

**NIGHT AND FOG PRISONERS  
OR  
LOST IN THE NIGHT AND FOG  
OR  
THE UNKNOWN PRISONERS**

**PETER D. HASSALL  
1562 Gordon Street  
Wallaceburg, Ontario  
Canada N8A 4Y9  
Tel: 519-627-7124  
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**Dedicated to Dennis Audrain, Maurice Gould  
and all victims of Hitler's criminal  
Night and Fog Decree.  
Go tell the Spartans, thou that passeth  
by, that here, obedient to their laws, we lie.  
Herodutus**

## - AUTHOR'S FOREWORD -

I began this book in January, 1946 - less than a year after being liberated from German concentration camps and prisons. I had returned home with two diaries: the first of which was started in April, 1944, in the Keltschkaustrasse prison, Breslau (now Wroclaw, Poland), then the capital of Silesia. In the first diary I wrote about events which had taken place between June, 1940, and April, 1944, and in the second I made entries of ongoing events, then using both diaries, I began my manuscript in 1946. I hand wrote over four hundred pages, but gave up, as I attempted to get on with my life, which was not an easy task.

There were many times that I, with a great deal of shame, looked at the dormant manuscript. Sometimes I felt compelled to finish it, but was unable to, as I did not want to re-open wounds, nor cause more grief to the families of Dennis Audrain and Maurice Gould. However, after I retired I felt compelled and somewhat pressured, to complete our story, and after several years of research and interviews I finally completed it, but not without a great deal of prodding from my former French deportee friends.

The first chapters of the book are not historical facts relating to the German occupation of Jersey, Channel Islands, as there are dozens of books on that subject - they are the memories, frustrations and aspirations of three young men coping with the outbreak of World War Two and the first twenty-two months of German occupation of their idyllic, Channel Island home.

The book is intended as a testimony to the short lives of two very courageous islanders: Dennis Audrain and Maurice Gould. It is also written, with deep respect and admiration, for the handful of islanders who, by resisting the Occupiers in any manner, dared to be different. It is also in memory of the thousands of French, Luxembourgers, Netherlanders, Belgians, and Norwegians Resistants, who suffered and perished in the Hell of Hitler's criminal Nacht und Nebel Erlass (Night and Fog (NN) Decree), without knowing why.

Many foreign language books have been written about Hitler's NN Decree, however, in the hundreds of English language books, in which the subject matter was Nazi concentration camps, I have not read an factual explanation or reason for the NN Decree, nor was there mention of the trials and executions of NN deportees, most of whom simply disappeared as a result of the Decree, which was promulgated on 7 December, 1941 - The handful of survivors are indeed fortunate!

In 1987, I made contact with a group of former French NN deportees, with whom I was imprisoned between May, 1942, and May, 1945. It was they who encouraged me to finish writing this book. It is written, but I still get news of them through our organization's newspaper, "Souvenir de la Déportation NN," and with each edition, I note, with sadness, that our numbers have steadily declined. Some of my former NN comrades had reminded me that it was time to get on with the

book, or else my testimony would also be lost forever. I would like to thank them, particularly those who insisted that it had to be written, "As the present would soon be the past." The President, of our organization, the late Colonel Roger Delachoue, suggested that I write about the good as well as the evil. I did what he suggested, and wrote about the "good" Germans whom we were privileged to meet.

I needed no more convincing to get on with the book, when Colonel Roger Delachoue reminded me that: "Heroes have a place in history and should not be forgotten." I had hedged to that point, but I then knew that I had a duty to write about Dennis and Maurice, despite the wounds this book might re-ignite.

Readers may wonder at the vagueness of our imprisonment, however, the book is purposely written that way, as we did not know, for the longest time, why we were so badly treated, nor what the Nazis intended to do with us, as we were unaware that we had been categorized as NNs, and it was not until two decades after the war that we learned all the facts pertaining to Hitler's Night and Fog Decree.

When I returned to Jersey after the war, I visited Dennis and Maurice's parents, and told them what had occurred, then respecting their grief, I spoke no more about it; not even to my family - I had my reasons, however, my silence has, possibly, been responsible for the many distorted versions of our escape and imprisonment - the most inaccurate of which was a letter, dated on or about 30 June, 1945, sent to a Jersey newspaper, and allegedly written by me. I was in no condition to write letters in June 1945, however, such inaccuracies still follow me in 1997. Perhaps, the most uninformed writer reasoned that our attempted escape was "irresponsible," as we had not considered what effect it would have on the local population. Another author wrote, "There were others, however, whose schoolboy enthusiasm simply got themselves, and their parents too, into trouble..." - We did not feel that our actions were irresponsible, indeed, we hoped that a successful escape might raise islanders' morale a little; just as Dennis Vibert's successful escape had done - again, I owe it to Dennis, Maurice, my Night and Fog companions and to myself, to set the record straight, after which, the news media and writers may be able to write with a greater degree of accuracy.

Peter D Hassall

Canada, 1997

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### **Jersey and some of its people**

The Channel Islands are situated about one hundred miles south of England and approximately fifteen miles from the west coast of Normandy, France. The Bailiwick of Jersey is made up of the island bearing that name and two reefs known as the Ecréhous and Minquiers. The second Bailiwick is comprised of the Island of Guernsey and the smaller islands of Alderney, Sark, Herm and Jethou. The most northerly island is Alderney, and Jersey is the southernmost. Alderney is the closest to France and England, however, Jersey is quite close, and on clear nights the headlights of French cars may be seen about fifteen miles away.

The Channel Islands were part of Normandy in 933 AD, and when William the Conqueror defeated the English at Hastings, in 1066, he continued to rule the Islands as the Duke of Normandy. After the Hundred Years War, when France regained her northern and southern possessions from the English, the Channel Islands remained loyal to the English crown, and this loyalty was rewarded by certain social and legal privileges, which were confirmed by all successive British monarchs. These unique privileges; the distance between the Channel Islands and England and the proximity between the Islands and France, have been the main influences on the Islands' history.

When William the Conqueror annexed England, he did not annex the Channel Islands to his new realm. They remained part of his Duchy of Normandy, and were never ceded to France. This may account for the fact that no native born islander ever admits to being anything other than a Jerseyman or a Guernseyman; moreover, there is a coveted distinction between the people of both islands.

The Islands are closely associated with the United Kingdom, but are not part of it, neither are they excluded from it. They may, perhaps, be described as British possessions, as they have never reached the status of independent nationhood within the Commonwealth, such as Australia and Canada.

On the Island of Jersey, for that is where this book begins, the old Norman-French of William the Conqueror survived in some areas past the Second World War, and French remained the Island's official language, being used in proclamations and legal notices. Today, the Islands are linked to the British Privy Council, both judicially and legislatively. Acts, passed by the United Kingdom's Parliament, are extended to the Islands by Order in Council, and Acts passed by both Channel Island Bailiwicks receive Royal assent through Order in Council.

When Normandy was lost to the French, after the Hundred Years War, the Islands remained distinct estates attached to the English Crown. They were too far away from mainland England to be given County status, and as things were very much Francophone on the islands, England allowed them to

retain their constitutions. The English government did not see fit to change the islands' status, because they appeared to be well governed.

When the final separation of France and England took place, two ancient institutions were firmly in place on both Islands. On Jersey there were twelve Parish Assemblies, where the menfolk of the parishes occasionally met to enact laws and set levies. These twelve, so called, Parish Assemblies functioned under the chairmanships of elected "Constables," under whom were several "Centiniers," each responsible for one hundred families in the Parish. Each Centiniere had several "Vingteniers" under him, and they were responsible for twenty families in each Parish - It was feudalistic and family oriented, but it seemed to have worked.

Presiding over the twelve Parish groups was a Warden, who would probably equate to today's Lieutenant-Governor, the British Monarch's representative. Under the Warden was a Bailiff, who acted as his Lieutenant, and answering to both the aforementioned officials were twelve, elected for life, Jurats, who served as local magistrates, even though, very often, they had little or no legal training. The twelve Jurats and the Bailiff usually held meetings in an establishment which became known as the Royal Court. It was there that criminals were tried, legal arguments and disputes settled and where the Bailiff acted as the Chief Magistrate.

In the 15th century, the Jurats often summoned the Parish Constables and the twelve Parish rectors to their meetings, and from these meetings emerged the States Assembly, which was in opposition to the Royal Court, but finally everything was merged into an States Assembly; commonly known as the the States (States), which was not reformed until early post World War Two.

Over the centuries, Jersey and her sister island, Guernsey, lived in constant fear of French invasions. This threat was the reason for the construction of many castles and Martello towers being built for defensive purposes. France did not give up its territorial claims on the Islands, and fought over Jersey, as late as 1781, when a Baron Rullecourt landed with 600 men and claimed Jersey in France's name. Although he captured Jersey's Governor, Rullecourt did not succeed in his mission. The British and French soldiers met, and fought a battle in the Jersey's Royal Square, where one can still see musket ball imprints in the wall of a well-known hotel. Baron Rullecourt was killed and his invaders were soundly beaten, and gave up their conquest - The British commander, Major Pierson was also killed in the same battle. He is still remembered with pride, and is eulogized in a well-known painting depicting his death.

When I was a boy, there were still disputes regarding the sovereignty of the Ecréhous and the Minquiers - the two small groups of uninhabited islands closer to France. This dispute was not settled until 1953, when the International Court of Justice in The Hague awarded Britain domain over them.

Jersey may affectionately be described as a pile of pink granite, approximately twelve miles long

and five miles wide. Its area is approximately forty-five square miles, and in 1939, its population was about 50,000; most of whom lived in the Town of St. Helier, the island's capital (in 1987 there are approximately 85,500 inhabitants on Jersey).

Jersey's north coast elevation points range from two hundred and fifty feet to four hundred and fifty feet, all sloping down to the south coast, where there is practically no elevation above sea level, and where retaining walls hold back the sea, which can be very high, particularly during full-moons. The seas around the Islands are highly unpredictable, although governed by prevalent west winds, and are carefully watched at the equinox, when the sea rises much higher than normal.

During my boyhood, the Gulf Stream influenced the Island's weather and brought to it an almost sub-tropical climate, in which palm trees flourished. There seemed to have been plenty of sunshine and enough rain to fill the reservoirs and irrigate farmers' crops. The sea also brought in brown, heavy seaweed, known locally as vrac (pronounced "rack"). It was collected from the beaches as the tide ebbed, and then spread over the fields, after which it was ploughed into the soil - a rich, priceless and welcome fertiliser.

Because of Jersey's ideal climatic conditions, fine beaches, haute cuisine, duty-free cigarettes and perfumes, Jersey was a favourite of British tourists. The island boasted dozens of fine hotels, holiday camps, pensions and boarding houses, and there was rarely a shortage of reasonable accommodation for tourists, who were the island's main industry. The influx of holiday makers, during the summer months, also brought in a flood of seasonal foreign hotel workers, many from Italy, France. The secondary industry was agriculture, and although the island was heavily urbanized, there were many small, efficient farms, some of which specialised in dairy herds, while others produced excellent tomatoes, potatoes and flowers.

As tourism and farming were Jersey and Guernsey's main industries, it is understandable that the weather played an important role in islander's lives. It seemed to me that the weather was always good to us in the summer, as we rarely had to stay in the house due to inclement weather, and, I suggest that the abundance of potatoes, tomatoes and freshly cut flowers clearly indicate that the weather was also good to the growers.

It was in this small Utopia that I was born on 22 November, 1926, and I must assume that on this date, many of my problems began, as according to my parents I was born on 20 November, 1926, on which date I celebrated my birthday for twenty-two years.

Years later I discovered that I was really born on 22 November, 1926, when I went to the Greffier's office for a certified copy of my birth certificate, as I needed to produce one for the military. When I asked the Registrar for a copy of the birth certificate for Peter Denis Hassall, born in the Paroisse de St. Clement on 20 November, 1926, the polite, diplomatic gentleman, without leaving the

beautifully polished counter of his bailiwick, suggested that I have a chat with my father before he issued the document, and at that point, I knew something was not quite legitimate!

After a heart-to-heart talk with my father, I learned that my true name was not Hassall, but a foreign, Italian sounding name - the consolation being that my birth certificate gave me a certain amount of legitimacy, as it showed a father's name. My Dad told me that he was, indeed, my biological father, however, certain Island laws had not permitted him to marry my mother; the main one being that she had been legally married to the Italian at the time of my brother's and my conceptions. My embarrassed father explained that there had been no divorce laws on the Island at the time he began co-habituating with my mother.

My father must have felt a considerable amount of guilt, as he gave me £13 and 13 shillings to have my name legally change to Hassall, thereby affirming the name I had used all my life. The Deed Poll, which, thank goodness, replaced my birth certificate, was a welcome document, as everything had been too confusing to make any sense.

After another talk with my biological father, whom I loved as my real father, the following facts were ascertained: on 23 December, 1904, my mother was born Emma Maria Elvina Le Normand, at St. Clair in the Island of Guernsey. My biological father, Edmund Hassall, was born on 19 February, 1895, in Stoke-on-Trent, England. He threw in, perhaps as another measure of consolation, that his ancestors were among the first Hassalls recorded in Cheshire, England, and it was said that these illustrious ancestors fought at the Battle of Agincourt - about three hundred and fifty years earlier.

My father was a coal miner who emigrated to Jersey from England, after having fought in the First World War of 1914-1918, and with one exception, the entire Hassall family preceded or followed him to Jersey. I was also told that my paternal grandparents, Ralph and Tamar, were buried in Almorah Cemetery, Jersey, however, I have no memory of them, but do remember my maternal grandparents quite well.

My earliest recollections of my father's profession was when he worked for Reg Wills, the photographer, in Halkett Place, St. Helier. He had met my mother somewhat earlier, possibly in 1925, but that is simply construed, and is based on my elder brother's age.

As I eventually perused my birth certificate, I read that that my mother's legal spouse, on 22 November, 1926, had been an Antonio C. The certificate indicated that he was a "Head Cook," but I suggest that this stretched the truth a little, as he was actually a waiter, being one of the hundreds of Europeans who annually flocked to Jersey for seasonal work. Antonio was an Italian by birth and, as I was told, was born in or close to Milan.

The marriage of Antonio and Emma was to have disastrous consequences for me, as my mother was compelled to take Antonio's Italian nationality, according to Jersey's marriage laws. Aggravating



this fact, was that Jersey had no divorce laws during the 1920s, such laws being enacted only after the Second World War.

My mother was a slim, and it is said, beautiful woman who made heads turn. My father was a tall, dark, good looking man, and biologically and emotionally, it is now understandable that they were immediately attracted to each other. They met when my father was taking a group photograph of guests at a Jersey hotel, in which my mother was employed as a cook. It was standard practice, in those days, for hotel guests to assemble on front lawns and forecourts, where they were herded together and asked to "Smile and say Cheese!" as they stared into the camera's lens, at which time, a fuse ignited an ounce or more of magnesium powder, which resulted in a large flash, followed by a cloud of black smoke, not unlike the blast of today's atomic bombs. The end product was a black and white, or sepia photograph showing a group of open-mouth, squinting hotel guests, who usually purchased a print as a keepsake of their vacation in Sunny Jersey.

