: "Something terrible has happened". My wife and daughters shook;

"Yes, he has escaped". They all could breathe easy, while the other kept ranting: Where is the maid ? My family got scared again: was our faithful, brave Jeanine, uncovered ? she had been used as my "mailbox". No, the policemen were only intent on taking everyone. My wife claimed to have no idea where the maid's room was, all she cared about was seeing her arrive on time in the morning. Everyone climbed to the eighth floor. "Where is the room ?" - "I have already told you that I don't know". Dr Schott and his aides banged on the doors one by one, several of the rooms were empty. One of them was inhabited by a family of local shopkeepers, victims of the last Allied bombing. Fear stricken, they came out. "Do you know where a young woman has her room around here ?". They pointed to the next room from which Jeanine emerged, clothed, made up, ready to go to jail: she had taken all that tumultuous time to prepare herself and came out calmly: what beautiful proof of sangfroid in a 20 year old girl.

My wife was distressed to have not been able to save her, but she had done all she could. Now she was faced with a task which might be more arduous: get her children freed, whom the Nazis were threatening to take into jail. She did so well, making it obvious that arresting three children, among whom an 11 month baby would be unconscionable, that her adversaries gave in. The three children and the maid went back home under tight watch, and would be a good trap for me. My wife and my sister remained at Fresnes. They were to be freed on July 22. Between June 10 and that date, the children found help from several quarters: The Matériel Téléphonique, where my sister worked as an engineer, and also the Ministry of Public Works; some simple people such as the concierge of the Parc des Princes (a velodrome under our balcony) who had befriended Jeanine, also offered help. Fortunately, our young Didier, 8 years old, was at a summer camp; his age made him more vulnerable than his sisters, older and partly in on the secret; they played the exceptional and fascinating cat and mouse game to perfection especially when both the "Abwehr" policemen and "Wermacht" soldiers were watching for me, like a spider in its web. But the fly never came...

Good news was rushing in, we were now full of unshaking confidence: we knew that a terrible battle was going on at Caen between German and British troops...but our allies couldn't lose it; we knew that Patton had broken through towards the south at Avranches, that the breach was narrow and that the Germans were counter-attacking fiercely at Coutances in order to blind him and cut off the American army on its rush towards Brittany...but they wouldn't blind him. As for the Russians, they deserved more than ever their nickname of "steamroller".

It was time to think of reaching my post as Commissaire de la République at St Quentin. Leclerc was at the gates of Paris with his division, and it was very tempting to await his entrance; but I had to leave on the precise morning when he was to enter the city. All night, cannons erected in the Bois de Boulogne at the Longchamps hippodrome were aiming toward Paris' 15th "arrondissement", the shells flying just above our heads. During the first half of the night, despite the whistling sound of those shells, the atmosphere was magical: the whole city was singing, the bells were ringing, a mad enthusiasm was all encompassing. Freed after four years of constraint and suffering, Parisians were blossoming. On the next morning, Leclerc's combattants were welcomed triumphantly, almost pulled away from their armored vehicles, carried in the arms of Parisian women. Germans were surrendering massively, and their marches through the streets needed to be protected by guardsmen.

Getting to my post was not an easy task; the closest administrative center

of my region was Beauvais, in the Oise Department; the others, in Aisne, Somme, and Ardennes departments, were further away. However, I did not know any address, had no landing place, and was aware that this was not the right time to look suspicious to the Germans: they were very trigger happy at that point.

