



## ***Bezen Perrot: The Breton nationalist unit of the SS, 1943-5***

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### **Abstract**

This article charts the origins and course of the wartime Breton collaborationist force, the *Bezen Perrot* (Perrot Unit). For the first time in English, and employing source material previously unused in any language, it investigates the impact of the 'Irish example' upon Breton militancy from clandestine beginnings to military 'alliance' with Nazi Germany, with particular focus upon nationalist leader Célestin Lainé (aka 'Neven Henaff'). Employing primary material such as interviews with *Bezen Perrot* veterans and their descendants, previously unpublished photographs, and Lainé's own unpublished memoirs, the motivations of the Bezen's chief identities are contextualised within a Celtic nationalist framework. The article presents an anglophone readership with a largely unexplored chapter of Celtic history while simultaneously challenging much of the French historiography on this controversial subject.

### **Keywords**

Brittany, Breton nationalism, collaboration, *Bezen Perrot*, French Resistance, Second World War, Irish inspiration, Célestin Lainé

It is one of the more bizarre footnotes in the story of the Third Reich that it was defended to the last by many non-Germans. Spaniards, Frenchmen and Norwegians battled the advance of the Red Army amidst the ruins of Berlin in 1945. Likewise, autonomists from minority regions such as Flanders and the Ukraine still wore German uniform, legacy of the vain hope that military support for the Nazi regime would result in political independence.

In the district of Tübingen, in the southwest of Germany, one such formation was cooling its heels after a lengthy retreat from Rennes. It was not the smallest of the Reich's foreign legions (the ragtag British Free Corps [BFC]<sup>1</sup> would probably take that distinction), but it was perhaps "the smallest fighting army in the world".<sup>2</sup> For, unlike the BFC, it had seen action against Allied forces and had suffered combat casualties, including fatalities. Its men were known by *noms*

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*de guerre*, designed to confound French authorities and limit Resistance reprisals, and which had often been carried over from earlier, more secretive organisations.<sup>3</sup> It had grown from an initial core of around thirty militants, more than doubling in number at its peak.<sup>4</sup> Now, in December 1944, that committed core of original members was all that remained. As they commemorated their first anniversary with a formal photograph, few present were under any delusion that they might celebrate a second. As 'Pipo' predicted to 'Eskob' that afternoon (in English, so the Germans present wouldn't understand), this would be their "first and last" photo as a unit.<sup>5</sup> Some among them were already planning to flee abroad. The destination was already decided: Ireland, the country that had haunted their autonomist dreams since the Easter Rising of 1916. These were the 33 remaining *gour*<sup>6</sup> of "the first armed Breton formation since the disappearance of the *Chouan* army";<sup>7</sup> the unit listed in the German order of battle as the *Bretonische Waffenverbände der SS 'Bezen Perrot'*.<sup>8</sup> (Fig.1).



Figure 1. The *Bezen Perrot* prepares for a formal photograph, Tübingen, December 1944. ("*Bezen Perrot* archives" [previously unpublished]).

For the first time in English, and employing source material not previously used in any language, this article charts the course and origins of this controversial unit. It focuses upon its leader Célestin Lainé (otherwise known as 'Neven Henaff'), his conceptions of the 'Irish example' of independence and its impact on Breton nationalism. The objectives and motivations of the unit's chief identities are examined, employing primary source material such as interviews with

*Bezen Perrot* veterans and their descendants, as well as Lainé's own previously unpublished (albeit incomplete) memoirs.<sup>9</sup>

Although this formation decided to throw in its lot with the Germans and its members wore *Waffen-SS Feldgrau*<sup>10</sup> devoid of Breton insignia, its members did not see themselves as collaborators. Instead they viewed themselves as a national force continuing Breton military resistance against France. As such, most were opposed to identification with French collaborationist formations such as the *Milice française* (the internal security force of the Vichy government) or the *Légion des volontaires françaises contre le Bolchevisme* (Legion of French Volunteers against Bolshevism: LVF). Indeed, most in the *Bezen* considered these 'Jacobin' forces as inimical to Breton interests as the Gaullist and communist fighters of the Resistance with whom they engaged in combat. "All the French political class were the same for us", *Bezen* veteran Alan Heusaff 'Rouat' or 'Professeur'<sup>11</sup> wrote in *Argoad*, an exile newsletter that appeared in Ireland in the 1950s.<sup>12</sup> "We are soldiers", Lainé himself declared early in 1945, "Breton soldiers [...] We have therefore always rejected the idea of enlisting in French formations."<sup>13</sup>

Inspired by foreign-sponsored forces in Breton history,<sup>14</sup> and more recent examples such as the Czech and Polish legions of the First World War, militants steeped in tales of Irish rebellion found their most powerful inspiration in the struggle of their Celtic cousins to the northwest. MacBride's Brigade, which fought for the Boers in South Africa, was an especially potent example.<sup>15</sup> Roger Casement's Irish Brigade of former POWs, whilst never actually seeing combat, was likewise powerfully intertwined in the Breton nationalist imagination with the glories of the Easter Rising in 1916 (Fig. 2). By this time, the nationalist Camille Le Mercier d'Erm had embraced the "old *Sinn Féin* formula" and imagined a time when "France's difficulty would be Brittany's opportunity".<sup>16</sup>

Louis Le Roux's *La vie de Patrice Pearse* (Life of Patrick Pearse, published in 1932) was an especially influential publication for young autonomists, and cemented their identification with the Republican struggle in Ireland. Indeed, for many nationalists, Irish heroes exerted greater influence than their own:

The heroes of Easter Week and particularly P. Pearse became our heroes alongside the Breton heroes of the past: more real since they were our contemporaries. Easter Week was for us a sign of Resurrection and its martyrs died for us too, and if the heroes of Easter Week came to replace our own long dead heroes in our minds we owe it to that great book of L.N. Le Roux.<sup>17</sup>



Figure 2. Easter Rising commemorative issue of *Breiz Atao* (Brittany Forever), May 1935. "Easter Monday 1916! Nineteen years ago, the Irish saved their country by shedding their blood for it." (Photograph by author from material at Trinity College, Dublin).

Whatever their inspiration, notions of enduring Breton military heritage allied to whatever power opposed Paris were particularly inspirational for Lainé and the militants of the *Bezen Perrot*:

In this war, and for the first time in several centuries, Breton nationalists have engaged themselves in a military formation to combat France in the ranks of its enemies.<sup>18</sup>

But the *Bezen* and its Irish-inspired ideology of 'my enemy's enemy is my friend' was not purely the result of wartime circumstances. It was, in great measure, the result of the uncompromising attitude Lainé had developed many years earlier when he first determined to struggle against the French state "à la manière irlandaise".<sup>19</sup>

At the end of 1930, the 22-year-old Lainé was studying chemistry and Irish language at the Sorbonne in Paris.<sup>20</sup> Contrary to popular belief, he did not already belong to a secret Breton

nationalist society known as *Kentoc'h Mervel* (Sooner Death),<sup>21</sup> which he is said to have formed with Gwilherm Berthou in 1929.<sup>22</sup> In fact, as Lainé makes clear in his unpublished memoirs, he and Berthou had discussed forming a secret society committed to direct action in the name of Breton independence, but while Lainé went about cautiously recruiting trusted associates for the as-yet-unnamed group at Paris, Berthou independently arranged for Théophile Jeusset of the small *Parti nationaliste intégral breton* (Breton Integral Nationalist Party: PNIB) and the staff of his journal *Breiz da Zont* (Brittany Of The Future) to join *en masse* the group Berthou now dubbed, without Lainé's knowledge, *Kentoc'h Mervel*.<sup>23</sup> Lainé considered it "illogical" for a group engaged in overt political activity such as publishing a journal to be simultaneously involved in an underground "activist secret military society". Lainé's unease became suspicion when Berthou demanded the names of Lainé's recruits. Despite their long association,<sup>24</sup> Lainé resolved to break with Berthou. As a ruse, he announced he and his members were "quitting the risky domain of secret societies".<sup>25</sup> "I don't know what became of *Kentoc'h Mervel* after that," Lainé writes, "except that it never grew beyond fancy words."<sup>26</sup>

Lainé reasoned that if Brittany was a nation it would have to fight as the Irish Republican Army (IRA) had done, and not "beg crumbs off the French table".<sup>27</sup> Lainé and his comrades Fant Rozec 'Meavenn', Hervé 'Bob' Helloco and Armand Girard therefore pledged to create their own, truly clandestine organisation dedicated to fomenting a nationalist uprising. *Gwenn-ha-Du* (White and Black, the Breton national colours) was therefore born late in 1930 on a street corner in Paris.<sup>28</sup>

Following Lainé's cautious strategy, recruitment for the secretive group was slow and deliberate. Helloco and Rozec left off all public nationalist activity, and 'Bob' became Head of Operations for the new group.<sup>29</sup> *Gwenn-ha-Du's* spectacular entry into French politics was the destruction in August 1932 of a monument at Rennes, known to autonomists as the *Honte nationale* (national dishonour), which featured the Breton Duchess Anne kneeling before the King of France and commemorated the union of the two countries 400 years earlier. The group declared in a communiqué to the press:

We open the struggle for the deliverance of our country, on this, the anniversary of our annexation, by destroying the symbol of our enslavement that dominates the centre of our capital.<sup>30</sup>

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Ironically, many PNIB members were arrested on suspicion of involvement in the Rennes bombing<sup>31</sup>—a development that vindicated Lainé's insistence upon secrecy. The police suspected Lainé as well, however, especially as the bomb would have required extensive knowledge of chemistry. His position as a reserve artillery officer no doubt also fit the police profile (Fig. 3). But he was soon released when a former co-worker provided him an alibi.<sup>32</sup> The following November *Gwenn-ha-Du* struck again, cutting the rail line at Ingrandes and delaying Prime Minister Édouard Herriot's train on its way to union commemorations at Nantes. As had been the case in August, this action was condemned as "a German attack" by elements of the French press.<sup>33</sup>



Figure 3. Reserve Lt. of Artillery Célestin Lainé, 1931. ("Bezen Perrot archives" [previously unpublished]).