My first memories of life began when we lived at 13 Ann Street, at which time, a young lady, Beryl Jordan, took my brother and me by the hands, then dragged us, kicking and fighting, along St. Saviour's Road to a small private school known as Hawthorn School. I was but four years old, and this intrusion into my life occurred in January, 1930 - the start of the school term. It was also my brother's first day at school, but he was "one year and eleven days" older than I - as we were always told by my parents.

There were two school systems in Jersey: one was the States' elementary schools, where one remained until fourteen, or fifteen years of age, and where academically inclined children could acquire scholarships, then go on to a higher education, usually to Victoria College, a sterling private school. Private schools comprised the Island's other educational system, and whereas the elementary schools were co-educational, the private schools were gender segregated. Continued education, in private schools, could lead to university educations in England, and gifted students, usually went to the United Kingdom to pursue their chosen vocations.

Hawthorn Preparatory School was co-educational, and was located in a private home near the Continental Hotel. It had only two classrooms: one for juniors and the other for seniors. The gracious and talented Headmistress, Madame Berthe, taught one class and the other was taught by Miss Carver. They were assisted by senior students, among whom I fondly remember the sisters Betty and Peggy de Gruchy, who demonstrated a great degree of patience towards the somewhat upset newcomers. Hawthorn school closely bonded its students, and I still remember, with fondness, almost all of those who attended at the same time as we did.

The playground, to the rear of the school, was quite small, being about forty by forty feet, and composed of hard packed gravel, which often caused skinned knee-caps. In its centre stood a large maple tree, around which we learned to dance and sing "Ring around the Rosies" and play

"dropping- the-handkerchief."

Although I was very happy there, I was unkind to the music teacher, Mr. Watson-Allen, when I placed a thumb-tack on his revolving, leather piano stool. As he sat on the object, he showed no sign of pain, however, when he stood up, he gave me a long accusatory glare - no words were necessary!

One day a week, we all trooped through the town to the gym on Mount Bingham, where we were instructed by Mr. Reg Nicolle, a talented physical education teacher.

In 1937, because of the depression, my father lost his job with Reg Wills, and we were forced to move out of 44 Roseville Street into a States' house at 12 Beach Crescent. It was an emotional let down, as we were compelled to attend St. Luke's School. My father had begun working for the States as a labourer, earning at sixpence an hour, and as this did not keep the wolf from the door, he decided to become an independent businessman. Accordingly, after every evening meal, he walked to Troopers Yard in Halkett Street, where he built his own film processing workshop.

Troopers Yard was so called, because that is exactly what it used to be: a series of stables, with overhead storage rooms, built around a cobble-stone yard in which the horses' water trough and hand pump still stood. It was in one of these old stables that my father built his film processing workshop, with help from no one.

Fortunately, he was a talented journeyman, being able to turn his hand to most facets of the building trade. His Troopers' Yard workshop was not fancy, however, it was functional. It had no store front, as it was simply a photo-processing unit with no frills attached. My father's eventual staff of three came from a family whose Island ties dated back several centuries. They all remained very loyal to him over the years, and worked diligently, until he went out of business in 1948.

In order to make a success of the business, my father went to almost every hotel on the Island, and for certain commissions, he was allowed to install slotted boxes in hotel lobbies. The guests then dropped their exposed films in these boxes, and the finished products were returned the following day, and paid for at the hotel's reception desk.

My father also sent a cameraman to take photographs of tourists as they relaxed on the beaches, or walked up and down Snow Hill in St. Helier. The targeted tourists were handed a numbered ticket, with which they were able to purchase or reject a strip of three black-and-white photographs from several sub-depots around the Town of St. Helier - the percentage of buyers being about one in eight. Even at a young age, I considered this to be a tourist annoyance, as often there were five or six photographers lined up across Snow Hill, all vying to shove one of their tickets in a tourist's hand. It was no wonder that some of the recipients were less than polite!

As my father's business flourished, we moved to better rental accommodation. From Beach Crescent, which were States' run houses, we moved to a large guest-house, known as "Clovelly," at

76 St. Mark's Road. There, we took in boarders, and in order to cope with their needs, my parents hired a series of cook-housekeepers; most of whom did not stay too long. When we moved into Clovelly, my brother and I were enrolled in De la Salle College, a private, Catholic boy's college on Wellington Road, St. Helier.

The school was nicknamed the "Beeches," as Wellington Road was bordered by dozens of magnificent beech trees. It was not surprising that the students from other schools called us "Beech Nuts." The most vocal being those from the adjacent Victoria College, Jersey's magnificent seat of learning, which turned out many well-known scholars, local politicians and military officers. Our little peaked caps were blue and white and our school badge was a star, but there was no mistaking the boys from the Beeches with those from Victoria College, whose school caps and ties were shades of brown.

De la Salle College was directed by the Order of Saint John Baptist de la Salle. I remember, with a great deal of fondness, its Headmaster, the Reverend Brother Edward and with equal fondness Brothers Peter, Adrian, Marcel and Charles. The brothers were supported by two able lay teachers: Messrs Timothy O'Regan and André Labbé, whose father ran a French meat shop in the French lanes. The housekeeper was Madame Durand, whose husband was the athletic coach and all-round assistant to anyone in need of help, or a shoulder to cry on.

There was a small cottage on the lower school grounds in which the gardener and his wife lived, and nearby was a small stone barn, which was well stocked with barrels of wine and fine Normandy and local ciders, which were consumed, in moderate measurements, by the brothers during their evening meal.

The Beeches was home to a limited number of boarders, who profited from additional education and well-supplied tables. On the school grounds was a large fruit and vegetable garden, and in one corner of the grounds the brothers kept pigs and chickens for their consumption. There was no doubt that the school was self-sufficient in vegetables and fruit during the growing seasons.

It was a wonderful seat of learning, where every boy was apprised of his academic standing on a weekly basis, when "testimonials" were handed out. These documents were about six by five inches, and came in three colours. A "Pink" was handed out when a student achieved above 75% in weekly academic grades. The Pink was designated "excellent," and when a student amassed one hundred of them, he was given a small monetary token, and a round of applause from his assembled peers.

The "Blue" testimonial was for a "Good" effort. One needed to achieve between 55 and 75% to get a Blue. Then there was the "White," which was a failing grade. It was a shameful experience to be issued with a White, as all testimonials were handed out weekly in the classrooms, where all eyes were on the boys with low marks, who were compelled to wait until the end to receive their

Whites. It was a degrading exercise, but probably prompted boys to arise from the depths of Blues and Whites.

A White was also given for disciplinary infractions. I received only one White for having put to death a master's favourite palm tree, which he had cultivated with a great deal of loving care. It was put to death by a stream of well-aimed urine over a period of time. This pervert and his equally perverted friends, got their jollies, as they watched the teacher dig and sniff around his decaying tree during the noon hour break.

Not long after the last leaf of the said tree turned brown, and had fallen to the ground, I was summoned to Brother Edward's study, where he told me that someone had named me as the tree's assassin. I admitted my guilt, because I knew that my father-confessor would snitch on me after Friday's confession, when he generally ate with the brothers. I took the entire blame, and for my efforts I received six cuts across the backside with a bamboo cane, as well as the White testimonial. Fortunately, I rarely received anything but Pinks, but the weekly award periods were painful, particularly when one noted only three or four Pinks left in the pile, and one's name had not been called. They were tense times, but I do think that the testimonials made us apply ourselves, as no one wanted to be in the Blue and White piles.

The problems associated with my White were not confined to Brother Edward's study, as my father always asked to see our testimonials. When he saw my White, I became the recipient of his patented lecture, during which, like a snivelling coward, I told him that I had only played a minor part in the tree's assassination, but for some reason he asked for, and received an interview with Brother Edward. This resulted in further remedial action and curtailment of several enjoyable functions, when my father learned that I was the avowed chief architect. Broth Edward often told me that I was an excellent student, but only when I put my mind to it. I agree with his assessment, because when I knuckled down I usually achieved good marks.

The Beeches offered a limited curriculum; concentrating mainly on the three Rs. I enjoyed my schooling, and did very well in: History, Geography, English, Literature, French, Religious Education and athletics. I had a photographic memory for subjects in which I was interested and enjoyed; but some, such as algebra and geometry, went in one ear and out the other, although I always managed passing grades. In 1940, I was awarded the Religious Education Trophy, which raised some eyebrows, but I was able to assure my fellow students that I had studied very hard for that trophy.

I enjoyed long-distance and cross-country running, and wherever I went, I always ran. I cannot remember walking anywhere, and I had great difficulty trying to confine myself to walking with other people, as I always had the urge to run. As a Junior, at the Beeches, I won all the Senior and Junior long distance running trophies for two consecutive years. My finest hour was during the

Senior long distance road race in 1939. I was thirteen and the race was supposed to be a walk-over for George l'Oiselle, an eighteen-year old student from France. For the first mile I ran at George's shoulder, then I increased my pace to test his response. By the fourth mile I looked over my shoulder and saw that he was a dozen or so paces behind. I also noted that he was holding his head to one side and was breathing irregularly. Consequently, I increased my pace, and by the fifth mile George was nowhere to be seen.

When I rounded the final corner at the top of Wellington Road, one of the spectators yelled that the closest runner was more than five hundred yards behind. With adrenaline pumping, I began the final spurt down Wellington road. I saw the red gates of the school, in front of which many dignitaries and students stood. They were cheering and applauding, but much to their surprise, after I broke the tape, I kept running, as the rear end of my gym shorts had split, exposing both flanks. I later returned to receive my laurels, but the best reward was the smile on my brother's face. The odds had not been on a thirteen-year old Junior to beat the eighteen-year old Senior.

Jersey was a wonderful place to grow up in. Its topography was conducive to many kinds of recreational activities, such as: rock-climbing, swimming, bicycling, walking or just lazing around in the sun. Some youngsters gathered in harmless "gangs" for their enjoyment. I remember, with a great degree of fondness the: Victoria College Gang, the Beeches Gang, the Havre-des-Pas Gang, the Pier Road Gang and one or two others. Most of the "gang" activities took place in summer on sandy beaches, or over the large granite structure of Fort Henry, which overlooked the Town of St. Helier and the Table Rock, the latter being the headquarters of the very fierce, warrior-like Pier Road Gang.

Our "skirmishes" usually consisted of throwing freshly dug clay at one another, or trying to "capture" a member or two of the enemy. If caught, you were out of the game and became a prisoner of war, which meant that one could not play until the next battle.

When we needed a break, we went to the slip (boat launching ramp) at Havre-des-Pas, where Mr. "Jock" Andrews operated his brightly coloured ice cream cart, which he wheeled into position every day, and I assume that he took it home of an evening. His home-made ice cream was very tasty and inexpensive: a cone costing one penny and a wafer two. Mr Andrews was always smiling, and had a kind word for everyone. If he noted that we had not bought an ice cream for sometime, he gave us one, but reminded us to pay when we got our allowances. He was a pleasant, well-known fixture at the Havre-des-Pas slip for many years, and his ice cream was tastier than that sold by the Eldorado Man, who cycled around town ringing his bell to attract customers.

When the talented Negro actor, Mr. Paul Robson, played the role of Bosambo in the film, "Sanders of the River," our Havre-des-Pas gang became African warriors; leaping and prancing about with wooden, decorated shields made from orange crates and spears from bamboo canes. Some tourists

were quite alarmed when they saw the two-way chases taking place along the peaceful La Colette walkway, or as they rested on the benches enjoying the sunshine.

Then there were the looks of anguish from the gentlemen, who sunbathed in the buff, on a rock formation known as the Low Cement, when two opposing gangs chased each other over their hallowed ground. We enjoyed the action when towels were scooped up to cover their nudity, as hordes of Masai Morans or Zulu Impis thundered over their precious rocks, screaming bloody murder - It was just not cricket to have to "cover up" and be denied one's sunshine, even for the shortest period of time!

During the summer school break, most of my time was spent sunbathing, swimming and dancing at the Jersey Swimming Club (JSC) at Havre-des-Pas, a small cove on the south side of the island. The swimming club comprised an open, horseshoe shaped concrete pool, which filled when the sea rose, and remained full when the tide ebbed. Its reason for being was that the sea ebbed about a half mile or so in that area, and that was quite a distance to walk for a swim, besides which, a swimmer had to walk another distance in order to be in enough depth to swim. It was also healthier to swim in the pool, as there was the problem of raw sewage, which poured into the pristine sea from the nearby Dicq Sewer, just a few hundred yards away. Built on the west side of the pool was a casino like structure, which contained: sun-bathing areas, shops, games areas and change-rooms, and when all the deck chairs were stacked away, the upper area became a large, cement dance floor, which was well frequented on weekends, when a band was in attendance.

In 1939, my father leased a modern photographic business from Mrs. Larbalastier at Charing Cross, St. Helier, and as things improved financially, we moved into a large, rented house, known as Winchester House on Winchester Street, St. Helier. The House was rectangular in shape with a nice flat roof, on which we sunbathed, as long as the pitch did not overheat and stick to our backs.

Winchester House had two large bedrooms and a small storage room on the third floor. On the second floor was a bedroom, a large games-room and a bathroom. The ground floor contained the dining room, kitchen, living room and sitting room. All of this built over the deepest, darkest basement I have ever seen, and into which I seldom ventured.

The garden was quite large, and many apple and pear trees grew there, and on the north wall was greenhouse in which very tasty grapes grew. The garden was looked after by a part-time gardener, as my father had no time to cultivate it, as he was too pre-occupied with his business.

Attached to Winchester House was a small cottage with two bedrooms, a bathroom and a kitchen-dining which connected it to Winchester House. This cottage became the domain of my widowed, maternal grandmother, Madame Louse Marie Desirée Le Norman, born Le Bredonchelle in the Village of Lessay, Normandy, France. I have no idea of her age, but we sometimes teased her by suggesting that she had been part of the Norman conquest of 1066.

Gran, as we called her, had only attended school for three or four years, but she spoke English, French, Norman French and the local Jersey patois quite fluently. My mother was her youngest child, and I believe that there were at least eight uncles and aunts scattered about the islands and France. For many years Gran rented a marble table in the local fish market, which was established in 1841. She also pushed a heavy cart, full of fish and ice, through St. Helier's streets. Everyone knew when she was in their area, as she rang a hand-bell and yelled, "Fish! Fresh Fish!" Her products were always fresh, arriving daily on the mail-boat, or having been purchased from local fish brokers. Although Gran could not read, she understood figures, and knew of she had been short changed the odd pound or two of fish.

While on the subject of Gran's fish cart, there were two very snotty young men, who used to look the other way when their grandmother rang her bell in order to attract their attention - not for us to be identified with a fish monger. The sound of the bell and her calling our names, prompted us to turn into the nearest off-road, or to run in the opposite direction. What priceless twits!

Soon after we moved into Winchester House, war clouds loomed on the horizon. My mother was doing what she did best: which was looking after the cash register at the shop, while I was still at school. Gran was looking after everything else, including the dog, a black Chow, which had been a present from one of my mother's admirers. In those days the entire family sat down, of an evening, to tasty meals which Gran prepared. My favourite dish was Gran's conger eel soup, made from her "secret recipe" of milk, butter, cream, carrots and potatoes, but flavoured with marigold leaves and sorrel. Then there were her lamb roasts, which only she seemed to be able to bake to perfection. In fact, Gran did everything well, and despite my youthful shortcomings, I loved her dearly and still miss her very much. I wish that I had taken time to tell her how much I appreciated her and loved her.