I was traveling with a young crank, Boistière, who claimed to be, without any reason, my Chief of Cabinet. At dawn on the        of August, we left on bicycles, and I was still hampered by my stiff right wrist. There were many police controls barring the roads, so we pedaled along the small dirt path following the railroad; it was the general rule, there was no danger, there were no trains passing. That was a mistake. After a few kilometers some "Feldgraus" who had been hiding precisely on our little path took our bicycles and sent us on our way by foot. We struggled along until we reached the limit of the Oise department. There I was faced with an important problem: how to get in touch with the local Resistance without arousing their suspicion; for if I was trying to avoid being killed by the Germans, I would have been even more upset if I were to be shot by French resisters. I approached a roadman who looked honest, told him who I was and what I wanted; he directed me towards the mayor, a leftist who had become, who knows how, mayor under the Vichy regime. I was successful in getting his trust and found lodgings at the house of a dairy wholesaler, father of a large family. The next morning, miracle: we found ourselves surrounded by young people: the local resisters, who accompanied us for a while. Around Beauvais, they said, cars could not circulate; they got attacked and shot upon by Allied planes as soon as they moved, we were told. Despite all, we managed to find one and at Beauvais, our arrival into the circle of the future "préfet" Perony was quite an event: my car was the only one to have come into town that day.

We had to immediately suspend the current "préfet", Malik, from his office. That was a general rule, and as it happens, Malik was not among those who would be nominated again. So we left, about ten of us: Perony, one or two of his aides, some local resisters, communists among them, and arrived at the "Préfecture". Very dignified, playing his professional role to perfection, Malik, erect, welcomed us, standing also. I told him what we were about, and he asked: "Do you have an official document to prove your position?" - "Yes, of course", and I searched. Nothing. I tried again, and was not able to find the paper I had been given in Paris, which had been sewn in my jacket. I remembered then that after my escape, my jacket having been torn through barbed wires, I had received one which had been collected for refugees. As to the said paper, god only knew where it was. No matter, such a question of form was not going to stop us. We let Mr. Malik understand that we were the stronger ones, that it was not in his interest to be obstinate, and... he let Perony take his place. (The occupiers were fleeing in haste; I saw a young "Feldgrau" pushing a baby carriage piled up with his plunderings; he surely wouldn't get very far).

Beauvais was due to be liberated soon and the next day or the one after, we heard that British tanks were at its gates. German artillery men were fighting back and two tanks were destroyed but others were advancing and around 5 p.m., we saw them arrive. General enthusiasm. Whereas there had been only a few flags out during the fighting when it looked like the Germans might be coming back, now they were suddenly blooming out of every window.

The Allied kept advancing: Péronne was liberated, then Amiens, which had suffered much destruction, mostly around the station. The atmosphere there was heavy: the future "préfet", Vivant, had not dared occupy his post and there was

no leadership in the department. Moreover, the police had been odious during the occupation, and had hunted resisters pitilessly. Acts of revenge would be sought, increasing the current disorder. It would be to the credit of Cornut-Gentille that he got things straightened out in a few days; he had to throw out of the corridors of the Préfecture the tables where so-called resisters had been playing big shots, manhandling the local people, very much like during the "Grande Terreur".

I spent a few hours at Amiens to get informed, make some urgent decisions, and left again right behind the German troops, accompanied by two young FFI's who carried their submachine-guns like beautiful new toys. I arrived at St Quentin which had not suffered much war damage and went on my own to meet Homo, who had been the "préfet" under the Vichy regime. More pliant than Malik, he did not feel the need to act up, and only said : "History will be the judge". He did not have bad press in town, but would be later condemned to death in a department which he had ruled previously, under Vichy leadership.

In St Quentin, the liberation was deadly: the praetorian guard created by Vichy (that would later become the C.R.S., or riot police) were intent on participating in the liberation of the town: they had been compromised more than the other of Vichy police forces. So they were marching towards the Champs-Élysées accompanied by FFI's (Forces Françaises de l'Intérieur), lightly armed. They were met with very determined armored cars; the imbalance between the two sides was flagrant: in a few minutes, there were 30 dead Frenchmen on the ground. For days we remained obsessed with those unhappy 30's. Ceremonies were organized to honor them, and they always were there, on the ground.