The actions of *Gwenn-ha-Du* proved popular among the more youthful sections of the Breton movement—so much so that the leaders of the constitutionalist *Parti national breton* (Breton National Party: PNB), Fañch Debauvais and Olier Mordrel, became anxious Lainé might usurp their position.<sup>34</sup> It was clear that younger nationalists were frustrated with the PNB's unsuccessful forays into electoral politics, and were increasingly radicalised not only by the example of Irish independence, but also by the rising tide of fascist nationalism that had brought Mussolini to power in Italy and would soon bring the Nazis to government in Germany. This influence also emphasised the prominence of an all-powerful, charismatic leader. Action and militaristic discipline under a hierarchical leadership, combined with *Völkisch* concepts of race and nation, held greater appeal for these young militants than the mild regionalism or constitutionally-constrained autonomism preached by the older generation.<sup>35</sup> Nascent Breton fascism, embodied by the cult of action developing around *Gwenn-ha-Du* and its leader Lainé, could not therefore be ignored by the PNB. Its journal *Breiz Atao* (Brittany Forever) was usually cautious when it came to extolling the virtues of 'direct action', but now went so far as to term the

Rennes bombing "the first sign, the first cry of an awakening of our people".<sup>36</sup>

Plaudits aside, Debauvais and Mordrel determined to rein in Lainé and his militants, whilst simultaneously ensuring the popularity of *Gwenn-ha-Du* was harnessed for party ends. They determined "to harmonise initiatives and converge disparate efforts towards the same goal, under the leadership of the same strategy".<sup>37</sup> In May 1933 a secret *Kuzul Meur* (Grand Council) of Breton nationalism was therefore established. Mordrel and Debauvais represented the PNB and its organ *Breiz Atao*, while Lainé and his chief of operations 'Bob' Helloco represented *Gwenn-ha-Du*. Raymond Delaporte of the Catholic regionalist association *Bleun Brug* (Heather Bloom) was also included, so that efforts could be co-ordinated across all politico-cultural platforms, both overt and covert.<sup>38</sup>

There was a curious lull in *Gwenn-ha-Du's* activities between 1933 and 1936. This was not entirely due to the restraint exercised by the *Kuzul Meur*. The real reason was more mundane, and indicates that, despite its growing membership, the direct action group was still reliant upon the energy of its founder to plan and carry out attacks: throughout this period Lainé was living and working at the Kuhlmann plant at Loos, in French Flanders.<sup>39</sup> Upon his return, however, there was a co-ordinated arson strike against four of the five Breton prefectures,<sup>40</sup> followed by another communiqué which recalled the glorious monument bombing of four years earlier and promised "All of our blood for Brittany; not a drop for France."<sup>41</sup> Despite the restraining influence of the *Kuzul*, younger militants were evidently still hoping to incite "war pure and simple" against France, in the style of their heroes in the IRA.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, in a swipe at the older generation in the *Kuzul* (and an indication of his increasing anti-intellectualism), Lainé appended an appeal to "young people" to the communiqué, warning them "not to attach an exaggerated importance to theories that make tongues work to the detriment of arms".<sup>43</sup>

Unbeknownst to the other members of the *Kuzul*, Lainé and Helloco decided to harness this youthful exuberance on the fringes of the Breton movement and create a new clandestine force completely under Lainé's control.<sup>44</sup> Whereas *Gwenn-ha-Du's* role remained sabotage action against the symbols of French power in Brittany (a form of "violent propaganda", in Faligot's phrase),<sup>45</sup> the new force would concentrate upon training the nucleus of a future Breton army. "Each Breton must prepare himself physically and spiritually to be a soldier," Lainé declared.<sup>46</sup> Recruitment and training took place with such discretion that even Mordrel and Debauvais were taken by surprise when the new group—christened *Kadervenn* (roughly translating as "nursery of

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combat")<sup>47</sup>—held its inaugural manoeuvres on the isolated Monts d'Arrée in 1937.<sup>48</sup> Lainé's brother Albert, a French army officer, was put in charge of training the group, which numbered only around a dozen members at this stage.<sup>49</sup>

There was a fair amount of dual membership between *Kadervenn* and *Gwenn-ha-Du*, yet Lainé and Helloco purposed to create another, more secretive organisation drawn from the executive branches of both groups—a "secret within a secret" tasked with carrying out confidential missions.<sup>50</sup> This was the *Service Spécial* (Special Service),<sup>51</sup> and Helloco was again placed in charge of its operations. Even Mordrel, his membership of the *Kuzul Meur* notwithstanding, confesses he never learned the precise composition of the *Service*.<sup>52</sup> Lainé and Helloco's efforts at bypassing the PNB leadership were obviously proving successful.

Also kept secret from the *Kuzul Meur* was the mission of *Service Spécial* members Guy Vissault de Coëtlogon and Ange Péresse to Germany in November 1938, ostensibly to undertake Celtic Studies at Rostock,<sup>53</sup> but actually to establish closer relations with Celticists employed by the *Abwehr Abteilung II*—the German secret service's 2nd department, tasked with utilising foreign subversive movements for German strategic ends.<sup>54</sup> Principal among these were men like Dr. Gerhard von Tevenar, who undertook recruitment missions to Celtic countries in the late 1930s. Vissault, in his testimony to British intelligence after his capture in 1944, claims to have first met the German Celticist in Ireland in July 1938.<sup>55</sup> This trip was itself a *Service Spécial* mission, and one which convinced the Bretons that the German intelligence service was a much more effective supporter of their struggle than the IRA, which was by that time a proscribed organisation in Éire.

Lainé and Helloco also travelled to Germany, via the residence at Brussels of Breton autonomist Paul 'Fred' Moyses, in July 1939.<sup>56</sup> Their mission was to go further than improve relations with German intelligence, but to capitalise upon the deteriorating political situation in Europe and "reverse the 150 year old trend of submission and renew the tradition of armed resistance to French domination".<sup>57</sup> To do this, the *Service Spécial* needed weapons.

Early in August 1939, a crate washed up at St.-Aubin Bay, Jersey.<sup>58</sup> The contents were brought to the attention of local police, who informed their counterparts on the French mainland. What had been found was some 50kg of seditious Breton nationalist propaganda; tracts and posters declaring *Pourquoi les Bretons se feraient-ils tuer pour la Pologne?*<sup>59</sup> (Why should Bretons get killed for Poland?) and *Pas de guerre pour Dantzig!*<sup>60</sup> (No war for Danzig!). This



was not the first time slogans of this nature had made an appearance in Brittany: Célestin Lainé himself had been sentenced to a three-month prison term for his part in a nationalist graffiti campaign the previous year,<sup>61</sup> although it is probable his insistence upon speaking Breton at his trial was a contributing factor to the severity of his sentence.<sup>62</sup> What perturbed French police was not so much the nature of the tracts but the appearance of such a large amount of nationalist material in the international waters of the English Channel. This testified to some sort of seaborne mission, and if one crate had been lost, it was reasonable to assume there might be others. Hardcore Breton militants were therefore put under increased surveillance<sup>63</sup>—especially those with access to ships. Police soon learned that a fishing boat capable of hauling large cargoes named the *Gwalarn* (Northwest) was registered under the name of one Hervé Helloco.<sup>64</sup>

When the police finally located the *Gwalarn* beached near Locquirec, they swiftly detained all on board. A thorough search of the vessel revealed nothing incriminating. Arresting the suspects all the same, the police then raided the nearby farm of one Andrev Geffroy. Again, nothing was found. Those arrested were then taken to successive prisons, where they reportedly endured five months of detention interspersed with interrogations and threats.<sup>65</sup> None of the detainees ever admitted any wrongdoing, maintaining throughout they were "peaceable vacationers". They were eventually released in January 1940 for lack of evidence.<sup>66</sup> Each—Andrev Geffroy, 'Bob' Helloco, Ange Péresse, Jacques Bruchet, Alan Louarn and the young Guy Vissault de Coëtlogon—was a member of Lainé's *Service Spécial*. Despite their arrests, the mission had largely been a success: the *Gwalarn* had managed to rendezvous in the English Channel with a German vessel from Hamburg,<sup>67</sup> and (the loss of one crate of leaflets notwithstanding) managed to transfer a cargo containing, according to one rather outlandish claim, some 50 tonnes of revolvers, submachine guns, munitions and nationalist propaganda.<sup>68</sup> None of this, contrary to some later claims, was an expression of militant Celtic solidarity;<sup>69</sup> Geffroy himself later acknowledged the shipment was a "gift" from the *Abwehr*, and not from "some mysterious organisation in Ireland".<sup>70</sup>

Geffroy's *Service Spécial* comrades Jacques de Quelen, Patrick Guérin and others had managed to unload the cargo before the police struck, and have it dispersed to secret arms caches throughout Brittany. The police searched in vain for the rumoured weapons, and among the many Breton individuals visited in this connexion was the parish priest of Scrignac and head of *Bleun Brug*, a certain *Abbé* Yann-Vari Perrot.<sup>71</sup>

Until it was time to put the weapons to use in an insurrection against French rule, Lainé ordered those of his men not already in jail to lie low while the repression of the Breton movement, which had begun with a law forbidding "attacks upon the integrity of the state" in May 1938, gained in force. On September 3, 1939 France declared war on Germany, and finally on October 20 the PNB was banned and its property seized as "enemy goods".<sup>72</sup>

The day France ordered general mobilisation, Lainé the reserve artillery officer rejoined his regiment. Hamon claims this caused consternation amongst the *Service Spécial*.<sup>73</sup> However, Louis Feutren, a close associate of Lainé's, claims there were express orders to rejoin regiments and defect to the Germans at the first opportunity.<sup>74</sup> Two days previously PNB leaders Olier Mordrel and Fañch Debauvais had fled to Germany via 'Fred' Moyses in Brussels.<sup>75</sup> Awaiting them in the Reich were a number of German Celticists, many of whom, like von Tevenar, doubled as operatives for the *Abwehr Abteilung II* or the *Ahnenerbe*,<sup>76</sup> the Germanic ancestry research office that had been incorporated into the SS in January 1939. Chief among these was Dr. Hans Otto Wagner, a longtime subscriber to *Breiz Atao* whom Mordrel describes as a "Rhenish federalist" passionately interested in minority nationalism.<sup>77</sup> He and von Tevenar assisted the PNB leaders to become established in Berlin, assisted by Kurt Haller, Director of the German Society for Celtic Studies,<sup>78</sup> and Baron Schenk von Stauffenberg, former deputy for Sigmaringen in the Reichstag.<sup>79</sup>

Another "left Nazi" was Friedrich Hielscher, an *Ahnenerbe* researcher, Celticist and "pagan"<sup>80</sup> who had first introduced Lainé to the *Abwehr*.<sup>81</sup> As war broke out between Germany and France he was central in ensuring the exiled PNB leaders were granted as favourable a reception in the German Reich as possible. This meant providing access to military officers known for their desire to dismember a defeated France, absorb its 'Germanic' regions such as Alsace and French Flanders, and establish an independent Brittany that would remain tied to Germany. Owing to this latter proclivity, these officers were known as *Die Bretonen*.<sup>82</sup>

By April 1940 the Germans established a *G-Sender* propaganda radio station dedicated to fomenting Breton nationalist sentiment. 'Radio Breiz' broadcast from Krems in Moravia. The German Celticists Julius Pokorny and Ludwig Mühlhausen were in charge of censorship, but otherwise the operation was, in Mordrel's phrase, "100 percent *Breiz Atao*".<sup>83</sup> The broadcasts were seldom received in Brittany, but may have been heard by troops on the front lines. Mordrel claims that morale amongst Bretons in the French army before the German invasion was

particularly low, and that desertions were common. Many of these were of nationalists under instruction to do so, but others were ordinary Bretons who feared Paris would once again sacrifice them to the Germans,<sup>84</sup> as had happened (according to Breton legend) to General Kerartry's *Armée de Bretagne* at Conlie during the Franco-Prussian war of 1870.<sup>85</sup>

The Germans segregated Breton POWs thought responsive to nationalist propaganda, placing them in separate camps such as Luckenwalde. These Bretons were to 'smooth the way' for the projected German advance into France, but in the end the invasion was so spectacularly successful this 'Breton vanguard' proved unnecessary.