I never heard Gran complain, and she never had a bad word for anyone. She was a strong-willed, resilient lady, and a demonstration of this occurred in 1941, when she fell down the stairs at Winchester House and broke her arm. She put on her coat, held her arm in place and walked the distance from Winchester House to Charing Cross to tell up about her accident. She was quickly bundled off to hospital, but her broken arm did not slow her down, as dinner was on the table when we arrived home.

### **War clouds loom**

As the British Prime Minister, Mr. Neville Chamberlain, shuttled to and from Germany in his futile quest for peace in September, 1938, it was small wonder that conversations, during our evening meals, centred around the possibilities of peace or war. My mother's main concern was the effect on the family business, however, my father was more pragmatic; being of the opinion that neither Britain nor France were ready for war, and should keep out of it until such times as they were. These table conversations usually bored my mother, who changed the subject, or went into the kitchen and did other things.

My father had never spoken to us about the First World War, but during the last days of peace in the summer of 1939, he told us about the terrible conditions in the trenches in France, where, he said, circumstances were so bad that many soldiers simply disappeared beneath the mud, or had to be rescued from drowning in it.

My father had served in the Royal Engineers during the 1914-1918 war, and was possibly sent to the Royal Engineers because he was a coal miner. I was not entirely ignorant of some of the effects of war, as my father had been gassed while tunnelling under some German trenches during one of the battles of the Somme. He told me that he and other Engineers, had been digging towards the German trenches, when their shovel noises were detected by the enemy. To counter the British tunnel, the Germans dug from the opposite direction, and when they drew level with their British counterparts, they exploded a land mine; resulting in the British tunnel's collapse. The Germans then pumped poison gas into the British tunnel, and caused more casualties.

Some of the Royal Engineers working in the tunnel were killed by the explosion, while others, who managed to reach the surface, were badly gassed. Dad was not too badly gassed, but its effects remained with him for the rest of his life. He was occasionally seized with terrible bouts of coughing as got out of bed. The coughing bouts were, at times, very severe, and brought him almost to the point of choking. There were other times when I heard him coughing at night, however, all his coughing bouts were assisted by his heavy smoking habit.

Dad was a chain-smoker, puffing his way through three and four packets of cigarettes daily, however, at several pence a package, it was not an expensive habit, at least, that was the excuse he often used - like all other smokers, he never considered nicotine to be a health hazard - It was trendy, and most Jersey men smoked, particularly those who frequented pubs.

During the First World War, my father also lost part of the first joint of his right index finger and had a small shrapnel wound in one of his legs. For these injuries he had been awarded a small disability pension, which he collected weekly from the General Post Office. Every year he received



a cheque book containing fifty-two pre-dated pension cheques. He had to sign each one, then hand it to a counter clerk in the Post Office, who gave him his weekly ten shillings. Dear Dad almost always went from the Post Office to the pub across the road, where he downed the odd pint or two of mild and bitter in "memory of fallen comrades."

During the 1930s my father subscribed to a monthly magazine, "War Illustrated." It contained: photographs of enemy and allied war materiel, prisoners of war being brought in, trench warfare, shells exploding, gas clouds and the usual carnage of dead soldiers, fallen in the "service" of their nations. Although I was not encouraged to read the magazines, I did, quickly flipping over the pages on which there were photos of mangled, decaying corpses.

My brother and I also received several schoolboy magazines every week. They were: Rover, Hotspur, Wizard, Adventure and Skipper, and contained short, illustrated stories, many about British heroes; similar to characters in American comic books. The magazines also had numerous stories about the First World War, and many had a definite German bias, portraying the British as "good guys" and the Germans as the "bad." I could not wait to get my weekly magazines in order to find out what happened to the "Lost Patrol, a small group of British soldiers, who hid out behind German lines during daylight, to emerge at night and carry out heroic deeds, by wiping out entire German battalions. Understandably, they became my heroes!

This type of reading material was, I am sure, somewhat responsible for my anti-German sentiments, but in this, I was not alone, as many of my school friends thought the same way. My father and his drinking buddies usually referred to Germans as: Krauts, Boche, Huns or Jerries, and we aped their warrior-like vocabulary.

My father also subscribed to a magazine called, "War in the Air." As an accomplished artist, he had painted several scenes of World War One air battles, which had appeared on the front cover of the same magazine. He stored his magazines in a tea chest, which I would sometimes open to admire the air battle scenes involving German, French and British bi-planes; machine guns blazing at each other, and, of course, the odd German plane or two plunging earthwards, trailing clouds of smoke and debris. With this type of reading material, it was little wonder that I grew up disliking Germans. It was, for me, somewhat difficult to understand that the First World War had hardly ended, and we were again faced with another one. We had been told that the last war was the "war to end all wars," and asked what it took to keep the Hun behind his borders and stop screaming for "Lebensraum" (living space).

British radio and newspapers had been full of Prime Minister, Mr. Neville Chamberlain's, utterances of "Peace in our times." We had watched the Pathé Gazette News in 1938, when it had featured Mr. Chamberlain stepping off a Royal Air Force plane, waving around a sheet of paper or two, which he and the "Very nice Mr. Hitler" had signed in Munich, Germany. The British Prime Minister had

gone as far as to suggest that Mr. Hitler was a reasonable and forthright fellow; having asked for very little in his latest territorial claims. He also said that Mr. Hitler had listened to his personal views on peace, and had agreed with them. Mr. Chamberlain added that Hitler had suggested that the English and Germans were close cousins, and, therefore, had no need to go to war with each other - In the meantime, Germany had occupied Austria and in October, 1938, the Sudetenland. This craving for "Lebensraum" and the protection of all Aryans was followed by the Occupation of Prague in March, 1939, immediately followed by the seizure of Memel.

The Italian Duce Mussolini then got into the act and occupied little Albania in April, 1939, followed by the signing of the German-Italian alliance in May, 1939. In August, behind the world's back, Hitler concluded a non-aggression pact with the USSR, then prepared to invade and divide up Poland. On the 1 September, 1939, the Germans struck across the Polish border, while the USSR occupied the western half of Poland - It was obvious that the Allies had to do something.

When my father listened to the BBC news, he made numerous scathing comments, such as: "Never trust a bloody Hun!" and "Don't turn your back on Fritz!" I was certain that he knew better than Mr. Chamberlain, or he would not have made such utterances. I perceived my father as an authority on war; after all, had he not fought in one? I had no idea if the Prime Minister had been a soldier, but even if he had, I still felt that my father knew better. As it turned out, the Munich Agreement was not worth the paper it was printed on, but I had already learned its value in advance from a great authority - my father. I had no need to heed politicians, as we had a war analyst in the family. Despite the fact that Mr. Neville Chamberlain and his Government were forced into declaring war against Germany on 3 September, 1939, it did not impact immediately on most Channel Islanders. Life went on as usual, school was still a requirement and tourists continued to enjoy themselves in the Island's places of entertainment. As far as I saw, nothing changed. The two mail boats arrived daily from Southampton and Weymouth, their decks lined with holiday makers, patiently and impatiently waiting to be bussed to their hotels, where, no doubt, some of them would be subjected to my father's magnesium flash.

Most of my school friends were confident that we would beat Jerry's pants off, "After all we had done it before. Hadn't we?" Some of us, at the Beeches, were angry when we learned that the local police had taken our Brother Charles (Karl) to an internment camp, being quite annoyed that our tuition had been interfered with. However, that sentiment did not last long, as we concluded that Christian brother or not, he was still a German, and the law had to be upheld. Which law, we could not say, but there had to be one to cover such eventualities, or they would not have taken Brother Charles away.

We all had great confidence in the impregnable, French-built Maginot Line, which extended along the Franco-German borders, but not along the Franco-Belgian borders. We read that the Maginot

Line had not been extended to the Channel coast, because King Leopold of Belgium had told the French that it would be an "unfriendly act," and the French, being diplomats, had respected the Belgian King's observation, albeit that northern France had no deterrent, apart from some ill-trained troops. Our history teacher, Brother Adrian, suggested that France had done the honourable thing by not extending the Maginot Line, but then, he was Belgian.

Jersey's two daily newspapers were full of photographs of smiling French soldiers standing in front of large banners, which read: "Ils ne passeront pas!" (They will not pass!) and "Je me souviens!" (I remember) The first slogan was attributed to Marshall Henri Philippe Pétain, the hero of Verdun in 1916. The second slogan was a reference to the German occupation of northern France in World War One, where, it is alleged, many atrocities were committed by the German occupiers.

Nothing changed! We still bicycled, walked or ran up the steep Wellington Road on our way to school. After school and on weekends, matters, other than war, took precedence. The war had become a boring subject, as it was in a stagnant phase, besides which, it was too distant for us to heed, and we did not let it interfere with our idyllic insular life. As far as we were concerned, the war could have been on another planet. It certainly wasn't on Jersey!

Our world was insulated by the ignorance and arrogance of youth. Nothing mattered! We were impregnable! We were shielded the largest army in the world, the French, as well as the large British and French fleets. What else was needed to take care of Adolf Hitler and his gang? Besides which, now that the British Expeditionary Force was in France, what chance did Jerry have? It was understandable that Jerry skulked behind his Siegfried Line. We even sang that we would soon be hanging out our washing on the Siegfried Line. We also learned new songs from a war-time wave of new singers, who kept the airwaves alive, and the troops' morale high with such songs as, "The White Cliffs of Dover and Run Rabbit Run!"

Several of my relatives, including my father's youngest brother, had joined the Armed Forces, or were waiting for travelling instructions to report to military training facilities. Conscription was unnecessary, as Channel Islanders had always flocked to the flag in large numbers whenever Britain was threatened, and again they left the islands in droves.

Victoria College turned out Officer Cadets in record number, and uniformed islanders were seen wearing shoulder-flashes of several famous British regiments. At the time, the War Office did not permit more than two members per family to serve in any one regiment. This was because most of the Guernsey Militia Regiment had been wiped out during World War One, and this had been a staggering loss, given the relative size of Guernsey's population at the time.

We also saw many uniformed young women, when they came back to the island to enjoy their end-of-training or embarkation leaves. They proudly wore the traditional Navy (W.R.N.S.), Army (A.T.S.) and Air Force (W.A.A.F.) uniforms; not forgetting the young ladies of the Navy, Army and

Air Force Institute (N.A.A.F.I.); an organization which ran the canteens and rest-centres for the Armed Forces. All proud young people fighting for a good cause. The sight of their uniforms made us grumble, "It's a pity we're too young to join up!"

I never lost contact with the Havre-des-Pas gang, even though we had moved a mile or so from our old stamping grounds. On weekends, I sometimes found time to visit them, however, as distance tends to remove one from former ways of life, I had fewer close friends, outside of my brother, Dennis Audrain and Vic Webb, all fellow students at De La Salle College. At the swimming pool, I made the acquaintance of Maurice Gould, a fine swimmer and water-polo player, who tried his best to improve on my Australian crawl.

On Sundays, my father sometimes drove me to the airport, in St. Peter's Parish. There we watched the planes land, and sometimes saw Maurice re-fuelling the De Havilland Rapide aircraft on their way to Europe and the British mainland. To fuel the De Havillands, Maurice manually pumped every gallon of gasoline into the aircrafts' fuel tanks, from a tanker truck parked alongside the little planes.

Prior to building the Jersey Airport, planes had landed on the beach at low-tide, in front of the West Park Pavilion, where buses and taxis picked up the passengers, so that they did not get their shoes messed up from the still-wet, but firm sand. Many people went to watch the planes land and I, too, found it a good way of passing time on a Sundays, particularly when we were with my father, who always bought us a little treat, such as an ice cream cone or a bag of Smith's Crisps.

Maurice was about six feet-two inches tall, and weighed approximately 170 pounds. He had a mass of chestnut coloured hair, and his even, white teeth were always in evidence, because of a built-in grin. On occasions, when he had finished his work, he cycled the five or six miles to his home, then joined us for a swim in the pool. Maurice lived with his grandfather, "Pop" Trueblood, who owned the "Australian Herbalist," a pharmacy on Bath Street, St. Helier. He told us that he was born in the City of Leicester, County of Leicestershire, England on 31 May, 1924, but came to live with his grandfather at an early age. Apart from his cousin, Sheila and his grandfather, Maurice never mentioned any living other relatives.

My closest friend was Dennis Désiré Audrain, who was born in October, 1925. Dennis was a native born islander, who left the Beeches at the age of fifteen to work for his father, who owned a fruit and vegetable store in St. Helier's central market place. He was about five feet ten inches tall and weighed about 150 pounds. His straight, dark hair matched the colour of his eyes, and he too, had a grin that went on for ever. He had the strength of an ox, from picking up crates of potatoes and vegetables, which he delivered all over town on a delivery bicycle. He lived with his parents and younger brother, Sonny, in Almorah Crescent, on the outskirts of the town. Dennis thought the world of his family, and one of my privileges was to visit their home, in which their love for each

other always manifested itself.

Apart from the khaki, light blue and navy blue uniforms, there were still few signs of war, other than a number of sand bags stacked around public buildings, statues and Red Cross centres. There were some restrictions related to the coastal areas, but only after midnight, however, many of the larger stores had placed tape across their windows as safety measures against broken glass caused by air raids. These bold, outward signs of preparation could not have assured many that Jersey was ready for war. My generation certainly had no idea of the horrors nor the consequences of wars, and the minuscule preparations for war soon became part of our every day landscape - in other words, we ignored them, as we were still not affected.

My father had to obtain a permit to drive his car in the early hours of the morning, as he was still collecting the un-processed films from hotels' boxes. Until May, 1940, there was no shortage of holiday makers on Jersey's beaches. Their favourite holiday resort, Jersey, was still very popular for the over-taxed, war burdened British, because of its duty free liquor, cigarettes and jewellery, and possibly its remoteness from the war.

Occasionally, we were reminded that there was a war on, when local Air Raid Wardens exercised their mandate. My father was, for a short time, one of those stalwarts, and was no doubt among those who patrolled St. Helier's streets looking for black-out violations, and when a light was seen peeking through a hastily drawn, black-out curtain, the wardens' cry would be heard: "Put that bloody light out!" One also heard whistles being blown at offenders who dared to have too much light showing from their vehicle's headlights, which were required to be fitted with metal covers, which allowed only a narrow beam of light to shine on the roadway.

The population had been issued gas masks, and by order they had to be carried at all times. My friends and I enjoyed some moments of pleasure when we put on the gas masks, then made horrible farting noises, by pinching the valve and exhaling. Some were not amused!

From the adults' conversations, to which I was privy from my corner in the bar, it appeared that my father and his drinking buddies still had confidence in Britain's ability to take care of the Jerry. Sometimes I joined him and his friends when they spontaneously burst into an occasional verse of "We're going to hang out our washing on the Siegfried Line." If nothing else, patriotism was still rampant in Jersey!

Many of my father's drinking friends were members of the Royal Antediluvian of Buffaloes, Grand Lodge of England, in which my father was a Primo - whatever that meant! I was certain that the Buffaloes were right when they said that Jerry was no match for the British and French. Who should know better? After all, there were very many prominent islanders in the Buffaloes, and they were certainly "in the know" about such things. My father once told me that King George VI was a Buffalo, and I had no doubt that the King kept Lodge members well informed.