German resistance had become very weak, they were fleeing so fast that the Americans, who had entered the same day, had put their artillery at the head of their column. In my office as Commissaire the first contact took place between Dauvergne, FFI chief in the Aisne, and the liberating officers. Joy was total, expressed in all we said and did, especially after the necessary military decisions were taken. When I reached my residence, the one that had been occupied by the regional prefect on the edge of town, I found that a sort of simple but oh, how moving arch of triumph had been erected on the street.

I had to get to work very quickly, everything needed doing. Communication routes were beyond repair, the railroads leading to Paris were apocalyptic, the destructions were many and serious, and food reserves non-existent. Moreover, the population, which had been oppressed for five years, was yearning for politics even more than for freedom. Old leftist parties, the Communist Party, the SFIO (Socialists), and Radicals, were coming back to life, others, like the MRP, were created.

The inevitable purge was beginning; I was struggling hard to keep it within legal bonds and avoid summary settlements of scores at street corners; I may have been successful in preventing any violence worse than shaving the heads of women who had slept with Germans. That was not a pleasing spectacle: it was painful to see defenseless women harrassed by hostile crowds, even though the violence was limited.

The most difficult department was the Somme: the French police had been brutal towards resisters during the Occupation. Some of the policemen were recognized by some women as having arrested their husband or their son and it happened that, during a ceremony, those women would physically aggress them, all claws out. Several times, Cornut-Gentille had to physically throw himself

between the parties in such instances, in order to prevent serious injury. The weakness of the préfet Vivant, which I mentioned earlier, left its traces for many weeks, disorder and confusion having established themselves.

My four "préfets", Tomasini (Aisne), Perony (Oise), Cornut-Gentille (Somme), and Scaillerez, followed by Rastel (Ardennes) and I had to start to work very hard, as well as our cabinets. No more Sundays, although on Sundays, I arrived at my office at 8:30 instead of 7:30. The duties involved as much public relations as office work, the whole load being extremely heavy. A few recollections: In mid-December, 1944, von Rundstedt launched his offensive in the Ardennes, the American army was broken through, although Gen. Gavin's (later Ambassador in Paris) airborne 101st Division resisted at Bastogne. In front of a breach of 40 kilometers, the Allies had only 4 bataillons of untrained FFI recruits. Luckily, the two borders of the breach, Sedan and Givet, were held firmly, by the British on one side, the Americans on the other. The Germans did not dare try their all and may have thus lost their chance to create for us an irremediable mess.

I went to Givet every other day, in order to sustain the morale of the people thus threatened, and to put a stop, on my return, to alarmist rumors spreading through St Quentin. One day, at sunset in Givet, I was suddenly surrounded by British tanks taking up position: they felt like steel mountains next to our car. How much comfort their tranquil strength gave ! Another day, arriving with Rastel at Givet as night was falling, we saw a customs officer in his uniform; he had piled up some belongings on a wheelbarrow, and was getting on the road. We immediately followed him and ordered him to turn back if he did not want to be removed from office. He obeyed. I was very afraid to see the population take fright and run off southward like a flood, with temperatures at or below zero F. But that single incident was not sufficient to stop the exodus. I had to make administrative decisions; having not enough time to check with the Ministry of Interior, I decided with Rastel to block the frontier. This would prevent Belgians from entering into France in their flight from the Germans, and creating a massive exodus of the local populations, as had happened in 1940. This decision was not easy to make, and could have had unfortunate diplomatic consequences. Nothing happened. The extreme cold was not as conducive to escape on the roads as the warm sun of May-June, 1940. Three weeks later, the battle having been victorious, and no diplomatic reaction needing to be feared any longer, the Ministry, at last, approved my decision.

On the first days of the battle, the weather was very overcast. Planes could not fly and the American Airforce was prevented from using its superior power. Then suddenly, the situation cleared at the same time as the weather, Allied planes crushed the enemy troops, the Americans took hold again, and the game was won.