While Helloco and other nationalists recruited under the POW scheme worked for the 'government-in-exile' at Berlin or broadcast for 'Radio Breiz', Célestin Lainé was in the early months of a five-year prison term at the *centrale* (military prison) at Clairvaux.<sup>86</sup> He had been sentenced in October 1939 for sowing defeatism in his regiment. According to one story, the inoffensive-looking nationalist leader was taunted by a group of tough Parisian gangsters when beginning his sentence.

"What are you in for, little one? A week's holiday?"

"No," Lainé replied. "They'll probably guillotine me for trying to destroy the train of the President of the Republic." After that, it is said, Lainé was bothered no more.<sup>87</sup>

Liberated by his comrades after the surrender of French arms, Lainé was one of the central committee members of the *Conseil national breton* (Breton National Council: CNB) declared at Pontivy in July 1940. Despite some early ambivalence on the issue of Breton independence, the Germans were now demanding the more radical elements of Breton nationalism, especially references to a Breton "nation", be deleted from the CNB's proclamations.<sup>88</sup> The promise of collaboration with France proper was taking precedence over schemes for the dismemberment of the country, but until the Montoire agreement in October between Hitler and Pétain there were still many who expected German support for Breton independence. There were even rumours the banks were designing a Breton currency.<sup>89</sup>

During these crucial months, Lainé holed up first at Pontivy and later at Gouézec in Finistère with members of his *Service Spécial* and *Kadervenn*,<sup>90</sup> many of whom had been repatriated under the POW scheme. Here they secretly planned for independence and drilled as the nucleus of Brittany's future military. The *Kadervenn* was renamed *Lu Brezon* (Breton Army) in anticipation of this development, but this wasn't the only change afoot. Lainé—steeped in

what Hamon calls a Celtic, Nordic and druidic neo-pagan syncretism,<sup>91</sup> devoting himself to arcane studies in Celtic mysticism, astrology and the spiritual aspects of nutrition—was developing bizarre military theories. Among other strictures, his men should not eat potatoes, as they grow hidden from sunlight.<sup>92</sup> They should adopt a new 'Celtic' goosetep in which the toes touch the ground first.<sup>93</sup> Like his German mentors Hielscher and von Tevenar, his beliefs were becoming overtly non- (or perhaps even pre-) Christian, and racialist conceptions distinguishing 'northern' Celtic and Germanic races from 'southern' Latins were becoming more pronounced in his thinking. From the early 1930s, Lainé had detected a "sense of Nordism" growing in him as he realised only Germany could defeat France. Perhaps conveniently (and in contradistinction to the views of many British Celts, no doubt) he developed notions of "a Germanic culture related [*parente*] to Celtic culture."<sup>94</sup> Olier Mordrel was developing similar theories in both *Breizh Atao* and his alternative, more overtly fascist publication *Stur*, which made references to a Celto-Germanic "Nordic super-race" united in blood and spirit.<sup>95</sup> Pagan conceptions such as Lainé's would have a negative impact in such a devoutly Catholic region as Brittany, and also upon internal relations within his own small nationalist force. For the moment, though, the *Lu Brezon* bided its time to see which way the German wind blew, knowing that, secreted in caches around the peninsula, the arms landed in the *Gwalarn* adventure awaited use.

At this early stage, then, Lainé and his small band of nationalists had already made their ambitions contingent upon the attitudes of the German occupiers. Guy Vissault de Coëtlogon, for one, had advocated rebellion against France when war was declared in September 1939,<sup>96</sup> but Lainé had insisted upon harmonising Breton nationalist objectives with those of the invaders.

After the Montoire agreement guaranteed French collaboration under the Vichy government, however, the Germans ousted the separatists Mordrel and Debauvais from the PNB leadership. Prospects for Breton independence under German aegis thereafter retreated considerably. The Germans now only tolerated the nationalists—largely as a guarantee of Vichy compliance—and the party itself under the new moderate leader Raymond Delaporte moved further towards a nominally neutralist and federalist line as a result. Moderates in the PNB found a compelling example for this position in contemporary Ireland,<sup>97</sup> just as militants found inspiration in the IRA. Removing separatists from the PNB leadership eased the pressure upon Franco-German relations, but the armed hardcore group around Lainé remained a potentially destabilising element. It was not until July 5 1941 that the occupiers acted against this threat.

The disarmament of militant nationalists that occurred on that date was precipitated by public reaction to Vichy's administrative detachment of the Nantes region from Brittany, declared less than a week earlier. The upsurge in popular resentment towards central government could, the Germans realised, lead to increased support for the nationalists and a general undermining of Vichy collaboration. Anxiety in this area became profound concern when an angry communiqué attributed to *Gwenn-ha-Du*, officially dormant since 1938, hit the regional press:

Any attack upon the integrity of Brittany will be considered by us a criminal act to which we shall immediately respond in a violent manner, with the certitude that we shall be understood and followed by the Breton people in their entirety...<sup>98</sup>

The *gendarmerie* at Carhaix was the subject of a bomb attack only a few days later.<sup>99</sup>

Significantly, though, *Gwenn-ha-Du* did not claim responsibility,<sup>100</sup> perhaps nervous as to what the German response might be should they do so.

The Germans were now forced to take action. The *Lu Brezon* was obliged to surrender its weapons by order of the *Kommandantur* at Rennes. Lainé, however, contrived to ensure only a portion of the arms were handed over. There was a fair deal of distrust towards Vichy within the German general staff—the transfer of many of *Die Bretonen* away from Brittany notwithstanding. Allies might be needed in future, especially if the Resistance were to grow in power. The *Wehrmacht*, therefore, ensured no awkward questions were asked about the balance of the *Lu Brezon's* armoury.<sup>101</sup>

Fears of an increase in Resistance activity were soon realised. On June 22 1941, the Axis invasion of the Soviet Union sundered the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact. The *Parti communiste français* (French Communist Party: PCF) now reversed its attitude towards the "imperialist" war. Clandestine resistance networks now grew exponentially. Perhaps with greater violence, any local elements thought to be assisting the occupiers began to be targeted. As the Resistance attacked Germans and their local supporters alike, so the reprisals of the occupiers came down more heavily upon the average citizen—often with a random savagery that simply drove more into opposition. Fifty residents of Nantes, for example, were taken hostage and executed in reprisal for the assassination of the German commandant in October 1941. His assassin was a communist of the *Francs-tireurs et partisans français* (FTP, the armed Resistance wing of the PCF).<sup>102</sup> As the tide of war seemed to turn after Stalingrad, so Resistance efforts

became further emboldened. More young Bretons—as citizens were to do throughout occupied countries—began to *prendre le maquis*, forming irregular guerilla bands to harass German lines of supply, ambush convoys and mete out harsh punishment to 'collabos'. The introduction of *Service du travail obligatoire* (STO, a compulsory labour draft) from June 1942 also served only to increase the flight of youngsters to the Resistance.

The militants of *Gwenn-ha-Du* had once hoped to provoke the French state into a blind repression of Breton particularism that would force even non-nationalists into rebellion.<sup>103</sup> But even at its most Jacobin, the French state had never resorted to the kind of repression witnessed in occupied Brittany during the war. As the German position became more desperate, captured members of the Resistance as well as innocent hostages could expect little mercy from the *Sicherheitsdienst* (Security Service of the SS: SD) and its various auxiliaries, including French units like the *Franc-Garde* of the Vichy *Milice* or the *Groupe d'Action* of the fascist *Parti populaire français* (French Popular Party: PPF).<sup>104</sup> Soon these French fascists would be joined by others of local origin yet rather different political motivation.

From the installation of Delaporte at its head in late 1940 the PNB had espoused a neutralist line. But many in Brittany recalled how the CNB had been rescued from loyalists by German troops at Pontivy in 1940, and how nationalist POWs had been repatriated while loyalists still mouldered in German prison camps. Many also had been schooled in French media depictions of the 'German' origins of Breton nationalism, dating back to *Gwenn-ha-Du's* first action in 1932. Furthermore, any attempt to convince Bretons that the war was a dispute between French and Germans that should not concern them was unlikely to hold much sway in an era of mass executions, food shortages and Allied aerial bombing.

There was also increasing division within the Breton nationalist camp—not only between the *attentistes* ('wait-and-see' types) of the PNB and the extremists of the *Lu Brezon*, but also those who began to reject the occupiers altogether. The '*Liberté*' troop of the *Bagadoù Stourm* (Combat Detachments, the uniformed youth wing of the PNB), defected to the Resistance, for example.<sup>105</sup> The conflict in Brittany was taking on aspects of civil war, but not of the kind Lainé had hoped for. In Mordrel's analysis, the war was becoming not a national struggle between Bretons and French, but an internecine clash between the majority of Bretons who were allied to "international communism, Anglo-Saxon capitalism and Gaullist revanchism" on the one hand, and "the German people, allied to international fascism, a minority of Bretons and the

collaborationist fraction of the French people" on the other.<sup>106</sup> Lainé's militant tendency was therefore marginalised not only within Breton society at large, but within the nationalist movement itself.

In September 1943, a *Maquis* gunman killed Yann Bricler, head of the PNB's Quimper section.<sup>107</sup> The impact upon the PNB was, according to Bricler's cousin Olier Mordrel, like a "lightning bolt". The sense of alarm and isolation was heightened by the Church hierarchy's refusal to allow Catholic funeral rites,<sup>108</sup> a reinforcement of Bishop Duparc's earlier threat to excommunicate nationalists.<sup>109</sup> At the funeral itself, onlookers insulted mourners and had to be held back by armed German military police—which only added to the sense that this was a *collabo* ceremony.<sup>110</sup> Soon afterward, *Service Spécial* militant Yves Kerhoas survived one assassination attempt, only to succumb to a second some weeks later.<sup>111</sup>

The PNB was teetering on the point of schism, and the targeting of its members hastened that division. Some demanded weapons from the Germans to defend themselves against these "communist terrorists".<sup>112</sup> Others felt feelers should be extended toward the Allies.<sup>113</sup> While most stuck to the neutralist line, militants agitated for more open alignment with the Germans, as the only force capable of defending nationalists and the traditional separatist goals of *Breiz Atao*. Some of these militants found great motivation in Breton variants of national socialism, roused by Mordrel's *Stur* or *Brezona*, a small Breton Nazi group at Lorient.<sup>114</sup> Still others are said to have held little faith in ultimate German victory, but simply felt the time had come to "put their faith in Brittany and the necessity to fight for her".<sup>115</sup> For most militants, though, this was an opportunity to demonstrate their value to the occupiers. The more supportive nationalists were of the Germans, they reasoned, the more likely Berlin would be to abandon Vichy and create a Breton state. In a choice between Germany and France, the latter had historically been a worse enemy to Brittany, they reasoned.<sup>116</sup>

Were Lainé's men therefore Nazis? There is no doubt their vision of an independent Brittany was as heavily influenced by national socialist and fascist doctrines as Irish Republicanism. They shared with Catholic traditionalists within the PNB (and, indeed, throughout much of Europe) a strong anti-communism and acute anti-Semitism. Often they, like many on the contemporary Right, conflated these two 'threats' into conceptions of 'Judeo-Bolshevism'.<sup>117</sup> A minority even felt that the Germans' 'crusade' in Russia was worth participating in directly. Most Breton separatists, however, could not countenance joining French

units like the LVF, and felt their principal anti-communist struggle was in Brittany against the forces of the FTP.<sup>118</sup> They were also influenced by elements of Mordrel's abortive program for Breton independence *Strollad ar Gelted Adsavet* (Union of Celts Reborn: SAGA),<sup>119</sup> which imagined the future 'cleansing' of racial and political enemies. Guy Vissault de Coëtlogon reportedly stated his willingness to eliminate 90 percent of Bretons so long as it brought about an independent state.<sup>120</sup>

Louis Feutren, however, claims the origin of external assistance was immaterial, and that nationalists would willingly have accepted aid from Moscow but such was never offered given the strength of the PCF and the 'Popular Front' Stalin sought against fascism.<sup>121</sup> Alan Heusaff, for his part, is said to have been radicalised in defence of the Breton language not by Breton Nazis, but by a Breton-speaking communist.<sup>122</sup> Only Germany was interested in destabilising France, they believed.