From my youthful perspective, the island did not appear to experience any physical sufferings nor food shortages, but again, this was probably because of my grandmother's good management in the kitchen, as well as our large garden, which was able to keep the family's in fruit and vegetables. And so, we continued to enjoy our Island way of life, but we might have worried somewhat, had we known of the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht's (High Command of the German Armed Forces (OKW)) plans. We also did not know that German military tacticians had read and digested Lieutenant-Colonel Charles de Gaulle's manual on tank warfare, which, unfortunately, had been ignored by the French and British Military.

My father was not a violent man, and I can only remember two occasions when he physically disciplined me. The first was when I failed to turn up for supper, when we lived at 44 Roseville Street. The second occasion was at Winchester House, where my father was bent over, weeding the celery patch. His trousers were well stretched over his buttocks, which, at the time, seemed to be an inviting target. Somehow I had obtained an air pistol, and taking aim at my father's backside, I pulled the trigger. The pellet hit dead centre, and an indignant, angry father picked himself out of the celery patch, then slowly climbed the stairs to my bedroom. Nothing was said when he entered.

He simply put out his hand, in which I placed the air pistol, and to my chagrin, he broke it in two pieces, after which my own backside was roughed up.

Few islanders had worried when Germany annexed Austria, then Czechoslovakia, nor was too much concern given when the cowardly attack of Poland occurred. After all, we were not occupied, and the Führer had said that he needed Lebensraum for his nation, and there were some who agreed with him - after all Germany had lost all her colonies, and eighty million Germans were packed into a small country. Fortunately, it seemed that the Führer's troops was content to sit behind the Siegfried Line for ever, and as long as they did, the boat was not rocked - perhaps the Führer had enough "living area" now that he had Austria, the Sudetenland and Poland.

On 10 May, 1940, my father returned home, carrying his usual copy of the "Daily Express." When he had eaten and stoked up his Gold Flake cigarette, he turned on the radio to listen to the BBC news. An announcer was commenting on the end of the Sitzkrieg (phony war), which had, overnight, developed into a Blitzkrieg (lighting war). At the end of the BBC broadcast, Dad opined that the Germans would be contained by the French and British armies. He did not seem overly upset, and his complacency re-assured us, and as he said, "Now that Winnie (Winston Churchill) is Prime Minister, he'll know how to deal with the Hun!"

Unfortunately, this time, dear old Dad was wrong, and things did not go according to his prognosis. The Allies were not prepared for the quick Belgian and Dutch capitulation. We had expected the

Belgian Army, at least, to fight to the last round, given their experience in World War One. Worse followed - the German war machine rolled over the Belgian border into France, where the storm turned into a typhoon, then a rout, and before forty-eight hours had elapsed, the French Army was on the verge of collapse. The much heralded Maginot Line held, but only because it was ignored - the Germans had simply bi-passed it through Belgium. Luxembourg was overrun after a brief, heroic struggle. It seemed that nothing was capable of stopping the German juggernaut.

As Belgian and French refugees clogged the highways leading to Paris and French ports, they impeded the advance of re-enforcements for the broken French divisions. On most Army fronts, with the exception of a small sector commanded by then Colonel Charles de Gaulle, resistance crumbled and retreat became the order of the day. After King Leopold of Belgium surrendered on 28 May, 1940, the evacuation of some 300,000 troops of the British Expeditionary Force and French Army from Dunkirk took place, after which, the Germans turned gloatingly towards Paris, the City of Lights.

In a desperate effort to rally his troops, the French Prime Minister, Monsieur Reynaud, promoted Colonel de Gaulle to the rank of Brigadier General and to the post of Undersecretary of Defence. The clear-sighted General de Gaulle informed Monsieur Reynaud that the battle for France was lost. However, he made it perfectly clear that France had only lost one battle, and would carry on the war from North Africa and France's large colonial Empire. Monsieur Reynaud agreed with the General, and promised to move the French Government to North Africa.

As the Germans approached Paris, the city emptied, and almost three-quarters of all Parisians joined the long columns of refugees struggling westward towards the Atlantic ports. On 10 June, 1940, the Germans crossed the River Seine, near Chateau-Thierry, approximately forty kilometres from the outskirts of Paris - The end of the French Republic was near! On 14 June, 1940, French and German officers met to discuss the German entrance into Paris, as Paris was declared an open city. On 16 June, 1940, the crash of hobnailed, German jackboots resounded, as the victors marched around Napoleon's Arc de Triomphe; which was garnished with a large, red and white flag adorned with the hated crooked cross, the Swastika. The victorious German troops snaked their way down the Champs Elysées, which was sparsely lined with sombre, weeping Parisians, looking up with shame at the hated Swastika, flying from the masthead of their beloved Eiffel Tower.

After the leading elements of the German Army had strutted their stuff down the Champs Elysées, they turned into the Place de la Concorde, marched over the bridge, then halted outside the French National Assembly - The battle for France was almost over, and the German defeat of 1918 was reversed. The Huns were jubilant - nothing could stop them and their Führer.

Fortunately, in England, hope lived on. The British Expeditionary Force had been saved; the Commonwealth was gearing up for war, and the French colonies' potential was still a force to be

reckoned with, but of greater importance was the fact that Britain now had a leader, and one who knew how to fight and rally the huge British Empire, and Winston Spencer Churchill quickly called his country to arms.

Our schoolboy hopes still had confidence in the large French armies in the south of France and North Africa. We assumed that the armies would re-group, then throw Jerry back over the Siegfried Line. We had been told that France had the world's finest Army, and the major part of it would be arriving from the colonies to take up the battle against the occupying Germans. We hoped that the inclusion of the French and British colonial forces, would turn the tide, and prevent Adolf's troops from setting foot on our beautiful Channel Islands.

Our youthful patriotism was somewhat subdued as we went with our fathers to Jersey's pubs. The Mary Ann (local ale) drinkers, previously renowned for their political and military astuteness, no longer discussed battlefield tactics. Gone were the raucous outbursts of: "We're going to hang out our washing on the Siegfried Line." Instead, conversations centred on the possible occupation of the islands and the consequences of such an occupation.

Despite our youthful arrogance and hopes, Britain's fortunes of war did not improve. The Hun regrouped, and his war-machine continued its advance on 16 June, 1940, as it pursued the remnants of several French armies. The French claimed the debacle to be the work of a non-existent "Fifth Column," which, they said, had sabotaged France's war effort. After all, politicians had to place the blame for their incompetence somewhere, and as I listened and read, I had visions of tens of thousands of saboteurs at large all over France, and I wondered if they were already in Jersey to disrupt our fighting ability.

The two local Jersey newspapers wrote alarming, battle-field accounts about the inexorable, advancing Teutonic hordes. It became very clear that things did not look too rosy for our futures; although, we were sure that the Islands would be made impregnable and defended against the onrushing Teutonic hordes - Winston Churchill would certainly ensure that the Royal Navy kept the Hun from our golden British beaches. Good old Winnie! Three cheers! Hip! Hip! Hu.....? Even though we were aware of the changes taking place around us, some of the island's youth still treated the whole thing as a big joke, because we still considered Great Britain and France to be impregnable. Wars and newspapers were for adults, not for us. We had no time for such things. Our kitchen tables lacked very little, and there were ample supplies of most things in the island's stores; which still displayed full lines of merchandise, although several food items had been rationed. There were wonderful days for swimming and sunbathing in June, 1940. What else could a young man ask for?

Unknown to us, on 12 June, 1940, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff informed the British War Cabinet that the Channel Islands had no strategic value. This matter had been debated on numerous



occasions before the announcement was made, and seeing that the islands had no strategic value, the War Cabinet decided to withdraw all troops from the Channel Islands, as "...they would cease to serve any useful function, once all Normandy was occupied."

On Saturday 15 June, 1940, the British War Cabinet also decided to leave the Islands undefended (demilitarized). This decision was not communicated to the Islands' civil authorities for two days, and even when it was, life went on as usual. Our bodies tanned and the dances became more intimate. What carefree moments! Why worry? The Bailiff and his States' members would look after us now that Britain had deserted us. That's what they were there for.

At the time it was difficult to comprehend what was really going on. On one hand, troops and arms arrived to protect us, then no sooner had they arrived, we learned that they would be withdrawn. It was a confusing time, during which it seemed that no one wanted to take responsibility nor make decisions.

In mid June, 1940, I went to the docks, where I watched a small flotilla of small boats set sail for the French coast - more specifically to the Breton port of St. Malo. I was again at the harbour when the same boats returned, over-loaded with tired, wounded, dishevelled British and French troops. This heroic action was hailed as a mini-Dunkirk by islanders. When the tired and beaten troops came ashore, the local authorities fed and took care of the wounded, and the war crept a little closer when we looked at the blood-stained bandages of the wounded troops.

A British order to evacuate all troops from the islands soon followed, and transport ships of all shapes and sizes arrived from Britain to remove them. These troops comprised those just evacuated from France on the small boats and all servicemen and women on leave, including some distinctive civilian tradesmen of military age. When they left, the ships took with them a minimal amount of war materiel; the rest was disabled, and lay strewn all over the port facility.

Dennis and I found an abandoned twin barrel, anti-aircraft gun, and spent some wonderful moments turning handles and swivelling barrels, in mock attempts to shoot down imaginary German bombers. This exciting game was interrupted by Police Constable, who ordered us off the docks, with a loud caution that he would report us to our parents if we did not "Oppit!"

On 20 June, 1940, islanders watched the last ferry boat leave the harbour at low tide. It was packed with British and French troops, as well as handful of people in civilian clothes. The ferry had difficulty clearing the harbour mouth because of its broad beam and the exceedingly narrow exit. Its hull crashed several times against the granite harbour mouth as it left, but no damage was done, and it quickly passed from our vision as it rounded Noirmont Point.

On 21 June, the two King's representatives from Jersey and Guernsey, namely the islands' two Lieutenants-Governor departed with most of their staff. Some half-hearted Whitehall activity was

reported, when the Home Office sought to inform the Germans that the Channel Islands had been demilitarized and no troops remained on them. The Jersey Bailiff, Mr. Alexandre M. Coutanche, received a message from King George VI, which basically extended his Majesty's regrets for the necessity of abandoning the Channel Islands. The King also imparted that he hoped the Channel Islands' long association with the Crown would continue when victory was achieved. The Royal message was subsequently displayed in the Royal Square, where all important proclamations were posted - It was obvious that the end was near and a German take over was now a certainty.

During this period, I was too pre-occupied with life, and did not notice my mother had packed and disappeared for a day or so. This took place sometime in June, 1940. There was just too much going on elsewhere. As usual, my father made no comments on the matter of my mother's disappearance - Family affairs were never discussed with the children, who were there to be seen, but not heard.

The truth of her disappearance was simple, but left unspoken - She had become an Italian by marriage, therefore, as an enemy alien she had been ordered to report to an internment centre at Grouville for deportation to the United Kingdom, and presumably into an internment camp for the duration of war. When this happened, my father went to the local authorities, where he argued her case and explained their years of common-law relationship, and based on this, the authorities released my mother into his tender care. The matter was never discussed with us, as our parents did not want to open Pandora's Box.

Subsequent to the order to demilitarize the Islands, a decision to evacuate as many islanders as possible was made by the States, in conjunction with the United Kingdom government. The evacuation did not seem too well organized, but it set in motion a voluntary exodus of the islands' population to Great Britain. For those taking advantage of the offer to evacuate, it was necessary to obtain a boat-ticket at the Town Hall, from where the evacuation was being co-ordinated. We did not stand in line with my mother when she acquired two one-way tickets for my brother and me, nor were we told about it. My mother had made a unilateral decision to evacuate us in the custody of my aunt, her elder sister, who was leaving with her daughter, as her four sons and one adopted son were already in the British forces.

Our parents had opted to remain on the Island; probably to safeguard their business and as many of the family's possessions as possible; including the furniture and effects of my aunt, which were to be moved to Winchester House from her house. We were not consulted, and we watched silently and heart-broken as our mother packed two small suitcases for us.

Then, on a fine day in June, 1940, my brother and I were marched to the harbour to join my aunt and her daughter, who had already boarded one of the channel steamers, however, we kicked up

such a fuss near the gangplank, that our parents decided to let us stay - probably to avoid the embarrassing dock-side scene we created. I even threatened to jump overboard before the ship left.

That did it! I am certain, that had we been given an explanation as to why we were being evacuated, we might have understood the necessity, but the usual cone of silence had prevailed.

June, 1940, was a time of many momentous and heart-breaking decisions; not only for our family, but for every islander who opted to remain or to leave. Hundreds of islanders were on the docks, weeping, waving and calling out words of encouragement, as the last, crowded boats left the harbour mouth. It was not a pretty sight, and I was glad when we were dragged off the dock by my mother who was muttering dire threats about our "despicable behaviour in front of strangers."

The St. Helier dockside was littered with abandoned cars, carts, horses, suitcases and the jetsam and flotsam, usually associated with people panicking in front of invading armies. Some islanders had arrived at the docks with several suitcases, but many had to be left behind due to the limited space on the small ships. Those articles did not remain abandoned for long, as looters quickly moved in and stole everything of value.

Many store windows were boarded up, and abandoned domestic animals ran through the streets. When they were caught, they were taken to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals on St. Saviour's Road, where the Society carried out their work of mercy, and put to sleep hundreds of the poor creatures.

There were many problems encountered immediately after the evacuation. To name but a few: the remaining farmers were obliged to collect the cows from abandoned farms, and milk them immediately; some farmers had volunteered to look after their neighbour's fields for the duration of the war, but could not find labourers to work in the fields; a heavy burden was placed on the local police force, as houses were looted and stores broken into and their contents removed, and last, but not least, the enemy aliens, interned by the British, were released, and a handful of them took advantage of the changing situation. The whole evacuation seemed to be very disorganized and lacking in leadership, and even at fourteen years of age, I felt that the authorities had made a terrible botch up of things.

The number of people evacuated from Jersey's population of 50,000 was said to have been from 10,000 to 12,000, but no one at the time really knew how many had gone. Guernsey, with a population of 42,000, evacuated approximately half its population. The difference in the percentages may be attributed to the way local officials reacted to the evacuation, but it was also suggested that more people left Guernsey, as more English-born families lived there, and they may have felt it was their duty to return to the Mother Country.

The stage was now set for the occupation of the Channel Islands, and on 27 June, 1940, we saw the

first of several flights of German reconnaissance planes, their black iron crosses clearly visible because of the low altitudes at which they flew. Regardless of the German reconnaissance flights and the Germans camped fifteen miles away, there were still those who harboured hopes that the British would return - I was among them. We could still see the large Union Jack proudly flying from the mast at Fort Regent, the massive, granite bastion overlooking the Town of St. Helier. Many locals could not believe that the British would allow the Germans to occupy the island without a fight, after all, never had Britain ceded any of her territories without a fight. Surely, it was said, the demilitarization announcement was a ploy to fool the Hun. But then there were those who were more concerned with beer deliveries than the nearby Teutonic hordes.

Brave, Utopian dreams were shattered during the evening of 28 June, 1940, when the Luftwaffe (German Air Forces) carried out its first bombing attacks on the islands.

At the time of the first bombing of the port facilities of St Helier and surrounding buildings, I was playing in an open field, opposite Dennis' home in Almorah Crescent, which overlooked St. Helier.