The camp inmates, from such sadly renowned places such as Buchenwald, Auschwitz, Neuengamme, Dora, etc... began to come back. We were anxiously awaiting the return of our companions in the Resistance, those who, at our side, had shared the same dangers; I thought very much of that young doctor, Mairesse, such a good man, courageous and extremely young at heart; his wife was full of hope, his children too young to understand. I met some comrades back from Germany. "Mairesse ? but he never got there, he died on the train that left Compiègne on July 31, 1944". How could one tell such horrible news to his wife ? his widow ? However, it was my duty, I must do it. For a few seconds, the poor woman did not believe it; then the terrible truth became obvious and she burst forth in curses: "ah! what a wonderful thing the Resistance was ! words, and at



the end, a husband who doesn't come back, who leaves me all alone, without resources, with my children ! You make me laugh !"

How to comfort her ? She was overwhelmed, and so was I; crushed by these feelings and by the relentless work, I had to stay in bed for two weeks. Madame Mairesse was right to be afraid of the future: her compatriots did not give her the support she might have rightfully hoped for, and raised her family on her meager salary as a social worker. My wife had organized a kermesse to benefit an orphanage for the children of camp inmates; each party was aggressively vying for the best location for its booth, boasting of all its dead, climbing on its cadavers. My wife tried her best to manage in this awful mess, with the help of Samama, who had replaced Tomasini in the Aisne department.

De Gaulle left at the beginning of 1946 and that did not bring any improvement, we had to get back to food restrictions, and ration cards; the people could not understand, got upset, and one day, invaded the Commissariat de la République. A wave of manifesters had already entered the courtyard when we were able to shut the gates. Some of the women looked like "petroleuses", reminding me of pictures of the royal family brought back to Paris by Parisian mobs in 1789. Samama and I received them in my office and we were able to calm them but this benign incident showed how sensitive public opinion was. The French had been durably traumatised by the glaring defeat of 1940, followed by a harsh and even more inhuman than harsh occupation. Military defeats may not have all the importance given them by last century's historians, but even if they do not cause events, they color them and, more easily perceived, bring about severe depressions, the demoralizing impression of great misfortune.

The moral wounds of a people took longer to cure than the physical destructions. The latter were beginning to slowly get repaired; railroad connections with Paris were re-established in a landscape that was still apocalyptic. Electric power, resting on an unstable and miraculous equilibrium, was slowly improved. The ruins were cleaned out, not fast enough for terrible Dautry, who made a scene one day with Cornut-Gentille in the Somme. Dautry wanted the people whose residences had been destroyed to do the clean-up themselves; Cornut-Gentille wanted to wait for the help of the State. It was Dautry again who, a few weeks later, violently reproached a SNCF (French railroads) engineer for building a very small building in stone. It was difficult to act on one's own when everything was destroyed and often, the victim did not do anything not out of laziness, but for fear of making mistakes. He was waiting for the general plan of reconstruction; having waited a long time, he sometimes lost patience and built anything.

We, as "Commissaires", had enormous powers. We, high level state functionaries, held in our hands the three powers: executive, legislative, and judiciary. Our post had been conceived with the idea that the provinces might be cut off from central power by war operations and had to be able to be governed independently. I believe that those powers included that of pardon, but I don't think any of us used it. I had begun to study an affair that I was only too happy to leave to others when relations with Paris were firmly re-established. To make a long story short: a bicycle was stationed at Amiens along a sidewalk; a man was running and was ready to climb on the bicycle when its owner came, took hold of him and the bicycle; a crowd gathered, the man said: "I beg of you, let me go, the Gestapo are after me, if they catch me, I am lost." - "The owner then said: "OK then, if that is so, take the bike and hurry." At that point one member of the crowd said: "I am against it. If this man is followed by the Gestapo, he must be guilty, we have to give him to them." Because of his intervention, the Gestapo

arrived, arrested the man, and sent him to a camp from which he never returned. Did the man who had interfered deserve a death sentence ? I might have been severe in that case: for us at that time, it was an major crime to deliver a Frenchman into German hands. How relieved I was when I no longer had to make such decisions !