It is debatable whether these were beliefs held at the time or are the product of later justifications. Certainly, Hamon claims an enthusiastic young collaborator who participated in arrests and conversed in German with Nazi officers in 1944 was none other than Louis Feutren<sup>123</sup>—an accusation Feutren rejects. "It's not me. I hadn't a word of German at the time."<sup>124</sup> Claims also recurred that Lainé's circle still embraced the label of 'national socialist' long after they fled to Ireland,<sup>125</sup> although they themselves described their politics as "socialist"<sup>126</sup> or even "liberal".<sup>127</sup> Single-minded nationalism, modelled in great measure upon the IRA's, appears to have blinded these militant nationalists to the ramifications of their alliance with Berlin.

In late 1943, Lainé, who still believed in ultimate German victory,<sup>128</sup> decided to pursue his alliance with Germany still further. Adopting the name of Brittany's famous rebel assisted by Britain, he again renamed his small nationalist force *Bezen Kadoudal* (Cadoudal Unit),<sup>129</sup> and offered its services to the occupiers. It would aim to protect nationalists from Resistance attack, but perhaps more than any other objective was the desire to field a purely Breton military force, thereby demonstrating the endurance of the Breton nation. In the words of his associate Feutren ('Maître' of the *Bezen*), Lainé wanted "to connect back with the Breton army that was defeated at St.-Aubin."<sup>130</sup> The simple presence of such a force would, Lainé reasoned, have a powerful impact upon Breton psychology. He "tried to have us as a unit protecting trains," says Feutren. "Anything at all that would have given us a uniform." But, mindful perhaps of how its enemies would seek to portray it, Lainé was, reportedly, especially concerned the unit should not operate



on behalf of the SD.<sup>131</sup>

The security arm of the SS was by this time desperate to recruit collaborators for counter-insurgency work. It was also loath to jeopardise valuable Vichy co-operation. It thus had very different plans for the Breton unit, and the result was a curious compromise: *Bezen Kadoudal* members would be classed as agents of the *Sicherheitspolizei* (Security police of the SD, or *Sipo*), but the men of the unit could consider themselves Breton soldiers of an independent military formation. "All precautions were taken that the German quality of the formation would remain unknown in Brittany," Mordrel explains, "and that the Breton character imprinted on the troop by its animators would not be known outside."<sup>132</sup> The terms of enlistment specified engagement only against 'French' power within Brittany itself.<sup>133</sup> It is testament to Lainé's burning desire to combat France in whatever form that he accepted this unsatisfactory role of German police auxiliaries for his unit, at a time when it was clear the Nazi leadership would never reward his efforts with Breton independence and an increasing number of Bretons were rejecting the occupiers and all who supported them.

Another prominent Breton was targeted less than a week later, however. In the aftermath of this killing, the *Bezen Kadoudal* took its most fateful step into collaboration in German uniform in the name of Breton independence.

*Abbé* Yann-Vari Perrot was director of *Bleun Brug*; member, alongside Yann Fouéré, of Vichy's *Conseil consultatif de Bretagne* (Consultative Council of Brittany: CCB); and editor of the journal *Feiz ha Breiz* (Faith and Brittany). In this latter capacity he had written favourably of the clerical-fascist regime of Msgr. Tiso in Slovakia and of the Axis campaign against 'Bolshevik hordes' in the East.<sup>134</sup> His commitment to Breton nationalism was likewise well-known, a position that put him at odds with the Church hierarchy whose bishops were supportive of Marshal Pétain and his *État français* (French State). It is perhaps owing to his Breton nationalist convictions that the Church posted Perrot to Scrignac, a town noted for its Leftism and hostility to autonomism.<sup>135</sup>

Perrot had been visited by the police some years earlier as they searched for the weapons landed at Locquirec.<sup>136</sup> Lainé even claimed the *Abbé* had offered his garden as a hiding place for these arms.<sup>137</sup> It is also said, however, that Perrot distrusted Lainé and his plans for open collaboration with the Germans.<sup>138</sup> This was partly owing to Lainé's neo-paganism,<sup>139</sup> a common element of Nazism that often brought condemnation from a Church otherwise favourably

disposed towards corporatism, anti-communism and other features of national socialism. Perrot was also respected by a broad range of regionalist opinion in Brittany. If Perrot were to be killed, it would send a powerful signal that the Resistance regarded all autonomists as *collabos*, which would, out of outrage and fury, likely force them into overt alliance with the Germans.<sup>140</sup> This, then, is what a lone communist assassin did at a crossroads near Scrignac on 12 December 1943.<sup>141</sup>

Shock at Perrot's death shook even many non-nationalists in Brittany. Mordrel claims even the communist press referred to it as a "tragic error".<sup>142</sup> For Lainé, however, this was an opportunity to "step from the shadows" and offer militant Bretons an instrument of vengeance. His emotive appeal at Perrot's funeral for action in defence of an imperilled Breton identity was largely unchanged since the time of *Gwenn-ha-Du*:

When all the means of discussion are exhausted [...] when offers, promises and seductions remain ineffective [...] Then [...] the cause has no further need of sloganeers [*phraseurs*], but of soldiers. Victory will decide the issue.<sup>143</sup>

After Perrot's death, members of the *Bezen Kadoudal* unanimously voted to rename their unit once again, this time in honour of this Breton martyr in priest's robes.<sup>144</sup> By so doing, however, the division between these thirty or so uncompromising militants and the rest of the Breton movement became blurred. The "peaceful regionalist" Perrot—and, by extension, all other constitutionalist streams of Breton autonomism—would now be forever associated with direct collaboration with the occupiers.<sup>145</sup> The *Bezen's* very existence, let alone its wartime conduct, would soon "allow Brittany's enemies [...] to crucify the Movement with the assent of the Breton people."<sup>146</sup>

One of the most controversial aspects of the *Bezen Perrot*, and one that assisted efforts to depict it as a force serving purely German interests, was the seemingly mundane question of its uniform.<sup>147</sup> The primary sources of recruitment for the *Bezen* were of course the PNB and the *Bagadoù Stourm*. Many recruits were reportedly told prior to enlistment that, as in the *Bagadoù*, with its *triskell* armbands and 'Scottish' caps, they would be serving and fighting in uniquely 'Breton' uniform.<sup>148</sup> This uniform, combining Celtic and Nazi German overtones, had been a considerable source of pride for Yann Goulet, the *Bagadoù's* leader. It had been designed by both Goulet and Lainé earlier in the war.

In the *Bezen*, however, different considerations applied. The *Bagadoù* had been involved in occasional brawls with political opponents—especially the hated fascist/centralist *Francistes*, and even Vichy's police on at least one occasion<sup>149</sup>—but it had never been armed with anything more threatening than paving stones, clubs and Goulet's personal sidearm.<sup>150</sup> Numbering some 400 members,<sup>151</sup> it performed a function somewhere between nationalist scout troupe and political 'street muscle' for the PNB. A force equipped with deadlier weapons engaged in anti-partisan work by the SD, however, was a rather bolder statement of German support for Breton nationalism—particularly if that force was committed to separatism and opposed the federalism the PNB now espoused. For this reason ("not to offend the French!"<sup>152</sup>), the *Bezen Perrot* served first in mufti and then, from March 1944, in SS



Figure 4. (*l-r*) Louis Feutren 'Maître', Yann Guyomarc'h 'Pipo' and Ange Luec 'Forster' in the SS uniform of the *Bezen Perrot*, Tübingen, c. early 1945. Note absence of any Breton insignia. ("*Bezen Perrot* archives" [previously unpublished]).

*Feldgrau* devoid of any Breton insignia<sup>153</sup> (Fig. 4). To many in Brittany, then, the *Bezen* would have seemed indistinguishable from civilian informers in German pay, or from regular German SS on operations.

Of greater significance, of course, was the *Bezen's* operational history. *Gour* participated in arrests of Resistants and evaders of STO, intercepted arms drops intended for the *Maquis*, and assisted in the infiltration of Resistance networks. As a security measure, many Resistance networks in Brittany communicated only in Breton, and Breton-speaking collaborators were therefore greatly prized.<sup>154</sup> More than one Resistance fighter is said to have been unpleasantly surprised when their 'German' captors began conversing in fluent Breton.<sup>155</sup>

The *Bezen* began operations alongside the SD early in 1944. At this time they were armed

only with pistols. In addition to raids against Resistants, they were used to mount guard at the SD interrogation centre at Rennes. By spring the elite groups were given SS uniforms to wear on operation, and were armed with sub-machine guns.<sup>156</sup> They operated in concert with another French '*collabo*' force, the *Selbstschutzpolizei* (SSP), which operated in a blue uniform similar to the Vichy *Milice*.<sup>157</sup>

These operations became more dangerous as D-Day approached, and sharp engagements with the *Maquis* became more common. Ange Péresse 'Cocal', the unit's field commander, earned a particularly ferocious reputation in these engagements, especially one against a hideout of "Spanish Reds".<sup>158</sup> Finally, in May 1944, Auguste Le Deuff 'Verdier' was shot dead by a captured Resistance fighter who had secreted a handgun in his beret, who also managed to wound Goulven Jacq 'Maout' in the hand. Le Deuff was laid to rest with full military honours, under a headstone that declares him a "German soldier"<sup>159</sup> (Fig. 5).

Yann Laizet 'Stern' and Jean Larnicol 'Gonidec', were killed in a firefight with Free French commandos shortly after D-Day. Alan Heusaff 'Rouat' or 'Professeur' was gravely wounded in this engagement. Local peasants who came to his assistance were stunned by his explanation that his wounds were the result of a skirmish "between Bretons and French".<sup>160</sup> Yann Louarn 'Le Du' fared rather worse when arrested by *maquisards*; led into a forest, he was executed with a shot to the head.<sup>161</sup> His body was later dumped into a flooded quarry.