It was early evening when we heard the roar of plane engines, and when we looked up, we saw pencil-slim Dornier bombers and Junkers 52 (J52) flying overhead at approximately five hundred feet. We clearly saw a J52's waist gunner who was standing in the plane's left door firing his weapon, the gasses pouring from the twin machine gun barrels. One of us casually remarked that Jerry was trying to scare us with smoke bullets, but this illusion was shattered when we heard several loud explosions come from the harbour's direction.

This was the stuff for us! We jumped on our bicycles and raced towards the sounds. Our involvement in the real war had begun. We were still invincible! Jerry was just trying to scare us! British planes would arrive momentarily and chase Jerry away. Britain would never abandon its cherished Channel Islands!

### **The German Occupation**

Dennis and I raced towards the docks, making for the general direction of the explosions. We thought that the bombs had fallen in or near the French Harbour, an older dock within St. Helier's harbour complex. When we reached the Weighbridge, a large open area where the farm carts and trucks were weighed prior to delivering their agricultural contents for shipping to the United Kingdom, dozens of people were walking and running in several directions. Some appeared dazed, and two men were holding bloody rags to their faces - probably the result of being cut by flying glass.

We stopped to look at the shrapnel damage and broken windows at the south end of Mulcaster Street, and were looking at a large piece of shrapnel Dennis had found, when we were grabbed by an Air Raid Warden, who asked what we were doing there. After listening to our feeble excuse, he told us to go back home, as there was a possibility that the German bombers might return. Feigning obedience, we cycled back in the general direction of town, but not wanting to miss the action, we went up Pier Road, which accessed the heights overlooking the harbour, as we knew that we could get a better view from up there.

From the hill overlooking the harbour, we looked down on the entire port facility and most of the town of St. Helier. The bomb damage was quite visible: there were several destroyed fishing boats; bomb craters in the harbour bed; many shattered windows and some vehicles were peppered with shrapnel. There did not appear to be any structural damage to buildings, but there might have been, as we could not see the houses and warehouses directly below us.

Our stay was interrupted by an elderly gentleman who was driving from Fort Regent towards the Government Offices on Mount Bingham; which also appeared to have suffered some bomb damage.

We do not know who he was, but he told us to go home, and knowing that Jersey had a number of honorary police, generally recruited from retired military men, or well known businessmen, we did not dispute his authority, and cycled towards our homes, having had enough excitement for one day.

On the way home we did not have much to say to each other. The events of the past month had begun to sink in: many of our fiends and relatives had been evacuated; Great Britain was going it alone, and had declared the Channel Islands to be demilitarized zones in order that they would not be bombed, but bombs had fallen despite this. I believe it was at that point that my dislike for Germans and everything German intensified. Part of my upbringing caused me to dislike them, but as I cycled home that day, I felt a surge of deep hatred for the first time.

When we saw two ambulances tearing through the streets, bells ringing, we also realised that the bombing had caused some casualties. We wondered if some of our friends were in the ambulances, but it was no time to be on the streets in case the planes came back, and we already knew what they had done in Rotterdam.

We both matured a little that day, but I also experienced a surge of anger against Great Britain for having abandoned us to the Germans. I wondered where the British planes were, as I had expected them to shoot the intruders from the sky. We could no longer make snide remarks about France, which we said, "had run away" from the Germans, as we had also sunk to the same depths of France's perceived cowardice.

We were worried that the Hun would unleash a reign of terror and killings once their hordes of jack-booted troops arrived on the island. Would they murder, rape and loot as they had in Poland? Our pristine island was no longer our Utopia, as there was an ugly stain only fifteen miles away. We were not prepared for a German occupation. No one had given it any thought until it was too late.

I turned my bicycle towards Winchester House, promising to meet Dennis the following day, but before we parted, he asked me what I would do when I came across my first German. I had no answer for him, and I still hoped that our Island would not be occupied by the Hun. It did not seem right to me. Surely, just around Noirmont Point, hundreds of battleships were lying in wait. Britain would never permit the Germans to occupy one of its territories. After all, we were still British, or were we?

Before parting, we again echoed our disbelief that Britain would allowed us to be occupied without a fight. Even for two high-spirited young men it was a sombre, chilling moment, because we now expected nothing but the worst from Jerry. Our weekly magazines and newspapers had told us what to expect, and even though my father had been wrong; surely not the Hotspur, Skipper, Wizard, Rover and Adventure. They had always been authorities on such matters. Why would they lie to us? What other authority was left? Certainly not our parents, nor the seemingly invisible members of the States of Jersey.

That night my father did not return home, as he had been called out on Air Raid warden duties. The following morning, 29 June, 1940, as he joined us for breakfast, he told us that Guernsey had been more seriously bombed than Jersey. He imparted that our sister island had suffered some thirty deaths and almost double that amount wounded, he said that in Jersey, twelve people had been killed and another dozen or more injured by shrapnel and falling debris. My father then gave me strict orders to stay away from the dock area, but as soon my parents left for the shop, I jumped on my bike and raced towards the forbidden zone.

At the Weighbridge, clean-up crews were already sweeping glass shards and debris from the streets

and sidewalks. There were one or two more air-raid alarms that day, when Dornier reconnaissance planes flew over. We called the thin-body Dorniers "Flying Pencils," as they had been so described in British newspapers. It was a shameful feeling to see them fly over Jersey without a shot being fired at them.

My family spent part of 29 June, collecting some of the food from a corner store, as my father had purchased the food from the owner, who had left for England. We made several trips to the store, each time filling up the rear seat and trunk of the family car. We also had the moving firm of Le Gallais haul the furniture and personal effects from my aunt's home to ours, after which, one could not move for furniture.

On 1 July, 1940, the air-raid sirens wailed again as German aircraft flew over at low altitudes. Later that day, we learned that the planes had dropped instructions to the States' officials. The instructions, so ignominiously thrown out of a plane, were in the form of an order, which was addressed to the Island's Military and Civil Authorities, and signed by the Commanding Officer of the German Air Force in Normandy, General von Richtofen (a cousin of the Red Baron of World War One fame).

The orders demanded that large white crosses were to be painted at the island's airport, the highest point of Fort Regent and in the large, open Weighbridge area. The order also stipulated that white flags should hang or be draped from all fortifications, buildings and private houses. There was also a threat of further bombardment for non-compliance with the Hun's order; which also said that the States' authorities were to remain at St. Peter's Airport until the Germans arrived.

The remaining paragraphs of the surrender document contained words to the effect that: no hostile actions were to take place against the occupying troops, or dire consequences would follow. Finally the order stated that if the Island surrendered peacefully, the lives, property and freedom of its inhabitants would be guaranteed. Compliance with these orders were to be completed by 2 July, no doubt, at which time the triumphant, gloating Teutonic hordes would arrive.

Not long after the blatant instructions were received, we saw States' workmen painting a large white cross on the Weighbridge square. We also saw dozens of white flags, sheets and bath towels in most windows, and I wondered if my father; formerly Sapper E. Hassall of His Majesty's Royal Engineers, would hang a white flag from the roof-top of Winchester House. I doubted it! However, my hero's reputation was spared, because it was my mother who quickly found one of my fishing rods, on which she tied a large, white towel, despite my protestations. She told me that we had to obey the law, and when I asked whose law, she made no answer.

At the same time as my mother was hanging out her white towel of cowardly surrender, my father was not too concerned about surrendering. He seized a golden opportunity, and went on a buying spree at Edward's Clock Tower, a local variety and tobacco store, immediately across the road from

his shop. There he purchased as many cigarettes as he could carry at one time, then went back for more, until he ran out of ready cash. He then locked his treasures in his office, to which only he had a key. He was a very clear sighted man; not too good as a military strategist, but as there had been no restrictions on the sale of cigarettes, his actions may have been justified. At least he could sustain his nicotine habit for a while.

Unknown to most islanders, the Germans had already landed at St. Peter's airport. A young German Air Force officer, Oberleutnant (First Lieutenant) Kern, was flying his Dornier on a reconnaissance mission from France, when he saw the large white crosses being painted. He also saw hundreds of white flags hanging from public buildings and homes, and taking a chance he landed his Flying Pencil on St. Peter's Airport, then took off again to report to his Commanding Officer.

When Kern flew back to his base in occupied Normandy, he, no doubt, reported the island's willingness to surrender peacefully. He must have laughed his head off all the way back to Normandy. What a coup! A British possession seized by a Lieutenant in Göring's Luftwaffe, without a shot being fired. That had to be one for German history books.

Later that same afternoon, plane-loads of jackbooted, field-grey troops arrived at St. Peter's Airport in their lumbering Junkers 52s. Their Commanding Officer was met by the Bailiff, the Attorney-General and other States' officials. A German airman's film, which captured both historic meetings, eventually arrived in my father's shop for processing, where several copies were printed and put in a photograph album for posterity. This unique photograph depicted the peaceful conquest and friendly surrender of the first British possession to fall into enemy's hands.

There was no shortage of accommodation for the incoming hordes of German troops, given the dozens of large hotels and boarding houses on the Island, and soon, the larger hotels were filled with jubilant German troops, who quickly threw their combat gear on their beds, then poured into the deserted streets, intent on buying all they could in the well-stocked Jersey shops and boutiques.

Some of the previously interned Germans and Italians were quick to fill many of the managerial positions in the German occupied hotels, where they rose from waiters and dish-washers to hotel managers overnight. After all, some of them were Germany's Allies, and as such, they felt that they merited the most senior positions. The new managers quickly evened old scores by demoting many employees to menial positions, which was not totally unexpected. Mercifully, some of the long-standing aliens kept their dignity and allegiance to their adopted home.

It was not long before another German order was issued from the Island's Town Hall, which became the first German Headquarters, commanded by Hauptman (Captain) Gussek. It was written in English and dated 2 July, 1940, and imposed: a curfew from 11:00 pm. to 5:00 am.; called for the surrender of all firearms and other warlike weapons; all remaining British troops were to report to



German Headquarters by 3 July; all boats were confined to the inner harbours, and were not to venture out until further notice; black-out regulations were to remain in effect; sales of all spirits were prohibited; St. Peter's airport was out of bounds - being declared a military zone; there were to be no sales of gasoline, except for essential service vehicles; all commercial establishments, including banks were to remain open; it was forbidden to listen to any radio station, other than German controlled ones; the population was obliged to obey all orders given by the German Military authority or face disciplinary consequences and finally, at least to my mind, one of the greatest indignities which signalled the beginning of the Germanization of the island, was that all clocks and watches had to be advanced one hour to harmonize with those in the Third Reich. This order was posted in prominent places, including the Royal Square, and was published in "The Evening Post," which came under German censorship.

The local Town Hall, known by the Germans as the "Rathaus" (Town Hall) was taken over as a German administrative Headquarters. From our shop's door, I saw the Nazi flag hanging from a small mast over the Town Hall's main portal, where once our Jersey flag proudly flew. I also saw an armed German Luftwaffe sentry, complete with Mauser rifle, and as I continued to observe the entrance to the Rat House (as it came to be known), I saw many people bring in their weapons - some of which were obvious souvenirs from the Boer and previous wars, but being bureaucratically minded, the Germans had said, "all weapons," and that is exactly what they meant - even if the thing was not capable of being fired.

The British troops, who had remained on the island for whatever personal reasons, straggled into the Rathaus carrying suitcases and packages. Some arrived accompanied by their families. I do not know how many turned themselves in, but among them was my paternal uncle, who went into captivity for the remainder of the war, but not before he and his colleagues were interned in a prisoner of war camp at Grouville, which had formerly housed the interned German and Italian civilians; including my mother.

No one knew why these British troops had remained on the island, and it was mind boggling to think that the British War Office had permitted British servicemen to proceed on leave to the Channel Islands, knowing that their occupation was imminent - On 19 June, 1940, British Military authorities had issued orders that all servicemen and men of military age were to report to St. Helier's dock for immediate evacuation to England, therefore, it puzzled me why some servicemen had remained on the Island. I could believe that the War Office had given them an option of returning to their units, or staying on the island to be marched into captivity without a fight. It was inconceivable!

On 4 July, several German soldiers came into my father's shop to buy some films. One, who spoke a little English, said that they were attracted by the exterior signs, which advertised "Agfa" films - a

very popular German brand name. The films were paid for with Reichsmarks (Occupation Marks); then valued at about eight to the Pound Sterling, the island's official currency.

That same day, seven German soldiers from a flak (Anti-Aircraft) unit, came in the shop, wanting a group photograph taken of themselves. My father took them upstairs to the studio, where he arranged them into a posed group, then took their photograph. It was amusing, yet embarrassing, to see my father try to induce four German soldiers to stand and three to kneel. That day my father learned his first German word: "Knien!" - The imperative of the verb to kneel. I noticed that his usual terms: Jerry, Boche, Hun and Kraut had disappeared from his vocabulary.

At the dinner table that evening, my mother informed me that it would be a good idea for me to learn German. No doubt she already recognized the commercial value of speaking German, given the fact that my father could now say, "Kneel!" And as I listened to her, I was certain that I would have to learn the German for: "Watch for the dickie bird and say tweet tweet!" or "Smile and say cheese!" My mother never did things in half-measures, and the following week, I was enrolled for German lessons at Professor Steiner's language school on David Place. My parents attended a few lessons, but dropped out for reasons better know to themselves.

Professor Steiner, for that was how I addressed my teacher, was an expatriate Swiss who had taught languages on the Island for many years. He was a tall, austere looking gentleman with a kindly manner, who was able to get the best from his students.

I had no difficulty learning German, despite my command performance, and within six months I was reasonably competent in the language, and able to converse with the German clients. My mother gushed with pride when English speaking troops told her that my German was good. One of them even inferred that my linguistic ability probably came from my father's German background - My father's Agincourt ancestors must have turned over in their graves.

There were some Germans who addressed my parents as Herr und Frau Hassell - using the German e and German pronunciation. This made me want to duck under the counter, as the Germans' errors were never corrected. I wanted my father to stand up and shout, "No! It's Hassall. Not Hassell! My ancestors are British. I am not of German descent!" However, nothing was ever said, as photography was his chosen profession in which he had to make a living, but to me, pride and honour mattered more.

Within two weeks of the German occupation, food rationing was dramatically cut. Islanders' weekly ration comprised only four ounces of butter and cooking fats and three quarters of a pound of meat. Other staples, such as bread and vegetables were still plentiful, although eggs had disappeared, as the Occupier had requisitioned most of them.

Meanwhile, the newly arrived German troops still swarmed into Jersey's shops. They could not believe their eyes as they looked over the inventories. They had only know "Guns before butter," and were not used to having basic commodities and luxury goods. They staggered back to their barracks, arms full of articles, unseen in the Third Reich for many years. Money seemed to be no object, as they pulled, what seemed to be, unlimited amounts of newly printed Reichsmarks from their leather wallets. Of particular interest to them were: women's silk stockings, clothing, perfume, chocolates, watches and jewellery.

The first occupation troops benefited the most, as no restrictions were placed on what they could buy, however, as the stores emptied and shortages became evident, the Germans were finally required to obtain permits to make purchases in local stores. No one had warned our States' officials that such a buying frenzy would happen, and when steps were finally taken by the German authorities, to curtail Germans' buying, it was already too late - most of the shops' goods were already on their way to the Third Reich. Little remained on store shelves for the islanders, despite some merchants' best efforts to hide some of their stock for their regular customers. There were a few angry scenes when Germans were denied purchases, when some merchants refused to produce the demanded articles.