Little by little, our powers were reduced, and those of the "préfets" increased. The "Commissaires de la République" had all been resisters. Having taken over the role of the "préfets régionaux" created by Vichy, they had given umbrage to politicians who pretended to fear them but in fact resented the fact that they had lost some of their influence in administrative affairs of State. A representative from the department of Aisne was asking even before our liberation, while we were still clandestine: "You, in the Resistance, do you plan to recognize the former political parties ?" . The political opinions of French people were contradictory: as much as they enjoyed criticizing and belittling the third Republic, as much they desired to find again the frames, the comforts, the political and administrative habits of the old days: department, "préfet", "Président du Conseil Général", "arrondissement", "sous-préfet", "conseil d'arrondissement", commune, mayor... Where would those new-comers, the Commissaires fit ? Although it would become inevitable to replace departments with larger administrative units; the departments had been created in 1794, and would be outdated now, with a different life style, different modes of communication.

I am writing these lines now in 1966, and the matter of regions comes up frequently, but no one dares tackle it. No one takes a global and rash decision, only small measures are taken, slowly leading to it.

The new Minister of Interior Le Trocquer, whose fame was to come later with the "ballets roses", did not appreciate us. Neither did the new "Président du Conseil" Félix Gouin: it was obvious that we would be liquidated; it happened on March 31, 1946, on a day when I was presiding a ceremony honoring the sailors from the ... Ardennes ! Unexpectedly, it is true that there are in the Ardennes a good number of sailors.

So I was in a sort of semi-rest which did not last long. Two months later, René Mayer named me "Commissaire for the Land Baden", or more colloquially Governor of Baden, with my office at Freiburg in Brisgau. I arrived without any hunger for revenge and the profound misery I could observe made me even more moderate. Freiburg is a pretty town at the foot of the Black Forest mountains, and I could not help but to compare it to Grenoble, also at the foot of mountains, and alive with many students. The two towns were at the time about the same size.

Despite the terrible bombardment of Nov., 1944 which had made numerous victims, Freiburg had kept some of its beautiful monuments: the cathedral and, next to it, the "Bauhaus", and two monumental gates: the "Martinstor" and the "Schwabentor". It was remarkable, how well the old cathedrals had resisted bombardments; when they had not received a direct hit, they stood up well . Their binder made of cement and lime stone was not very good, but the stones had been cut so well that their adhesion to one another was very strong.

The area was a paradise for tourists: one could ski for several months at the Schauinsland at 4,000 feet, and at the Feldberg, at 5,000. The mountain was full of pretty lakes and the large pine forests were reaching the bottom of the

valleys. The local people were very much like their Alsatian neighbors: solid, hard working, somewhat stubborn, they were not deeply anti-French; they had seen French soldiers so many times through their history ! Their main resources were the trees, tourism, and industries of precision: clockmaking first, and from there, unfortunately for them, precise mechanisms that the war effort required: V I and V II. The fact that those had been spread about the forest were the cause of many bombings.

We first resided in a house on the heights, then one day, Françoise discovered on the road to Breisach, 11 kms from Freiburg, a very pretty château belonging to the Princes of Hohenzollern (the Catholic branch): 3 floors, at least 30 rooms, a parc of 10 acres filled with beautiful trees and including a small pond. This château was once occupied by Stéphanie de Beauharnais and there was in it a beautiful service of china that Napoleon had offered to her. A few notables had spent their childhood there: Prince Louis II of Monaco, Ferdinand of Roumania, Albert Ist of Belgium. On the second floor, the austere little room decorated in Empire style where Napoleon had spent a night on his way to the campaigns of Ulm and Austerlitz was piously kept as such.