Anger at the targeting of Breton nationalists by the FTP motivated some *gour* to excessive violence. Gilles Foix 'Eskob' was known to have struck prisoners during interrogation,<sup>162</sup> contrary to Lainé's supposed orders to avoid such duty altogether.<sup>163</sup> Ange Luec 'Forster' was also known for his "bestiality" towards prisoners.<sup>164</sup> André Geffroy 'Ferrand' is said to have bragged of his role in the execution of fifty captives of the *Forces françaises de l'intérieur* (French Forces of the Interior or FFI, the amalgamated forces of the Resistance after



Figure 5. Auguste Le Deuff 'Verdier', first fatality suffered by the *Bezen Perrot*. ("*Bezen Perrot* archives" [previously unpublished]).

March 1944).<sup>165</sup> Finally, after the unsuccessful attempt upon Hitler's life in July, the SD was ordered to take no prisoners in its anti-partisan war. The *Bezen Perrot* was thereafter accused of assisting in massacres of captured Resistants at various locations throughout Brittany, although some veterans of the unit maintained they simply stood guard while the SD and other auxiliaries carried out the atrocities.<sup>166</sup>

It must be noted that not all militant nationalists favouring collaboration with the Germans joined the *Bezen Perrot*. Lainé's old *Service Spécial* comrade Andreu Geffroy 'Le Grand Geff'<sup>167</sup> enlisted instead with a *Sipo* outfit composed of nationalists and German SD that operated in Finistère, known as the *Kommando de Landerneau*. Guy Vissault de Coëtlogon likewise bypassed Breton units "allied" to the Germans and offered his services directly to the SD. His group of operatives specialised in infiltrating and betraying Resistance networks. He was eventually trained in espionage with a view to conducting operations against Britain in either the UK or Ireland. It is for this reason the British evinced such interest in him after his capture by the Americans in Normandy in 1944, where he had allegedly been organising 'stay-behind' agents to sow chaos in the Allied rear.<sup>168</sup> The British took him to London for extended interrogation before handing him over to the French. Defiant at his trial, and raised on tales of Irish sacrifice, Coëtlogon revelled in his death sentence. "God," he announced, "gives me the honour of dying for my country."<sup>169</sup>

Division within the militant section of the Breton movement was minor compared to the rupture between it and the moderate majority. A schism had threatened to erupt since Perrot's funeral, when Lainé had issued his militant appeal and shocked Catholics with his displays of Celtic paganism.<sup>170</sup> The final crisis came when Fañch Debauvais, terminally ill with tuberculosis, issued a political testimony in which he named Lainé heir.<sup>171</sup> Upon the death of 'Deb', Lainé and his political affairs chief Marcel Guieysse formally declared in May 1944 their own PNB, the resurrection of the CNB, and launched a new journal named *Breiz Atao*. This suggested they, and not the *attentistes* of what would come to be known as the PNB-*Croupion* ('Rump PNB'), were the real heirs of the movement first established in 1919. Raymond Delaporte, however, refused to dissolve the existing party. The schism was complete.

Lainé's *néo-Breiz Atao*, as Mordrel calls it, managed only a single issue in Brittany.<sup>172</sup> In the first days of August 1944 the Germans issued orders for the *Bezen* to quit its barracks in Rennes and join the retreat to the east. American forces had broken out of Normandy and were

advancing on the Breton capital. Along with the SD, the *Bezen Perrot* piled into trucks and fled, pausing to collect other nationalists who were likely to fare badly under Republican rule such as Fant Rozec 'Meavenn', the writer Roparz Hemon, and Marcel Guieysse.

If the *Bezen's* German uniform and its brutal anti-Resistance operations served to earn the antipathy of the majority of Bretons, its flight from Brittany alongside the retreating invaders sealed its image as a collaborationist force serving purely German interests. Many nationalists, including members of the *Bezen* itself, came to question the wisdom of this precipitate departure. Celtic militants schooled in the martyristic heroism of the Easter Rising, they asked how different the outcome might have been if, after the departure of the *Wehrmacht*, Breton militants had seized an important public building at Rennes, run up the *Gwenn-ha-Du* (the Breton flag), declared a Breton republic and defended it against all challenges.<sup>173</sup> Efforts to depict such a desperate gesture as a purely *German* stratagem—as French newspapers had portrayed the Easter Rising in 1916—might have encountered considerable difficulty. Mordrel—somewhat improbably—claims the Americans would have "looked twice" if faced with such a scenario.<sup>174</sup> While loyalists in the FFI may have reacted with increased fury, it is a matter of speculation as to what the reaction of Breton elements of the *Maquis* or FFL (Free French Forces) may have been.

Lainé's unstinting belief in German victory was perhaps the key reason why an uprising à *l'Irlandaise* was not attempted. What would be the value in sacrificing the best fighters of the movement in a heroic but futile gesture if the Germans were to hurl the Allies back with devastating 'miracle weapons' only a month or two later?<sup>175</sup> Having so firmly attached his fortunes to the Reich, the thought of German surrender was obviously beyond Lainé's imagining. His immersion in esoteric Celto-Nordic mysticism at this time could not have helped in his assessment of military or geopolitical realities, either.<sup>176</sup> So, in August 1944 just as in June 1940, the opportunity for nationalists to fill the brief power vacuum left by the collapse of public order in Brittany quickly evaporated without result. Now all that was left was flight toward the east, and a hope that one day Breton nationalists would return in the van of a reconquering German army.

In Paris, several chose to leave the unit, including staff intelligence officer Jean Chanteau 'Mabinog'. Louis Feutren, for one, disputes these as desertions:

Some came to Neven and told him, "We don't want to go to Germany." And Neven said, "OK, of course," because the bond was broken...<sup>177</sup>

Foix 'Eskob' however, says the "desertion" of Lainé's lieutenant hit the unit especially hard, and brought morale to new lows.<sup>178</sup> Three of those who absconded later decided to switch sides and join the FFI, and one—Joseph Le Berre, formerly 'Kernel' and later 'Stern' of the *Bezen*—perished attacking a German position during the liberation of the capital.<sup>179</sup>

At Troyes, 'Eskob', Yann Guyomarc'h 'Pipo'<sup>180</sup> and another man known as 'Bleiz' were alleged to have participated in the execution of 49 prisoners.<sup>181</sup> 'Eskob' maintains the arrival of the *Bezen* simply "coincided" with this German atrocity, and that his unit was "wrongly accused" of having taken part.<sup>182</sup> Whatever the truth of the matter, the *Bezen Perrot* was now associated with the worst kind of collaboration.

The unit headed further east, eventually passing into Germany. Here the idea of parachuting them back into Brittany to conduct sabotage operations was mooted.<sup>183</sup> Arriving at Tübingen, however, Feutren says he was surprised the Germans honoured their original agreement and did not pressure them to serve in any further capacity.<sup>184</sup> Lainé's involvement with his men was also becoming more distant. Pious Catholics in the unit—especially men from the Vannes region—resented his inner circle of "*celticards*",<sup>185</sup> and the fact that he ventured forth only occasionally to deliver motivational speeches on the glorious "impossibility" of the *Bezen's* mission or to compare his *gour* with the depictions of Celtic warriors in Tacitus.<sup>186</sup> There was, writes 'Eskob', a "*fin du monde*" aspect to these final days,<sup>187</sup> and Lainé (now employing his 'Breton name' of 'Neven Henaff') was increasingly turning in upon himself, even while exhorting others to maintain the struggle.<sup>188</sup>

Finally, some weeks after their anniversary celebrations (at which Lainé was promoted to the rank of *Untersturmführer* in the SS proper)<sup>189</sup> (Fig. 6), the *Bezen Perrot* was informed it would be broken into groups. *Gour* had the choice either to undertake sabotage or radio training for insertion back into Brittany, or enlist with the *Waffen-SS*.<sup>190</sup> Whatever their choice, the dream of an independent Breton military force in combat against France was at an end.

Rumours at this time were rife that separatists were conducting guerrilla campaigns against the forces of



Figure 6. SS-Untersturmführer Célestin Lainé, ID photo, early 1945. ("*Bezen Perrot* archives" [previously unpublished]).

Republican France in Brittany. In what might be termed a '*maquis blanc-et-noir*', these diehard '*Breiz Atao*' (as autonomists were known) were said to have joined German stragglers ('*maquis brun*') and assorted Vichyites and fascists ('*maquis blanc*'), and were operating with support from besieged German pockets at Lorient, St.-Nazaire and Brest, as well as airdrops from mysterious aeroplanes said to be sighted at night by nervous FFI sentries.<sup>191</sup>

While there were indeed instances of autonomist guerrillas operating after the Liberation, most units trained by the Germans for 'stay-behind' duties belonged to French fascist units like the *Milice* or PPF.<sup>192</sup> Members of the *Bezen* in Germany were ignorant of this fact. Whether much optimism as to the possible outcome of reinsertion operations was felt at this stage is debatable; it is equally possible some believed it was the most effective way to strike back at the eternal Jacobin foe, or afforded them the best chance of getting back to their families.

The *Bezen* now divided as instructed. Two groups went on to train in sabotage and radio operation, respectively. Another went to the *Waffen-SS*. A fourth was, according to 'Eskob's' account, supposedly to be a "Propaganda" unit,<sup>193</sup> but Feutren remarks this was a title they awarded themselves because they were unsuited to all other tasks and the staff section didn't know what to do with them<sup>194</sup> (Fig. 7). These latter remained at Tübingen as the others departed for missions around Germany. While travelling by train to one such posting, Pier Hirc'air 'Ivarc'h' was killed in an Allied strafing attack.<sup>195</sup> He was the *Bezen's* final combat fatality. He would not, however, be the last to die by hostile fire.

In April 1945, as the *Führer* prepared to commit suicide in his bunker at Berlin, the staff section of the *Bezen Perrot* retired to Marburg. Here Lainé had prepared a "little hideaway", according to Mordrel, arranged by Prof. Leo Weisgerber whose German Society of Celtic Studies was based in this university town on the Lahn.<sup>196</sup> It was Weisgerber's society, under the cover of conducting research for the *Ahnenerbe*,<sup>197</sup> which had allowed researchers like von Tevenar to establish links with subversive movements in Celtic countries on behalf of their secret paymasters in the *Abwehr*.



Figure 7. *SS-Oberscharführer* Louis Feutren, ID photo for his *Soldatenbuch*, c. early 1945. ("*Bezen Perrot* archives" [previously unpublished]).



Recognising now that the war was lost and that no miracle weapons would turn the tide of the Allied march across Europe, Lainé and his inner circle resolved to preserve the movement—and themselves at its head. Members of the *Bezen* were instructed, according to Hamon, to get back to Brittany and lie low in regions in which they were not well known, there to await further instructions.<sup>198</sup> Mordrel, however, contends that most of those who had not joined the *Waffen-SS* and were not in Lainé's clique were abandoned to their own devices.<sup>199</sup> Many of these spent the war's final weeks wandering between southern Germany and northern Italy, searching for some way to escape the wrath of the French armies fording the Rhine and their vengeful intelligence service, the *2e Bureau*.