Most islanders were surprised at the German troops "korrekt" behaviour towards them. I was told, by several German customers, that all troops had received strict orders to behave correctly, and to be particularly kind to children. A frequent German customer suggested to my mother that the Germans and British were first cousins and should not be fighting each other. He even suggested that "Britain and Germany should rule the world together." No doubt he had been influenced by the speech Hitler made shortly after Munich.

Not long after the island was occupied, Dennis and I rode to West Park slip, opposite a large hotel occupied by German troops. There, we saw a German UFA (German News Service) team, complete with van, cameras and English speaking soldier hosts, who asked a group of school children to raise their hands if they liked chocolate. Most of the children, quite naturally, raised their hands, and were rewarded with pieces of chocolate. It was later rumoured that this propaganda exhibition was seen in German cinemas, where the narrator explained that it was a scene of British school children welcoming the German troops to the Channel Islands, and enthusiastically giving the Nazi salute. We chose to believe the accuracy of the rumour, as there was nothing to deny it; besides which, it sounded like the kind of thing Dr. Joseph Goebbels' Propaganda Ministry would carry out on unsuspecting children.

Except for two occasions, the occupying troops acted "correctly" towards me and my family. The first occasion they stepped out of line was when I emerged the winner of a tug-of-war with a soldier

who wanted to "borrow" my cousin's five-speed bicycle. I yelled at him in German that I would report him to the Feldgendarms (Military Police). He must have been startled at my German, because he let go the handlebars, then stomped away muttering dire threats. The second occasion was when a German soldier, feigned interest in purchasing an somewhat expensive Robot 35 mm. camera, walked away without paying for it. He had asked my father's if he could check the focus outside on the street, and as my father was busy serving other Germans, the soldier simply walked away without paying for the camera.

My father remembered that the thief had previously signed the shop's register, in which all troops were required to enter their regimental numbers and names when bringing in films for processing. The register was maintained on orders of the Feldgendarmerie (German Military Police), and from time to time it was checked by the breast-plated Feldgendarms.

Armed with the soldier's particulars, my father went to the Feldgendarmerie, and was then driven to the thief's unit, where all the troops were made to parade outside the hotel. My father, the unit commander and two Feldgendarms walked slowly along the ranks, until my father identified the man. Dear Old Dad made a triumphant return to the shop, carrying the Robot camera. He was quite smug that an entire German company had been paraded for his inspection. Quite a feat for an ex-sapper of Royal Engineers he suggested.

Even though many parts of the harbour were out of bounds, Dennis and I still went there to watch German troops and dockers unloading military ordnance and supplies from barges and ships which had come from the Port of Granville in France. We were also at dockside when the interned British servicemen were transferred to France, towards the end of July, but we were too far away to recognize faces, as the Germans had cordoned off the area. However, in order to get a better look at things, we cycled downhill, where we joined several women and children behind a barrier, which separated them from the British troops. Many of the waiting women were weeping and crying; children clung to their mothers' coats and dresses, and called out to their departing fathers - They faced lonely and difficult times without their husbands and sons. Sick at heart, we left, still wondering why the troops had chosen to remain to face certain detention in Germany.

During the next months, we watched the systematic rape and looting of the island. Barges and ships were piled high with: cars, potatoes, motor cycles, bicycles, pure-bred Jersey cattle and many household articles; much of which was looted from houses whose occupants were in the United Kingdom. Many of the nicer yachts and power-boats were also loaded onto barges, or were sailed directly to France to become the property of privileged, high ranking Germans.

In August, the Germanization of the island intensified, as more troops and war materiel arrived, and German road and military unit signs were erected on almost every street corner. Traffic, although minimal, became hazardous, particularly for those islanders driving essential vehicles, and who

were used to driving on the left hand side of the road. This was not the case with the German drivers, who created havoc as they tried to negotiate the left hand lanes. After several head on collisions and near misses, the States finally proclaimed a German order requiring all vehicles, including bicycles, to drive on the right hand side of the road. For a while driving was hazardous again, because the steering columns of local vehicles were on the right hand side, and to add to the confusion, Jersey's narrow streets were designed with the left-hand concept in mind.

The Occupiers, in their requisitioned vehicles had their share of problems, because they ,too, found it difficult to drive on the right hand side of the road when the steering wheels of their requisitioned cars were on the right hand side. A few accidents occurred until drivers became used to the new requirements, however, the problem eventually resolved itself, as with the exception of a few essential vehicles, all private cars were banned from the roads - Most of them being shipped to Europe or used by the Occupiers.

The Germans allowed the States to continue governing the island, contingent upon their good behaviour, as well as that of the Island's population. All German orders and demands were proclaimed through the States, and all States' orders were vetted by the Germans before being proclaimed by the States. The noose tightened, although in a seemingly friendly manner.

The Germans demanded, and obtained complete submission from the States, which had reduced itself to a number of committees, to better cope with local problems, and although the full States Assembly met once or twice yearly, the island was run by smaller committees, which had been created to cope with the unusual situation. It was patently obvious that few people in my milieu respected the States' perceived subservience to the Occupiers, however, I am sure that we had to be aware of would happen if the States refused to proclaim the Occupier's orders. However, knowing this did not stop many of us from voicing the opinion that the States acquiesced to every German order too readily, regardless of the order's consequence. All German orders and decrees were posted in the Royal Square and on other prominent States' buildings, as well as being printed in the island's newspaper - Ignorance of proclamations was not excused.

Many privately owned vehicles were requisitioned by the Germans as soon as they arrived, and it was not long before the remaining vehicles were "purchased" by the Occupier. The German Paymasters began by "purchasing" the newer automobiles, and in return for their vehicles, the owners were given receipts for certain sums of money, which most certainly did not represent fair market value. It followed that many commercial vehicles went in the same direction, and when this happened, horse draw carriages became the delivery means, and bicycles became treasured and coveted possessions, and within a short period of time it was impossible to buy bicycle spare parts, particularly tires, which became quickly non-existent. Exorbitant prices were asked for bicycles in

the "For Sale" section of "The Evening Post," and all of them were quickly sold, and bicycles became the major means of transportation for most islanders. Unfortunately, all Jersey bicycles were licensed and registered at Parish halls, and all bore a small paper licence plate, which made it simple, for the Island's officials, to locate every bicycle, when the Germans demanded some.

More German troops arrived, and a new German commander was appointed. He was Oberst (Colonel) Schumacher, the Channel Islands' first Field Commander, who was responsible to District Military Headquarters at St. Germain-en-Laye, France. In honour of the new Commander's inauguration, German troops held a "Victory" parade through the main streets of St. Helier. I stood in the doorway of my father's shop and watched the hordes march by; steel helmets, rifles, respirators and jackboots, all highly polished for the auspicious occasion. To me they looked permanent, triumphant, well-fed and so very Germanic.

As they marched past, behind their Military bands complete with Teutonic glockenspiels, I thought back to the newspapers which had shown crying Parisians, as the Occupiers paraded down their beloved Champs Elysées, and as I looked at the passing enemy, I was able to commune with France's agony. But my agony was, perhaps, more profound, as the marching troops I was watching, had merely sauntered in, as if invited. At least, I thought, the French had put up some kind of a fight, unlike Jersey, which had been occupied as a result of a couple of pieces of paper, casually tossed through an aeroplane's window; after which white flags had blossomed all over the island - like lilies in the fields.

We had no building or structure as tall as the Eiffel Tower on which to fly the Nazi flag, but the hated Swastika now prominently flew on the mast at historic Fort Henry, where it was visible to most of the town's inhabitants. It became an oppressing symbol for Dennis, many of our friends and me. We once discussed sneaking up to Fort Henry to steal the thing, but the risks were too great, besides which, the Germans, no doubt, had more flags with which to replace it. It was part of German "kultur" to wave red, white and black flags all over the world, and Fort Henry was no exception. However, it shamed us deeply, as it represented our pacific occupation.

My father received permission from the Field Commander's Headquarters to photograph the victory parade. He took dozens of photographs of triumphant troops snaking past the Rathaus and through the town's main street. The finished photographs were placed on a placard, then displayed in the shop window, by my mother, who hoped to attract many of the participating soldiers, who, as she said, "...would want to buy them to send home to their mothers, wives and girl-friends."

Some of the parade photos were given to me by my brother and they went into my photograph album. My brother and I had also begun to reproduce extra copies of all German photographs

which we found interesting, and eventually I acquired a rather extensive collection of German war materiel, including some close-up photographs of the latest German night fighter planes, which had been parked on St. Peter's airport - all compliments of the shutter-crazy German troops. I sometimes smiled when I thought of my ready-made spies.

My mother had also been instrumental in having my father's shop licensed as: an "Official German Photographic Depot," in which the German troops could "safely" have their films developed and printed. The only condition attached had been to keep a clientele register, which was infrequently inspected by Feldgendarms. A German sign, placed in the shop window, announced that the shop was sanctioned by the Field Commander. This sign drew the ire of a handful of "patriots," and I fully expected my father to arrive at work to find a brick thrown through the window. Fortunately, most islanders were too well disciplined and disposed to harbour such seditious thoughts. After all, they had been told, by the local authorities, not to rock the boat.

Most, if not all, of my father's business came from the camera-conscious German troops, as the local population was required to obtain permits to take photographs; which were restricted to weddings, births and family groups. Heavy fines and or imprisonment were threatened against those breaking this proclamation, and all cameras were eventually ordered to be handed over to the Occupier.

One of the first English-speaking Germans to come into the store was Oberwachtmeister (Petty Officer) Walter Linde of the Wasserschutzpolizei (Water Police). He was a large, bluff character, who made his home in the German Hanseatic port City of Hamburg, where he had served in the Harbour Police for many years before the war. He had also sailed on German merchant ships, which, he said, accounted for his excellent command of English. Walter Linde and the remainder of the Water Police were quartered in the Pomme d'Or, which was directly opposite St. Helier's port facilities. The hotel also served as German Navy Headquarters, and another large Swastika hung from a pole over its portal. Linde was generally in the company of his immediate superior, Hauptwachtmeister (Chief Petty Officer) Stromp, who spoke no English, and if he did, he kept it to himself.

The first act of the Water Police, was to requisition the Island's pilot boat, which, for many years had been commanded by the experienced pilot, Captain Brewer. who with a great degree of foresight had left the Island before it was occupied. The pilot boat was a necessity in Jersey, because of the narrow, dredged channel leading into the harbour, and without a knowledgeable pilot, navigation was hazardous. In addition to the dredged channel, there were several dangerous, underwater reefs, known only to experienced pilots, the life boat crew and local fishermen, however, German boats, without experienced pilots, soon came to know the local underwater dangers, when they chanced the passage to France without pilots.

As more troops arrived, German Quartermasters looked around for additional accommodation. Their eyes fell on Maison St. Louis, a large, chateau-like establishment, which served as an international Jesuit training college. It contained dozens of small, cell-like rooms, in which the novice Jesuits lived. No doubt the Germans were aware of the Jesuits' influence on island life, as they quickly expelled them to France and Belgium; again cutting deeply into our local culture. Towards the middle of August, "Feldkommandantur 515" (Field HQ 515) opened its doors at Victoria College, and a sub-branch of the same HQ was opened on Guernsey. Their tasks were to deal with the islands' civil matters. At HQ 515 were two non-commissioned officers, who claimed to be members of the "Abwehr" (Espionage, Counter Espionage and Sabotage Service of the German High Command), but who were probably members of Amt VI, and members of the Sicherheitsdienst (Security Services (SD)). To my understanding, there were no actual Gestapo on the island, but there was little distinction between Gestapo and SD.

The Germans eventually lifted the restriction on fishing boats, which were then permitted to leave the harbours, up to a distance of two miles, but all boats had to return during inclement weather and before nightfall, however, some professional fishermen were given permission to sail farther out, where larger fish stocks existed. These were escorted by German manned ships, which would have, no doubt, fired on the fishermen had they tried to make a run for England.

In order to leave any harbour in a fishing boat, it was necessary to obtain a fishing permit at the Rathaus. Once the permit was obtained, the owner of the boat had to register with a German sentry when the vessel left its berth, and exited the harbour mouth. There were many boat owners who took advantage of the situation, and were able to supplement their food rations.

It was not long before the port of St. Helier bristled with machine guns, some of which were mounted on both sides of the narrow harbour mouth. Concrete gun emplacements were soon under construction along the Albert Pier, and other weapon emplacements were being built along the entire length of St. Aubin's Bay.

There was a smaller harbour in the village of St. Aubin, about four miles west of St. Helier, but it could berth only small vessels, as it had not been dredged. In addition to the main port of St. Helier and the one at St. Aubin, there were several smaller harbours scattered around the island. Some of them were built as breakwaters to protect the small craft moored there, however, not long after the Germans arrived, they ordered all boats to be moored in the main harbours, as they wanted to control the boats and prevent their owners from escaping to England.

Fishing had been a way of life on the islands before the Germans came, and it was a great day for the islanders when the small boats sailed again. The seas still abounded with: conger eels, mackerel, snipe, white-fish, sole, flounder, small octopus, crab, shrimp and lobster. Most islanders



respected and feared the seas surrounding their coast, and fisherman always checked weather conditions before setting sail, as coastal storms blew in quite suddenly. I had seen fishermen's wives and children standing on the docks, peering out to sea, hoping to catch a glimpse of the mastheads of their husband's boats, as they emerged over the choppy horizon, however, when they did not return on time, there was no immediate panic, as the fishermen usually managed to take shelter on small, outer islands, where permanent shelters had been established for such emergencies.

My uncle, who lived with us at Winchester House, and his friend Bill, obtained fishing permits from the Rathaus, then went fishing in Bill's small dinghy. When they came back, they usually brought some fish with them, and it was nice to have fresh fish again on our kitchen table. As I wanted to fish, I, too, applied, and obtained a fishing permit, complete with my photograph, which allowed me to go along with my uncle on some of his fishing trips. Sadly, whenever there was the smallest of sea, I was sea-sick - I was not a good sailor.

By the end of 1940, most of the island's shops were bare. Clothing was rationed, as was every other essential commodity. The States managed as well as possible, given the very difficult conditions, but they were unable to cope with the busy black market which had sprung up all over the island. Prices on the black market were exorbitant, and many articles, some looted from the evacuees' homes, appeared for sale on the streets.

As an alternate meat source, rabbits were the order of the day, and islanders were thankful for the amount of good rabbit fodder in the surrounding countryside, just as they were thankful that the little animals were so prolific. Later on, the Germans controlled even the rabbits, but fortunately, the little creatures were easier to hide than cows or pigs, which had been enumerated soon after the Germans arrived.

Apart from the odd scuffle and name calling, there had been few serious confrontations between the Occupiers and islanders. Most islanders did their best to avoid the Germans, but a number of local females did court the enemy's attention, and it was not long before they were to be seen clutching the Occupiers arms. They became part of our Bailiwick's shame, but something we had to live with, as confrontation with the so called "Jerry bags" could have, and frequently did bring, immediate reprisals by their uniformed boy friends. I viewed their fraternization with the Occupiers as a treasonable act, as Jersey was part of the Britain, which was still at war with Germany. The sight of such females clutching Germans' arms sickened me. It was bad enough to having my parents court them in order to earn a living, but going to bed with the enemy was a more serious matter, at least in my mind.