Weisgerber sheltered Lainé and his associates in Marburg first as the town fell to the Americans, and then as the Reich finally surrendered early in May 1945. Soon they were joined by Friedrich Hielscher, recently released from a concentration camp, where he had been sent for his alleged involvement in the anti-Hitler 'July Plot' of 1944. Still a passionate defender of Breton culture and a close friend to both Lainé and Feutren,<sup>200</sup> he determined to assist his old contacts in their latest predicament. With Weisgerber's help, he provided the Bretons with a safehouse and obtained false documents, reportedly certified by the mayor of Marburg himself, that testified to their Resistance service. With these, Lainé and his associates were placed in neighbouring farms, "where they never had anything to fear".<sup>201</sup>

Whether these false documents testified to Resistance service in France, or identified them as liberated German political prisoners, is unclear. It is also possible that the documents declared their bearers to be STO workers newly released from labour service. This was an artifice used by many of the *gour* who found themselves left to their own devices in the Tübingen area, and who finally managed to track down Olier Mordrel at Innsbruck in the war's final days.<sup>202</sup> It was especially popular to claim to be a native of one of the German-occupied Breton ports, as these were the last areas of occupied Europe to fall to the Allies and French *gendarmes* could not easily discount such claims.<sup>203</sup> St.-Nazaire, the last such German bastion, was not surrendered until 11 May 1945—three days after the fighting ended at Berlin.<sup>204</sup> As for Tübingen, it would be, as luck would have it, in the French Zone of Occupation, meaning many *Bezen* veterans would find those early postwar months especially anxious. Many were of course captured in Germany or France. Léon Jasson 'Gouez' and André Geffroy 'Ferrand' were executed by French firing squad in July 1946 (Fig. 8). Many of those spared execution for "attacks upon

the integrity of the French state" would instead serve lengthy prison terms, such as the unapologetic Marcel Bibé 'Targaz', and a *gour* named Gervenou 'Docteur', whose death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. Many younger soldiers of the nationalist force—especially those who had enlisted late and deserted early—were acquitted, or were dealt with leniently owing to their youth. The older militants, many of whom had been members of the *Kadervenn* or even *Gwenn-ha-Du*, were almost entirely successful in avoiding French justice and escaping in the main to Ireland, where de Valera's government granted them discreet asylum. Some others, however, escaped to Spain, Argentina or Brazil, or managed to lie low in Germany or even France. Unlike many in the PNB, very few returned voluntarily to Brittany to face trial in the 1950s, and most remained in their countries of asylum. Even amnesties from the late 1950s to the 1960s failed to entice them back permanently.

The *Bezen Perrot* saw active service in Brittany only between early to mid-1944. It was, says Mordrel, "six months that weighed more heavily upon the destiny of the movement, and upon us all, than all of our [previous] twenty-five years of political engagement."<sup>205</sup> Despite mustering fewer than seventy effectives at its height, the unit's acceptance of an auxiliary anti-partisan role for the forces of foreign occupation condemned Breton nationalism to twenty years of political taboo. Conflating all autonomists with this force in German *Feldgrau*, Republican authorities were able to stigmatise even mild regionalism with the 'collabo' taint. Breton nationalists' difficulty, in Maynard's apposite phrase, became Paris's opportunity.<sup>206</sup> When in 1966 young Bretons of the *Front de Libération de la Bretagne* (Liberation Front of Brittany: FLB) again embraced symbolic violence in their efforts to win autonomy, their avowed models were the national liberation movement in Algeria, the nationalists of Québec, and the Marxist-inspired program of the IRA. Any continuity with the *Bezen Perrot* or even the wartime PNB,

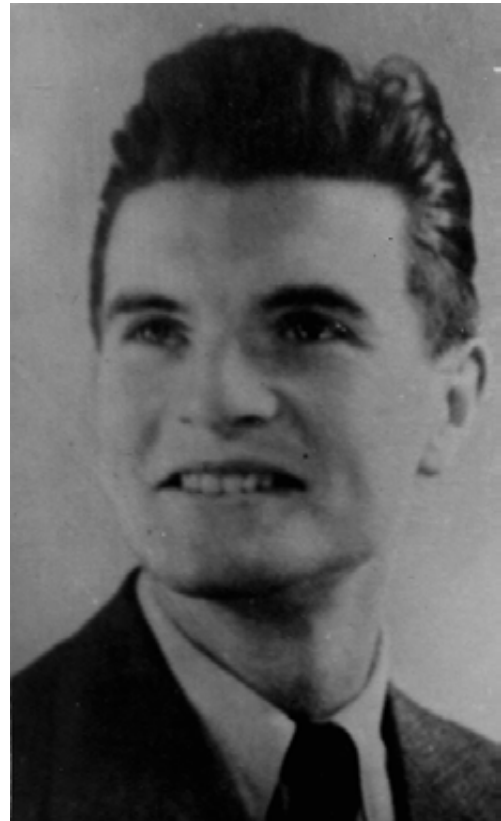


Figure 8. Léon Jasson 'Gouez', executed by French firing squad July 1946. ("*Bezen Perrot* archives").

however much alleged by the French press, was vigorously rejected.<sup>207</sup>

As for its exiled leaders, few retained an interest in the movement, let alone involvement in militancy. Alan Heusaff channelled his energies into constitutional activism on a pan-Celtic scale, becoming General Secretary of the Celtic League in 1961. Others led relatively uneventful lives in Irish business or education. Ange Péresse in Germany was the only *Bezen* veteran alleged by the French state to have had any involvement in FLB attacks.<sup>208</sup> The Irish-based spokesperson and 'letterbox' of the movement, who formed a *Comité nationale de la Bretagne libre* (National Committee of Free Brittany: CBL) at Bray in County Wicklow from 1967 on was in fact Yann Goulet—the former leader of the *Bagadoù Stourm* who had opposed the formation of the *Bezen Perrot*.

Also in Ireland, Lainé, now 'Neven Henaff', retreated further into Celtic mysticism—developing a Celtic 'Giam/Sam' spirituality leavened with Japanese yin/yang theory courtesy of an association with George Ohsawa.<sup>209</sup> He remained unapologetic about the *Bezen* and its conduct. It has even been suggested that he claimed to have deliberately led it on an "unforgettable"<sup>210</sup> course so as to more strikingly assert Breton rights to independent action. While some of the unit may have been motivated by such desperation, and by an ardent hatred of 'Jacobin' France, Lainé's own motivations in 1943 and 1944 appear to have been more firmly grounded in a very rational, if ultimately erroneous, assessment. This was simply that Germany would win the war and Breton nationalists would do well to curry favour with them. In that respect, it is worthy of note that, in private—his unrepentant attitude and belief that time would eventually vindicate him notwithstanding<sup>211</sup>—Lainé is said to have admitted to "serious political miscalculations" during the war.<sup>212</sup> Heusaff, too, is reported as commenting he and his comrades "backed the wrong horse".<sup>213</sup> Lainé was also, it is claimed, known to deny the Holocaust. "After a while, one avoided the subject with him," remarks the historian Peter Berresford Ellis.<sup>214</sup> It is perhaps for these reasons that the wartime actions of the *Bezen Perrot* continue to weigh heavily upon Breton nationalism. For that movement, as the Breton historian Christian Bougeard remarks, they remain "*le passé qui ne passe pas*"<sup>215</sup>—the past that does not pass.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> See Adrian Weale, *Renegades: Hitler's Englishmen*, (London: Warner Books, 1994), *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> "La plus petite armée du monde en guerre." Ronan Caerléon, *Le Rêve fou des soldats de Breiz Atao*, (Quimper: Nature et Bretagne, 1974), p. 100.

<sup>3</sup> Louis Feutren, *Bezen Perrot* veteran, letter to author, 3rd Jan. 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Estimations of the size of the *Bezen Perrot* vary. Louis Feutren, in an untitled and undated tract purportedly written in the late 1950s for *The Observer*, claimed the unit was "purposedly [*sic*] limited to 100 members" [document courtesy James McLeod]. The most reliable figure, however, is Kristian Hamon's: 67 militants as of January 1944, with perhaps slight fluctuations owing to desertion and later recruitment [*Le Bezen Perrot 1944: Des nationalistes bretons sous l'uniforme allemande*, (Fouesnant: Yoran Embanner, 2004), p.8]. Mordrel counts a maximum of 72, including the Lainé brothers [Olier Mordrel, *Breiz Atao, ou Histoire et Actualité du Nationalisme breton*, (Paris: Éditions Alain Moreau, 1973), p. 386.]

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Caerléon, *Rêve fou*, p. 171.

<sup>6</sup> A Breton term for 'man', used by members of the *Bezen* to describe themselves. See Hamon, *Bezen Perrot 1944*, p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> "La première formation bretonne armée, depuis la disparition de l'armée chouanne..." Fañch Debauvais' appeal to the *Bezen Perrot*, 1944, quoted in Caerléon, *Rêve fou*, p. 97. The *Chouans* were counter-revolutionary irregulars who opposed Republican rule in Upper Brittany and surrounding regions from 1792 to 1800.

<sup>8</sup> "Breton armed detachment of the SS 'Bezen Perrot'".

<sup>9</sup> The typed manuscript entitled *Biographie-Memoires* was provided courtesy of the son of a Breton exile who prefers to remain anonymous. It details Lainé's involvement in Breton nationalism from his earliest recollections to around 1931. See later citations for further details.

<sup>10</sup> 'Field grey', the standard colour of the German military uniform.

<sup>11</sup> The identification by name of all *Bezen* veterans remains incomplete in the literature, owing in part to the continued sensitivity of the topic in Brittany. This article connects names to *noms de guerre* in as complete a fashion possible through 'triangulation' of published and unpublished sources, including interviews.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Hamon, *Bezen Perrot 1944*, p. 169.

<sup>13</sup> "Nous sommes des militaires, et des militaires bretons... Nous avons donc toujours repoussé l'idée de nous engager dans les formations françaises". Quoted in Yann Fouéré, *La Bretagne Écartelée: essai pour servir à l'histoire de dix ans 1938-1948*, 2nd ed., (Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Latines, 1962), p. 114.

<sup>14</sup> A Breton company of the British-equipped Loyal Emigrant Regiment supported the *Chouans* from 1795 to 1799. René Chartrand, *Émigré & Foreign Troops in British Service (I) 1793-1802 (Men-At-Arms series #328)* (Botley, Oxford: Osprey, 1999), p. 45. Gilles Foix 'Eskob' of the *Bezen* reasoned that if

Georges Cadoudal's men donned British uniform in 1795, he was justified in donning German uniform in 1944. See his account in Caerléon, *Rêve fou*, p. 139.

<sup>15</sup> Neven Henaff (Célestin Lainé), *Biographie—Memoires* (unpublished manuscript, n.d., 65pp.), p. 32.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in Jack E. Reece, *The Bretons Against France: Ethnic Minority Nationalism in Twentieth-Century Brittany* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1977), p. 83.

<sup>17</sup> "Biography of Louis Napoleon Le Roux (1890-1944)", *Carn: A Link Between Celtic Nations*, (9) May 1975, p. 21.

<sup>18</sup> "*Dans cette guerre et pour la première fois depuis plusieurs siècles des Bretons Nationalistes se sont engagés en troupe militaire pour combattre la France dans les rangs de ses ennemis*". Quoted in Fouéré, *Écartelée*, p. 114.

<sup>19</sup> Henaff (Lainé), *Biographie*, p. 60.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 54, 60.

<sup>21</sup> From the historic Breton ducal motto *Kentoc'h Mervel Eget Bezañ Saotret*, or 'Sooner Death Than To Be Sullied'.

<sup>22</sup> See Kristian Hamon, *Les Nationalistes bretons sous l'Occupation*, (Ar Releg-Kerhuon: An Here, 2001), p. 153; Mordrel, *Breiz Atao*, p. 163, among many examples.

<sup>23</sup> Henaff (Lainé), *Biographie*, p. 64.

<sup>24</sup> Lainé and Berthou had formed the *Fédération des Étudiants bretons* (Federation of Breton Students) while studying at Rennes in the late 1920s. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>26</sup> "*J'ignore ce que devint Kentoc'h Mervel par la suite, sauf que jamais elle ne se dégagea des langes des belles paroles*." *Ibid.*, p. 64. *Gwenn-ha-Du* later banished Berthou from Brittany on pain of death for indiscreet chatter, informing police, and otherwise jeopardising clandestine militants. See Alain Déniel, *Le Mouvement breton de 1919 à 1945*, (Paris: François Maspero, 1976), p. 151.

<sup>27</sup> Quoted in Peter Berresford Ellis, *Re: Neven Henaff: Notes for Dan Leach*, unpublished Word document, e-mail correspondence with author, 22 September 2003, p. 3. Ellis worked with Lainé (*aka* Neven Henaff) on the committee of *The New Celt* in London in the late 1960s.

<sup>28</sup> Mordrel, *Breiz Atao*, p. 163.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Quoted in Ronan Caerléon, *Complots pour une république bretonne: les dossiers secrets de l'autonomisme breton*, (Paris: Éditions de la Table Ronde, 1967), pp. 83-4.

<sup>31</sup> Déniel, *Le Mouvement breton*, p. 150.

<sup>32</sup> Per Denez, interview with author, St.-Benoît-des-Ondes, Brittany, 2 Jun. 2005.

<sup>33</sup> *La Liberté* quoted in Déniel, *Le Mouvement breton*, p. 153.

<sup>34</sup> Hamon, *Nationalistes bretons*, p. 25.

<sup>35</sup> Mordrel himself declared his admiration for fascism in his journal *Stur* (Tiller), albeit adapted to Celtic sensitivities. It represented, he wrote in 1935, "youth, force and renewal". See Jean Bothorel, *Un terroriste breton*, (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 2001), p. 46.

<sup>36</sup> Quoted in Reece, *Bretons Against France*, p. 124. Debauvais did seek to deny any PNB responsibility for the actual attack, however.

<sup>37</sup> *Breiz Atao* quoted in Hamon, *Nationalistes bretons*, p. 26.

<sup>38</sup> Mordrel, *Breiz Atao*, p. 166.

<sup>39</sup> Hamon, *Bezen Perrot*, p. 28. Here Lainé established connections with both Flemish and Alsatian autonomists.

<sup>40</sup> Vannes had been targeted also, but the militant tasked with setting fire to the prefecture there broke down in his car on his journey from Rennes. See Mordrel, *Breiz Atao*, p. 201.

<sup>41</sup> Caerléon, *Complots*, p. 108.

<sup>42</sup> Mordrel, *Breiz Atao*, p. 167.

<sup>43</sup> "*Jeunes gens [...] N'attachez pas une importance exagérée aux théories qui font travailler les langues au détriment des bras*", quoted in *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Hamon, *Bezen Perrot*, p. 29.

<sup>45</sup> Roger Faligot, *La Harpe et l'Hermine*, (Rennes: Terre de Brume, 1994), p. 82.

<sup>46</sup> Quoted in Caerléon, *Rêve fou*, p. 55.

<sup>47</sup> *Kad*, combat; *ervenn*, in agriculture, a raised bank between two furrows, used for cultivation. (In French this is given as *sillon de combat*, or "furrow of combat". Among other examples see George Broderick, "The Breton Movement and the German occupation 1940-44; Alan Heusaff and the Bezen Perrot: A Case Study", PDF document available at *Klask online*, [http://www.uhb.fr/langues/klask/documentations/bezen\\_perrot.pdf](http://www.uhb.fr/langues/klask/documentations/bezen_perrot.pdf), p. 6. Accessed 13 Jun. 2005).

<sup>48</sup> Feutren, unpublished tract on *Bezen Perrot*. While never a member of the group, Per Denez contends *Kadervenn's* training regime was "funny" and "not really [...] for people who were going to fight", consisting only of marching and similar drill. (Interview, 2 Jun. 2005). Mordrel, on the other hand, claims the training included "guerilla tactics and bomb making" (*Breiz Atao*, p. 204).

<sup>49</sup> Mordrel, *Breiz Atao*, p. 204.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 205.

<sup>51</sup> Broderick conflates *Kadervenn* and the *Service Spécial*, and adds "The formula *Service Spécial* is found for various developments of Hénaff's paramilitary group from the mid-1930s to November 1943." ("The Breton Movement", p. 6 fn.) In reality, the *Service Spécial* was always a separate (albeit related) organisation to *Kadervenn* and its successors.

<sup>52</sup> Mordrel, *Breiz Atao*, p. 205.

<sup>53</sup> 90a full report, Oct. 1944, KV2/303, "Guy Vissault de Coëtlogon", National Archives (NA), Kew, England.

<sup>54</sup> MI5, "Report on *Abwehr* up to March 1942", Jun. 1942, KV3/7 NA.

<sup>55</sup> 90a. Oct. 1944, KV2/303, NA.

<sup>56</sup> Hamon, *Bezen Perrot*, p. 29.

<sup>57</sup> Alan Heusaff, "Neven Henaff, Activist and Druid" (obituary), *Carn—A Link Between Celtic Countries*, (45), Spring 1984, pp. 10-11; p. 11.

<sup>58</sup> Caerléon, *Complots*, p. 187.

<sup>59</sup> Hamon, *Nationalistes bretons*, p. 31.

<sup>60</sup> Philippe Aziz, *Le Livre Noir de la Trahison: Histoires de la Gestapo en France*, (Paris: Editions Ramsay, 1984), p. 206.

<sup>61</sup> Mordrel, *Breiz Atao*, p. 219.

<sup>62</sup> Per Denez was present at these proceedings at St.-Brieuc in May 1938. Refused the right to continue in Breton, Lainé thereafter steadfastly remained silent. (Per Denez, letter to author, 21 May 2004).

<sup>63</sup> Aziz, *Livre noir*, p. 206.

<sup>64</sup> In contrast to some claims that Helloco procured it specifically for the Locquirec landing, Louis Feutren, a former *Service Spécial* member and close associate of Lainé's, claims Helloco had previously used the vessel to travel to Ireland. (Interview with author, Ireland, 8 Jun. 2005).

<sup>65</sup> Aziz, *Livre noir*, p. 206.

<sup>66</sup> Yann Fouéré, *La Maison du Connemara: Histoire d'un Breton*, (Spézet: Coop Breizh, 1995), p. 53.

<sup>67</sup> Faligot, *La Harpe*, p. 86.

<sup>68</sup> Aziz, *Livre noir*, p. 204.

<sup>69</sup> For example: Mordrel claims Geffroy was told to await a shipment of arms from Ireland [*Breiz Atao*, p. 230]; Philippe Burrin claims the arms were delivered "through the intermediary of the IRA" [*Living with Defeat: France under the German Occupation, 1940-1944*. Translated by Janet Lloyd. (London: Arnold, 1995), pp. 50-1.]

<sup>70</sup> Aziz, *Livre noir*, p. 205.

<sup>71</sup> Caerléon, *Complots*, p. 188.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 194.

<sup>73</sup> Hamon, *Bezen Perrot*, p. 31.

<sup>74</sup> Feutren, unpublished tract on *Bezen Perrot*.

<sup>75</sup> Mordrel, *Breiz Atao*, p. 237.

<sup>76</sup> Feutren, interview, 8 Jun. 2005.

<sup>77</sup> Mordrel, *Breiz Atao*, p. 214.

<sup>78</sup> Georges Cadiou, *L'Hermine et la Croix Gammée: Le Mouvement Breton et la Collaboration*, (Paris: Mango Document, 2001), p. 46.

<sup>79</sup> This latter was the uncle of Count Claus von Stauffenberg, who would famously fail to assassinate Adolf Hitler with a bomb concealed in his briefcase at the 'Wolf's Lair' bunker in East Prussia in July 1944.

<sup>80</sup> Feutren, interview, 8 Jun. 2005.

<sup>81</sup> Hamon, *Nationalistes bretons*, p. 36.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37. Mordrel claims he, Debauvais and their families were still obliged to enter Germany under aliases, owing to the hostility towards *Die Bretonen* in the Reich's foreign service. See Mordrel, *Breiz Atao*, p. 246.

<sup>83</sup> Mordrel, *Breiz Atao*, p. 259.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 244.

<sup>85</sup> See William R. Beer, *The Unexpected Rebellion: Ethnic Activism in Contemporary France*, (New York: New York University Press, 1980), p. 11.

<sup>86</sup> Hamon, *Bezen Perrot 1944*, p. 31.

<sup>87</sup> Recounted in Ellis, *Re: Neven Henaff*, p. 4.

<sup>88</sup> Fouéré, *Écartelée*, p. 54. Jacqueline Sainclivier claims the CNB published two tracts at Pontivy that ignored these German restrictions and spoke openly of a "Breton state". See *La Bretagne dans la guerre 1939-1945*, (Rennes: Éditions Ouest-France, 1994), p. 81.

<sup>89</sup> Fouéré, *Écartelée*, p. 45.

<sup>90</sup> Hamon, *Nationalistes bretons*, p. 51.



<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154.

<sup>92</sup> Hamon, *Bezen Perrot 1944*, p. 36.

<sup>93</sup> Hamon, *Nationalistes bretons*, p. 154.

<sup>94</sup> Henaff (Lainé), *Biographie*, p. 47.

<sup>95</sup> Writing in *Stur*, July 1937. Quoted in S. & C. Gras, *La Révolte des régions d'Europe occidentale de 1916 à nos jours*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1982), p. 159.

<sup>96</sup> Mordrel, *Breiz Atao*, p. 278.

<sup>97</sup> The PNB issued a pamphlet in 1942 entitled *L'exemple de l'Irlande* (The Example of Ireland). See Eamon Ó Ciosáin, "La Bretagne et l'Irlande pendant l'entre-deux guerres (première partie)", *Dalc'homp Soñj!* 22 (Spring 1988), pp. 29-35; p. 29.

<sup>98</sup> Quoted in Hervé Le Boterf, *La Bretagne dans la Guerre*, Vol. II 1941, (Paris: Éditions France-Empire, 1970), pp. 82-3.

<sup>99</sup> Déniel, *Mouvement breton*, p. 427.

<sup>100</sup> Hervé Le Boterf, *La Bretagne sous le gouvernement de Vichy*, (Paris: Éditions France-Empire, 1982), p. 113.