A very ominous German order was proclaimed by the States. It called for the registration of all persons over 14 years of age. Among other questions on the form, were spaces asking for the

registrant's place of birth, nationality, parents nationality, religion, clubs organizations and many other very intimate particulars. It was particularly unsettling for everyone concerned, but mostly to the few remaining Jews on the island, but as the States had proclaimed the order, it had to be obeyed - The boat was not to be rocked!

December, 1940, found most islanders entrenched in their own problems, the main one being the ability to find enough food to survive. Feldgendarms patrolled our streets during curfew hours. They could be heard a fair distance away, as the metal studs on their jackboots resounded through the empty streets. We still listened to the BBC on our radios. Unions and clubs had been disbanded as potential threats - No doubt the Occupiers feared an attack by the well-disciplined Jersey Cricket Club, or the Ladies' Tennis Club, hurling their tennis rackets in gay abandon.

Some islanders said that things could be worse. Others suggested that even though food rationing was tight, they were not bothered by the Germans, as many other European countries were, but a few knowledgeable people held their breath and waited for the true Hun to show himself. I was one of the latter. For six months the Occupier had been well behaved, but islanders knew, from the BBC radio broadcasts, the terror of which Nazis were capable, and in fact practiced in many parts of Europe. But that had not happening on Jersey. We were a friendly lot, and hardly any German felt obliged to carry his personal weapon. They didn't need them, as we did not rock the boat. There were no partisans to shoot the Landsers (Soldier) in the back. The Occupier was enjoying himself. No wars! No bullets to dodge! No partisans and no bombs! Cor blimey! What a life kamerad! Life was a big holiday for the Occupier. He was housed in Jersey's finest hotels, with maid service, paid for by the States, or was it the ratepayers? The farmers were forced to supply the Hun with fresh milk, from the world's finest milk-cows. There was an odd bit of sentry duty and the occasional parade, and at times, there were firing practices, but the Landser was used to such things; besides which, every good German loved a parade. The only overworked Germans were in the military bands, which marched and played all over the island; ostensibly, to entertain us. I do not suggest that their concerts were well attended, but they were a part of the island's Germanization. The island's newspaper was strictly censored, and we learned only those things which the Germans wanted us to know. From the BBC, we knew that things were going badly for Britain, and German victories kept piling up, and as islanders listened to their radios, they hoped to hear a message from the British government - a message which might set their minds at ease, and tell them when they would be liberated, but in the first six months of occupation, no such message came. Some said that it was just as well, as the boat should not be rocked. After all, the islands were better off than most other German occupied European nations.

Somehow, as the eve of 1941 approached, it appeared that some islanders had forgotten that we were British and that the war was still being fought against Nazi Germany. The submissive first six

months of the occupation had been a shameful experience to many patriotically minded islanders, and it was more shameful for me, as my parents went out of their way to court the Occupiers, who were invited to Winchester House for social evenings. Thank God that my bedroom was not far away, and I was able to escape the "German nights," however, even my room was not sacrosanct, as I was sent for, and like a performing seal, was asked to show off my German. What next? Perhaps an invitation to join the Hitler Youth? I was very angry with my parents. It was a shameful time, and I hated to come home of an evening, because all I heard around the dinner table, was how well the bank accounts were growing, or how our lot could be improved if we did this or that, as long as we did not offend the Occupier. The smell of Gold Flakes had been replaced by the stench of German and French cigarettes, but, thank God, my father was unable to chain smoke any more.

It was a shameful time, during which my respect for my parents reached a low level. I felt that there had to be more honourable ways of making a living than collaborating with the enemy. I might not have been so ashamed, had the Germans not been invited to Winchester House, although I was aware that many people, because of the lack of food and good job opportunities, had been forced into collaboration or working for the Germans. I did not mind the Germans coming in the shop, because that was my father's means of providing for us, however, unknown to me, my mother had bigger and better things on her mind.

### **The Occupier and Collaborators**

Somehow, most islanders managed to survive the first six months of German occupation, after which the New Year, 1941, began. I was still at school, Dennis worked in his father's shop and Maurice was still an apprentice mechanic/blacksmith, although I did not know where, as we had little contact with him. Curfew was in effect from 11 p.m to 6 a.m and the Germans, once more, prohibited the movement of fishing boats for a few days; not giving any reason for doing so, but probably because of the usual target practice and zeroing in their fields of fire.

Word got around that Captain Sowden, the Skipper of the SS Normand, a freighter plying between Granville and Jersey, had been arrested for refusing to carry ammunition on his ship, although he was within his rights according to the Hague Convention. The motor vessel sailed between Granville and St. Helier, keeping Jersey supplied with whatever essential commodities the hard pressed States were able to purchase from the reluctant French. The ship had also carried, at least to the time of Captain Sowden's arrest, non-military ordnance for the Occupiers.

I was elated and proud of the Captain's refusal to carry German armaments on his ship, which flew a Jersey flag on its stern. His action was, as far as Dennis and I were concerned, the first meaningful act of resistance on the island.

When the Occupiers banned most organized clubs and societies, they curbed the Salvation Army's function, stating that it was a para-military group. It was a sad day for many of Jersey's poor who relied on the Army for clothes, soup and a few pennies to buy food. I always had a weak spot for the Salvation Army, and admired their dedication to Jersey's poor. It was not long, however, before the Army was working, out of uniform, but it was difficult times for them, as some of their charitable funds were cut off, and they could no longer openly solicit, as Hitler viewed the Salvation Army as a threat to his regime - no doubt influenced by the cutting edge of Christianity. In February, 1941, a German military court tried sixteen young Frenchmen for having attempted to escape from France in a small fishing boat. Their trial took place in Jersey's Royal Court. It was ironic that the young men, all French Resistants within their own right, were tried in a British court by a German Military Tribunal. I wondered what they must have thought when they looked up at the British coat of arms covered with the hated German red, white and black flag.

The sixteen young men had been captured off the Guernsey coast, which, it was rumoured, they had mistaken taken for England, however, they had probably been blown off course by a sudden, heavy sea, which pushed them close to Guernsey, as they had been captured by an alert German Navy unit. Their trial lasted but two days, and resulted in death sentences for some and long prison terms for the remainder. There was no doubt in my mind that the trial was intended to influence islanders

harbouring similar thoughts.

In March, 1941, Jersey's population was apprised, by the usual black and white notice stuck on walls, that one of the young French escapees had been executed by a German firing squad. The German poster read: "Francois Scornet, born on 20 May, 1919, residing in Ploulean (Department of Finistere) has been sentenced by the German War Court and has been shot on 17 March, 1941. This had to be done, because of his favouring the actions of the enemy by willfully supporting England in the War against the German Empire. Signed the German War Court. 23 March, 1941." It was a chilling epitaph to a brave, young Resistant.

The type of support given to England by this young Frenchman was not outlined, but we later learned that the German War Tribunal (Military Court) had considered Scornet's role in the escape more significant than those of his fellow escapees. He was taken from his place of imprisonment, and after being afforded the services of a local priest, was shot by a German Army firing squad on the grounds of an old Jersey estate. Francois Scornet was buried in Almorah Cemetery, Jersey, and on the day of his burial, his grave was covered with dozens of wreaths, placed there by islanders, as tokens of respect for the youthful French Resistant.

Scornet's execution awakened some islanders to the Germans penchant for brutality, while others could not believe that a simple act of escaping from France, had ended with a brutal execution. To my knowledge, no one in the States sought to dissuade the Germans from carrying out Scornet's execution, and if the Bailiff, or the Attorney-General did make representations on Scornet's behalf, they were not publically aired.

The island's starvation food rations did not affect my family, but for most islanders, food rationing was severe; particularly for those who could not afford to buy the odd egg, loaf or piece of meat on the black market. The weekly staple ration for adults, at the beginning of 1941, was: 2 ounces of butter, 4 pounds 10 ounces of bread, 4 ounces of sugar and 8 ounces of meat. There was also a dramatic cut back in the consumption of electricity; which could only be used between the hours of 11 p.m. and 7 a.m., and as 1941 progressed, gas was also restricted, however, no restrictions were placed on the Occupiers' use of the island's essential services.

Coal gas had always been the island's chief source for cooking and lighting homes for many years, and was produced by the Jersey Gas Works, by extracting gasses from high grade coal. Island homes usually had gas meters installed in accessible areas, and the gas was usually paid for by inserting one shilling or more into the meters, thereby paying in advance for a number of cubic feet of gas. When the shilling ran out, the gas flow ceased, and the lights and gas stoves ceased to function - it was not a very safe system.

Jersey boasted three magnificent cinemas: West's Cinema, the Opera House and the Forum, the latter being the newest and largest. I usually went to the cinema once a week, however, in 1941, the

best seats were reserved for German troops, and were separated from those of the islanders. Before each main feature, German news flashes of military victories were always shown. The brazen show of propaganda usually elicited cat-calls from the sectors occupied by youthful locals. This perceived rudeness displeased members of the States and the Occupiers, who branded it as hooliganism. The States quickly moved against the "noisy, unruly manifestations" by threatening to close the cinemas unless the "hooliganism" stopped. To the hooligans, it was just another example of the States' closeness to the Occupier.

We loved to go to the Forum, and if for no other reason, we went to see Mr. O'Henry, who played popular music on his beautiful Hammond organ. It was worth the admission price just to see the organ rise from below the stage to its floodlit place of prominence in front of the large, silver screen. The lyrics to many of Mr. O'Henry's tunes were projected onto the screen, and the audience usually followed the words, and sang along with his music. Mr. O'Henry, was a warm, friendly man, and a credit to Jersey's entertainment industry.

Many films were German, with English sub-titles, but some U.S., apolitical films had also been acquired, as the United States was not yet at war. A most hateful German film brought to the island was titled "Jude Süß" (Jew Sweet). The film was blatantly anti-Semitic, having been produced with funds from Dr. Joseph Goebbles' Propaganda Ministry. It depicted: the Nazi prototype of ancient, hooked-nose Jew; the fair German maiden with long, blond braids and the ultimate blond, and no doubt blue-eyed, German hero, who arrived in the nick of time to rescue the damsel from being sexually violated by the ugly, money-lending Jew. It was a disgusting misuse of Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice," which had been altered to pollinate the Nazis' anti-Semitic minds. The final scene in Jude Süß depicted the German damsel struggling to protect her virtue, while the Aryan prototype ran up dozens of castle steps. This part of the film elicited cries of admiration from the German audience and their local female companions. The film ended in thunderous applause, when the Jew met his end. It was a gourmet feast for anti-Semites' minds, and there had to have been a few of them in the audience, given the thunderous applause at the film's conclusion, as well as their remarks on the way out.

I hate to admit that I came away from the hateful film somewhat influenced by it, however, the Germans' conduct against the handful of Jews remaining on the island, quickly washed away any anti-Jewish sentiments I may have unconsciously harboured through the vile film.

Dennis had accompanied me to the film, and on the way out of the cinema he remarked, "It's no wonder that the Germans hate Jews when they are fed a steady diet of that stuff!"

It was very fortunate that only a handful of Jews had remained on the island, as most had taken the opportunity to leave before July, 1940, being fully aware of the Germans' attitude towards them. One who remained was a lady to whom I occasionally took small packages of food. It was an eye-

opener for me to learn from her that she had been compelled to register as a Jew with the Island's authorities; was not permitted to work in high profile positions, nor could she own a business. She told me that she had been compelled to sell some of her jewellery and most of her household effects in order to supplement her meagre rations, and when I glanced around her basement apartment, I saw that only a few sticks of furniture remained. The film, *Jew Sweet* and the lady's plight, was the beginning of my youthful understanding of German anti-Semitism. We had heard rumours about Germans murdering thousands of Jews, just because they were Jews, but there was no confirmation of them in the *Evening Post* nor on the BBC, although the BBC had spoken about the financial plight and terrible living conditions of Jews residing in Germany.

The devil made Dennis and me purchase corn-cob pipes, which we took into the cinemas, where smoking was permitted. We usually sat directly behind, or to the side, of the seats reserved for Germans and their local female companions, and when the lights dimmed, we stoked up our "Coltsfoot Supreme" - a dried, evil smelling weed, which many nicotine-hooked islanders were obliged to substituted for tobacco. Its stench drove the Germans to despair, and they either moved, told us to move, or complained to the management, who asked that we refrain from smoking the stuff. When not stirring up trouble with coltsfoot, we made it a practice to sit in the back rows in the upper balcony, from where we made loud, rude comments when German victories were flashed on the screen - The back rows, at the Forum, were close to two exits, through which we were able to run, when we saw *Feldgendarms* lumbering towards us.

Because of the shortage of electricity, the three cinemas were placed on rotation schedules. Dennis and I were partial to the opulence of West's Cinema's foyer, where the manager, resplendent in his tuxedo, usually greeted his patrons, most of whom he knew by name. Unfortunately, the refreshment kiosks were closed, as no chocolate nor candies were available, and because the aroma of candy, chips and biscuits, usually associated with going to the movies were no more, it lessened the enjoyment of going to the movies.

According to the BBC and the German censored *Jersey Evening Post*, the war was not going in Britain's favour, and the German Propaganda Ministry made full use of the cinemas to demoralize the islanders. Prior to each main feature, a UFA newscast portrayed the demise of the British Empire, and to rub salt in our wounds, the Germans, in 1940, and the beginning of 1941, constantly inferred that the invasion of England was imminent. We were shown scenes of hundreds of barges and boats in French and Dutch Channel ports, which the announcer said, "Would soon be landing in England." This announcement caused the Occupiers and the States to be further annoyed when "hooligans" acted up by blowing loud raspberries.

In the spring of 1941, the Germans invited the civilian population to see a film called, "*Sieg im*

Western" (Victory in the West), which was shown at the Forum. The cinema was decorated with huge Nazi flags and a large "V" (for Victory) signs, although the German word for victory was "Sieg." The film began with a small, garland-surrounded V in the distance, which grew larger until it ultimately filled the wide screen. This fiasco was accompanied by the opening bars of Beethoven's Symphony No. 5, Opus 67 - The film had already been shown to the German troops, but had obviously been re-worked for English-speaking audiences on the Islands.

"Victory in the West" was produced for German mentality, and quite understandably, it elicited muffled laughter and discreet coughs from many of the viewing locals. The "rude" noises were very offensive to the watching Germans, as the film had been produced as a dedication to Adolf Hitler's 52nd birthday, 20 April, 1941. It re-played most of the important German victories, including Hitler's little jig, as he viewed the splendours of occupied Paris. It was very disheartening film for the locals, but it gave some of us some insight into the humourless, German psyche.

I had met dozens of Germans in my father's shop and in our home, and I found them devoid of any humour. At times, particularly when they had consumed sufficient alcohol, they laughed at their own morbid jokes, but good humour was noticeably lacking in all of them. Dennis and I wondered if this was due to Germany's austere, party-oriented school system, or because it was an inbred German trait. It was not worth while telling any of them a rousing English joke, for no matter how funny it was, it elicited, at most, a blank stare, as if the Hun was waiting for the punch line.

During 1941, several "Military Zones" were declared throughout the island. These zones were created when areas were mined and fortified, and were usually located where the terrain had been deemed suitable for seaborne landings. The creation of Military Zones deprived islanders of many of their favourite walking and recreational areas, however, islanders' recreation was far from the German minds.