<sup>101</sup> Lainé was proud of duping the Germans in this manner, according to Ellis [*Re: Neven Henaff*, p. 5]. Richard Doody, however, claims the Germans deliberately "looked the other way" at the "token" weapons handover. See "Brittany from the Great War to the Liberation", *The World At War*, <http://worldatwar.net/article/brittany/>; accessed 30 June 2003.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> "Henaff said his idea was to start a backlash in Brittany by the French which would rouse Bretons from the submissive position they had taken and start to fight back." Ellis, *Re: Neven Henaff*, p. 3.

<sup>104</sup> Hamon, *Bezen Perrot 1944*, p. 86.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>106</sup> Mordrel, *Breiz Atao*, p. 370.

<sup>107</sup> Bothorel, *Un terroriste breton*, p. 48.

<sup>108</sup> Mordrel, *Breiz Atao*, p. 365.

<sup>109</sup> Reece, *Bretons Against France*, p. 156. There was considerable tension between the Church hierarchy, who supported Vichy, and local parish priests who were more supportive of regionalism and nationalism.

<sup>110</sup> Mordrel, *Breiz Atao*, pp. 365-6.

<sup>111</sup> Hamon, *Nationalistes bretons*, p. 184.

<sup>112</sup> Mordrel, *Breiz Atao*, p. 367.

<sup>113</sup> Delaporte and Fouéré considered sending a Breton emissary to North Africa in the wake of the Allied landings of 'Operation Torch' in November 1942. See Caerléon, *Complots*, p. 288 plate.

<sup>114</sup> Baudot, *Libération*, p. 52.

<sup>115</sup> Mordrel, *Breiz Atao*, p. 377.

<sup>116</sup> Gilles Foix 'Eskob' of the *Bezen* quoted in Caerléon, *Rêve fou*, p. 147.

<sup>117</sup> See *Ibid.*, p. 202.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172.

<sup>119</sup> Hamon, *Nationalistes bretons*, p. 27.

<sup>120</sup> Aziz, *Livre noir*, p. 200.

<sup>121</sup> Feutren, interview.

<sup>122</sup> Bríd Heussaff (widow of Alan), interview with author, Spiddal, Co. Galway, Ireland, 19 June 2005.

<sup>123</sup> Hamon, *Bezen Perrot*, p. 69.

<sup>124</sup> Feutren, interview.

<sup>125</sup> Jean le Dû cited in Broderick, "The Breton Movement", p. 16.

<sup>126</sup> Son of a Breton exile (name withheld), interview with author, Ireland, 18 June 2005.

<sup>127</sup> Feutren (describing Alan Heussaff), interview.

<sup>128</sup> Peter Berresford Ellis, e-mail communication with author, 13th Sept. 2003.

<sup>129</sup> Broderick, "The Breton Movement", p. 6.

<sup>130</sup> Feutren, interview, 8 June 2005. The army of the duchy of Brittany was defeated by the French at St.-Aubin-du-Cormier in 1488. This was the highwater mark of Breton independence, beginning a process of incorporation into the kingdom of France that culminated in Franco-Breton union in 1532.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> Mordrel, *Breiz Atao*, p. 378.

<sup>133</sup> Feutren, interview, 8 June 2005. 'Cadoudal' of the *Bezen* likewise stated to his interrogators that the documents he signed specified he was enlisting only for operations in Brittany for the duration of the war.

(Hamon, *Bezen Perrot*, p. 81.)

<sup>134</sup> Cadiou, *L'Hermine*, p. 209.

<sup>135</sup> Maryon McDonald, *"We are not French!": Language, Culture and Identity in Brittany*, (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 134.

<sup>136</sup> Caerléon, *Complots*, p. 188.

<sup>137</sup> Hamon, *Bezen Perrot 1944*, p. 38.

<sup>138</sup> Hamon, *Nationalistes bretons*, p. 196.

<sup>139</sup> Hamon, *Bezen Perrot 1944*, p. 51.

<sup>140</sup> Yann Brekilien, *Histoire de la Bretagne*, (Paris: Éditions France-Empire, 1985), p. 338.

<sup>141</sup> Hamon, *Bezen Perrot*, p. 215.

<sup>142</sup> Mordrel, *Breiz Atao*, p. 367.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 370.

<sup>144</sup> 'Eskob' in Caerléon, *Rêve fou*, p. 137.

<sup>145</sup> Fouéré, *Écartelée*, p. 107.

<sup>146</sup> Mordrel, *Breiz Atao*, p. 385.

<sup>147</sup> "The interrogations of all the ex-members of the *Bezen Perrot* dwell too long (*s'appesantissent*) on detailed descriptions of their SS uniforms." Luc Capdevila, *Les Bretons au lendemain de l'Occupation: Imaginaire et comportement d'une sortie de guerre 1944-1945*, (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 1999), p. 363.

<sup>148</sup> According to 'Eskob', one *gour* known as 'Valentin' preferred to desert the unit "rather than wear *Feldgrau*". (Caerléon, *Rêve fou*, p. 139).

<sup>149</sup> Mordrel, *Breiz Atao*, p. 326.

<sup>150</sup> Hamon, *Bezen Perrot*, p. 37.

<sup>151</sup> Caerléon, *Rêve fou*, p. 77.

<sup>152</sup> Louis Feutren, letter to author, 7th Feb. 2006.

<sup>153</sup> Hamon, *Bezen Perrot*, p. 55.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>158</sup> 'Eskob' in Caerléon, *Rêve fou*, p. 145. Exiled Spanish Republicans played a major role in the French Resistance.

<sup>159</sup> Hamon, *Bezen Perrot*, pp. 115-6.

<sup>160</sup> Alan Heusaff's unpublished memoirs in *Ibid.*, p. 128. The memoirs appear in Hamon's work without authorisation, as these were to be published first in Breton according to the late author's wishes (Per Denez, interview, 2 June 2005; Louis Feutren, interview, 8 June 2005).

<sup>161</sup> Feutren, interview, 8 June 2005.

<sup>162</sup> Hamon, *Bezen Perrot*, p. 131.

<sup>163</sup> 'Eskob' in Caerléon, *Rêve fou*, p. 141.

<sup>164</sup> Hamon, *Bezen Perrot*, p. 134.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>167</sup> Not to be confused with André Geffroy 'Ferrand' of the *Bezen Perrot*.

<sup>168</sup> PF 600, 237/BIH 114a To Dublin, 24 Nov. 1944, KV2/303, NA.

<sup>169</sup> Aziz, *Livre noir*, p. 230.

<sup>170</sup> Fouéré, *Écartelée*, p. 105. These included placing branches of yew on the corpse, 'Celtic' goosestepping and the benediction of 'Celtic circles' rather than the sign of the cross.

<sup>171</sup> Mordrel, *Breiz Atao*, p. 373.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>173</sup> 'Eskob' in Caerléon, *Rêve fou*, p. 172.

<sup>174</sup> Mordrel, *Breiz Atao*, p. 384.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>176</sup> The *Bezen* leader had even managed at the height of the political chaos that was 1943 to have a study of the Gaulish calendar of Coligny published in the respected German *Zeitschrift für keltische Philologie*, under the name 'Lainé-Kerjean'. The article is appraised in Garrett Olmsted, *The Gaulish Calendar* (Bonn: Dr. Rudolf Habelt GmbH, 1992), pp. 44-7. While Lainé's construction of intercalary months is considered "comparatively accurate", certain other reasoning is "flawed".

<sup>177</sup> Feutren, interview, 8 June 2005.

<sup>178</sup> 'Eskob' in Caerléon, *Rêve fou*, p. 151.

<sup>179</sup> Hamon, *Bezen Perrot*, p. 154.

<sup>180</sup> Alternatively Guiomarc'h, Guiomard or Guyomard.

<sup>181</sup> Hamon, *Bezen Perrot*, p. 155.

<sup>182</sup> 'Eskob' in Caerléon, *Rêve fou*, p. 151.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160.

<sup>184</sup> Feutren, interview.

<sup>185</sup> Hamon, *Bezen Perrot*, p. 64.

<sup>186</sup> 'Eskob' in Caerléon, *Rêve fou*, pp. 227, 157.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228.

<sup>189</sup> Hamon, *Bezen Perrot*, p. 157.

<sup>190</sup> 'Eskob' in Caerléon, *Rêve fou*, p. 177.

<sup>191</sup> Capdevila, *Les Bretons*, p. 108; 'Eskob' in Caerléon, *Rêve fou*, p. 173 fn.

<sup>192</sup> Perry Biddiscombe, "The Last White Terror: The Maquis Blanc and Its Impact in Liberated France, 1944-1945," *Journal of Modern History*, 73 (4) December 2001: pp. 811-861; pp. 835, 815-7.

<sup>193</sup> 'Eskob' in Caerléon, *Rêve fou*, p. 177.

<sup>194</sup> Feutren, interview, 8 June 2005.

<sup>195</sup> Hamon confuses this *gour* with his cousin, Job Hirgair 'Skav' (*Bezen Perrot*, p. 164). He also wrongly identifies them as brothers.

<sup>196</sup> Mordrel, *Breiz Atao*, pp. 399-400.

<sup>197</sup> Both Hielscher and von Tevenar also worked for this organisation, Feutren claims (Interview, 8 June 2005).

<sup>198</sup> Hamon, *Bezen Perrot*, p. 159.

<sup>199</sup> Mordrel, *Breiz Atao*, p. 400. Even so, 'Eskob' still evinces great respect for 'Le Grand Druide' Lainé. See Caerléon, *Rêve fou*, pp. 227-8.

<sup>200</sup> Feutren, interview, 8 June 2005.

<sup>201</sup> Ange Péresse quoted in Mordrel, *Breiz Atao*, p. 400.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>203</sup> Hamon, *Bezen Perrot*, p. 161.

<sup>204</sup> Doody, "Brittany from the Great War".

<sup>205</sup> Mordrel, *Breiz Atao*, p. 375.

<sup>206</sup> David Maynard, *Ideology, Collective Action and Cultural Identity in the Breton Movement, Western France*, (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1992), p. 51.

<sup>207</sup> In the view of Jean Bothorel, an FLB militant in the 1960s, the "best gift" the old exiles could give Brittany would be to "retire from combat". See *Un terroriste breton*, p. 101.

<sup>208</sup> Lionel Henry and Annick Legadec, *FLB-ARB: L'histoire 1966-2005*, (Fouesnant: Yoran Embanner, 2006), pp. 238-9.

<sup>209</sup> Peter Berresford Ellis, e-mail to author, 15 Sept. 2003.

<sup>210</sup> Jakez Bernard quoted in Erwan Chartier and Alain Cabon, *Le dossier FLB: Plongée chez les clandestins bretons*, (Spézet: Coop Breizh, 2006), p. 111.

<sup>211</sup> "In time, one will see that I was right," Lainé assured Ronan Caerléon in Dublin in 1970 (*Rêve fou*, p. 52).

<sup>212</sup> Ellis, *Re: Neven Henaff*, p. 2.

<sup>213</sup> Quoted in Broderick, 'The Breton Movement', p. 17.

<sup>214</sup> Ellis, *Re: Neven Henaff*, p. 2.

<sup>215</sup> Quoted in Hamon, *Bezen Perrot*, p. 170.