In mid-1941, the Germans brought hundreds of European labourers to the island, and employed them on extending the airport and building fortifications. The first labourers were mainly Spanish ex-socialists and communists, who had fought General Franco during the Spanish Civil War. After their defeat in Spain, the so called Red Spaniards fled to France, where they were interned in concentration camps in the south of France, and remained incarcerated for almost five years. In June, 1940, the Germans, after occupying France, had noted the convenient Spanish labour pool sitting behind barbed wire, and had released most of them to build fortifications in northern France and the Channel Islands. Many die-hard Communists among them, refused to work for the Germans and were deported to concentration camps in Germany.

The Red Spanish workers were actively recruited by the Organization Todt (Todt Organization (OT)), a German para-military, labour organization, which was responsible for the construction of



all German fortifications, including the Siegfried Line. The OT's labour force was supplemented by thousands of men and women from conquered nations, but those who had volunteered for the OT, soon found out that working conditions were not quite as good as had been promised.

It was said that Adolf Hitler took a personal interest in fortifying the Channel Islands, and during one of his many vitriolic speeches, he proclaimed both Bailiwicks to be "Festungs" (Fortresses). He also decreed that they were to be defended to the last man.

The Germans also recruited Jersey men to work on fortifications, and were quite successful in signing up the required manpower. The reason being that the German Paymaster paid almost double the wages than paid by the States' Labour Board, which also recruited islanders to work for the Germans, although, it was said, on non-military functions. It was very ironic, as the money came from the same source - the Jersey taxpayer, who was responsible, according to the Hague Convention, for paying the German occupation costs.

The Germans also recruited Irish workmen, who had opted to remain on the island prior to its occupation - Just as the Italians had converged on the islands as waiters and cooks during pre-war, summer vacation periods, the Irish came in large numbers to plant and dig potatoes during the growing season. Although Ireland was a neutral nation, the Occupier did not allow the Irish to return to their homeland, despite the fact that many of them wanted to leave. It was a clear violation of the Neutrality Act, but the Irish could do nothing about their plight, despite representations made by their government.

In order to boost the Island's defenses, the Germans shipped in a dozen old French Renault tanks and some large artillery pieces; some of which had been removed from the Maginot Line and French Navy ship yards. And as soon as a new bunker or emplacement was built and the weapons installed, the usual order, regarding artillery firing practise, was proclaimed to the public, and all fishing was cancelled for a period of time. In the beginning of the occupation the Germans used makeshift gun emplacements, but by October, 1941, many concrete bunkers were completed - The island was fast becoming Fortress Jersey.

The German High Command considered the Channel Islands to be an extension of Hitler's fortified West Wall, and great emphasis had been placed on making them impregnable. One of the most fortified areas was St. Ouen's Bay, a once beautiful four-mile stretch of beach, on the Island's west coast, and because of the unobstructed beach and low tides, the Germans considered it to be a potential landing site.

Some of German bunkers were built directly on the coast line, but others were constructed slightly inland, giving the Germans defence in depth. The most ambitious construction was in St Ouen's, where a long anti-tank wall was started in 1941, and was due to run the full length of the

bay.

Some dormant British patriotism popped up, when audacious islanders painted and chalked V signs on garden walls in the Rouge Bouillon area - It was said that the V for Victory sign was synonymous with the patented two raised fingers victory sign, generally associated with the British Prime Minister, Mr. Winston Churchill - These acts infuriated the Germans, who threatened to confiscate radios, unless the culprits gave themselves up. It was unfortunate, or opportune, that the V signs were painted on or about the same time as the Germans celebrated the first year of the island's occupation, and the actions did not sit well with them. As no one owned up, several radio sets were confiscated from homes in the immediate area of the V signs, however, they were shortly returned to the owners without explanation. To some, including a few members of the States, the painting of V signs was an act of vandalism, but to Dennis and me, it was a sign of passive resistance by a few who had dared to resist, and the little spark of resistance told us that the Germans were not winning the battle for our minds.

In a typical block-headed, counter movement to the V signs, the Germans painting their own, some being painted with pitch, which made them difficult to remove. My mother was quite offended when a medium-size V was painted on our garden wall, and it must have been doubly offensive for her, as her Axis allies were the artists. I smiled each time I passed it, because it seemed to belong on a wall, behind which the Occupiers, too frequently, enjoyed themselves.

As the war swirled around the island in 1941, my mother took full advantage of her "Italian nationality by marriage." She obtained an Italian passport, through the island's Italian representative, and armed with this document and the help of her German accomplices in the German Water Police: Messrs Linde and Stomp, she set off for France and Belgium on a "shopping expedition;" ostensibly for paper, chemicals and films, as my father's supplies had almost run out. Somehow, my mother and her German accomplices convinced the Field Commander's office that her trip was necessary in order to keep the camera-conscious, German troops happy. It was suggested that their photographs were sent to the Fatherland, where proud German parents showed their friends pictures of the conquered British territory, for which their sons had so bravely fought. It was small wonder that her request was not denied, besides which, my mother was a very determined and most disarming woman.

By mid-June, 1941, my mother was deeply involved in local black market activities, and was making a lot of money. Her illegal enterprise flourished, mainly with the help of her Water Policemen, Linde and Stomp, who took their share of the profits. They were also her protectors, who saw that no harm came to her illegal French supplies, as they were shipped between Granville and Jersey.

Late one night I woke up to the noise of a truck being parked outside Winchester House. I slipped into my pants, then went downstairs, where I saw four German Navy ratings and a German soldier, unloading boxes and crates from a three ton truck. The pirate in charge, Walter Linde, did not seem to care that he was making enough noise to wake up the dead - With typical bureaucratic German thoroughness, he was simply making sure that everything was delivered to the right place on time. To hell with what the neighbours thought! His stentorian voice echoed up and down Winchester Street, on which a few curtains moved, as the curious cautiously peeked out.

At the bottom of the stairwell I ran into my mother, and asked her what was going on. She gave no explanation other than to order me back to my room. I went back, but it was impossible to sleep, because after the truck was unloaded, it was party time! The celebration went on until dawn, at which time the drunken Germans piled in their truck, then left; tooting the truck's horn all the way up Winchester Street, and causing the curtains to move again.

When all was quiet in the house, and my mother and father were fast asleep, I sneaked downstairs to the living room, in which I had seen the contraband piled. I was staggered to see: five or six wooden, twenty-kilo boxes of Normandy butter; dozens of cartons of French cigarettes; hundreds of bottles of assorted liquor and numerous large glass flagons in baskets, each containing about 25 litres of premium French cognac. There were smoked hams, boxes of chocolate, dates, perfumes and French candies. Later that day, I learned that it was only part of the shipment from France, as the photographic supplies, including thousands of rolls of Agfa and Gaevent films, had already been delivered to my father's shop that night.

From that day onwards, I thought of Winchester House as an American speak-easy of prohibition days. The beautiful mahogany table in the dining room was turned into a card playing table and the sideboard was covered with diverse bottles of French liquors and wines. My mother played hostess to the card playing patrons, as she served their drinks and collected payment for them. On German-nights, her "friends" stomped all over the house, marring the carpets and floors with their metal jackboot studs and smelly Turkish-style cigarettes. Most of the German rowdies were my mother's black-market accomplices, but others were from the Feldkommandantur, and were in positions to further her enterprise. My mother was very much aware that honey caught flies, and knew that the occupying troops craved a little "homelife," which she offered them at Winchester House.

It was particularly irritating when the Germans played their favourite card games, Skat. The game involved a lot of loud, guttural yelling: "Zehn! Fünfzehn! Achtzehn! Zwanzig!" (10! 15! 18! 20!), as the players bid up their hands. The noise was ear-splitting, and as the hands were played out, bony German knuckles crashed on the mahogany table. It seemed to me that the Germans were unable to do anything without making a noise, and the more they drank, the louder and more guttural their voices became. Sometimes I plucked up enough courage to go downstairs and

complain to my mother, but I was always ordered back to bed and told: "Mind your own business!" Which made me wonder what my business really was.

My mother constantly reminded me that her German friends were responsible for the plentiful, rich foods on our table. She could not understand that I was upset because I did not want to be known as a collaborator's offspring, but with my mother's thirst for wealth and excitement, there was little I could do to avoid the growing stigma. As Gran said, "Once Em makes up her mind, she can't be stopped."

During one of the German nights, my father came to my bedroom, where he, too, attempted to explain the reason for the Germans being in our home. He offered no excuses, nor did he try to console me. Instead, he explained that it was a simple matter of earning a living during difficult times. I could not believe my ears, because I had expected the ex-sapper of Royal Engineers to feel the same about the Hun as I did. Their noises caused me a great deal of pain, as my grandmother was unable to sleep, and at times she crept up to my bedroom, climbed under the eiderdown, put her arms about my shoulders, and tried to help me shut out the guttural, Teutonic shrieks. She usually managed to comfort me, and I sometimes woke up to find Gran still holding me. She was my one love in the ugly world of occupation and collaboration.

At times, I had difficulty deciding whether I was a boy, a youth or a man, and sometimes I thought that I was all three, but I finally rationalized that my intense dislike for the occupier made me an angry young man. I was very much aware that the war was robbing me and my peers of the best years of our lives, and this sat heavily with me. I had formulated plans for my future at an early age, but they had been destroyed by the Occupiers, with whom my parents collaborated without shame, or even a blush to their cheeks.

Daily, as I left the house, I looked downward, as I did not want to make eye contact with our neighbours, and I usually kept my eyes down until I turned the corner of Winchester Street and New Street. Our neighbours and friends were aware of my mother's black market activities, but there was nothing they could do, as they knew that some islanders had been arrested and threatened for criticising the Occupiers' friends.

I was extremely hurt by my father's attitude towards the Hun, and did not understand why he allowed Germans into our house, although I realized that he lived under the threat of my mother's friends closing his shop, but regardless of the unspoken threat, I felt that he could have demonstrated in some small way, or even given me a few words of encouragement, but he never did.

At times I saw my mother and uncle cutting, weighing and wrapping butter, and once I saw them butcher an entire cow on the kitchen table. Probably, my blackest day was when my mother ordered me to hop on my bicycle and deliver her black market goods. She told me that the price of

the goods was written on each package, and that I was not to leave the goods, until money, or trade articles, were in my hands. I refused to do her bidding, and got into an argument with her. Unfortunately, when my father came home, he backed my mother, and ordered me to make the deliveries. I was stunned, because I was certain that he would have taken my part, and when he did not, my hero lost most of my remaining respect, and I avoided him whenever I could.

I was not emotionally equipped to cope with my parents collaboration with the Germans - Britain's enemy. I could not understand their greed as we appeared to be financially well-off without the black market enterprise. My parents offered no explanations when I questioned their integrity, other than, "Our table is well stocked!" My greatest difficulty was contending with my friends and neighbours, as I was certain that all respect and friendship had evaporated. I often thought of leaving home to live with relatives, but my favourite aunt was in England, and there were no others with whom I wished to live. I was also deeply concerned of what might happen to my family after the war. Would we be jailed as collaborators, or even shot? I had never doubted England's ultimate victory, and I knew that there would be a day of reckoning for collaborators and black marketeers, and now that I was associated with them, I was very concerned for my future.

My shame took a turn for the worse, when I learned, by looking at her list of customers, that my mother was selling black market goods to the Christian brothers at De La Salle College, as well as to some of my friends' parents. I was mortified when I had to deliver her illegal goods to my friends' homes, in which I carried out the shameful transactions without words and with averted eyes. I always ran from their homes as soon as they had paid Madame Emma's price, but my most haunting shame occurred when I delivered black market food to my school, where I dealt directly with the person whom I respected the most, the Reverend Brother Edward. After that delivery I could not raise my head for weeks - It was painfully obvious that neither my mother nor my father had any respect for my feelings.

The black market food, no doubt, contributed to our good health, and I was still able to carry on with my long-distance running and athletics, as I was practicing for the school's upcoming Annual Sports Day. It was an exciting time for me, as I had won the Junior and Senior Road and Cross Country trophies for the past two years, and hoped to win them for the third straight year; after which I was entitled to keep the trophies, or donate them back to the school. My favourite trophy was the Senior Road Race cup, a magnificent silver cup, some 20 inches high. I really wanted to win it outright so that I could donate it back to the school, with my name inscribed three times on the small, silver shields around its base.

It was not to be! My dream was shattered when the all sporting competitions in the island's schools were cancelled by the local Medical Officer of Health, due to "serious food shortages." I shed tears

that day, as I had worked hard and run many miles in preparation - Quite selfish sentiments from a well-fed, young man, but understandable given my love of running.

I looked around for someone to blame, and naturally I blamed my parents, who had never attended any of the school's sports' days or assemblies, at which I had been presented trophies in the past. In 1939, I won many trophies, and needed help to get them home, but my mother and father were "too busy" to come and fetch me. When I finally arrived home, I proudly displayed the trophies to my mother. She was not interested, but did ask where I was going to keep the "dust collectors." She had no interest in me, other than to provide a roof, food and bed; which I assumed was all parents were required to do. When my father came home from work that evening, he was too tired to even glance at my trophies. It was a humiliating experience, and made me wonder if all the long hours of training had been worth while.

My mother's continuing collaboration deepened my dislike for the Occupiers, and there were times that Dennis and I spoke about taking some kind of stand. We had no idea what we could do, but we had an urge to do something to upset the status quo of our dismal life under the jackboot. We were aware that any open resistance was impossible, as the Island was too small, besides which, the Germans would not have tolerated any overt acts of resistance on their British Island Paradise - It would have been too simple for them to ship the entire population to Europe if an uprising took place, and there was no doubt in my mind that the Occupier had contingency plans for such an eventuality. Francois Scornet had been shot for merely attempting to escape to England, and from that Dennis and I reasoned that the Occupier had more dramatic measures on his books; besides which, it would have taken only a day to ship every Channel Islanders to France, given the many barges still in French ports.

Our token resistance began with small-talk, however I became involved in a very dangerous sport, when I pulled down two German military signs and turned one in the opposite direction. It was a pitifully, small effort, but I was happy with my effort. Furthermore, in defiance of the law, I took to roaming the streets after curfew. I enjoyed being spotted by patrolling Feldgendarms and local Bobbies, as I always managed to outrun them, however, I did not consider the deadly game it might have turned into. I believe it was frustration and shame which prompted me to behave in such an irresponsible manner, but disobedience of German laws acted as an outlet for my confused emotions.

One evening, as Winchester House crawled with German officers, my mother positively glowed when an Army captain compliment her on the fluency of my German. He jokingly said, "Peter would look nice in a Hitler Youth uniform. It is a pity that his eyes are brown." When my mother laughed at the Hun's humour, she made me sick to my stomach, as her laughter told me that she agreed with the buffoon, who was no doubt enamoured with her feminine charms - just as all the

Germans in the room were. It might well have been her blond hair and slim figure, versus the fat wives back in the Third Reich.

I sometimes looked at my father, hoping to catch a sign of defiance, but all I saw was a far away, glazed look - My hero's star was more tarnished. He just sat there, cognac in one hand, French cigarette in the other, and that distant look on his face. However, he was in his element, and often tried out his smattering of German on the house guests. I could not understand why he lacked the courage to control my mother's activities, but I really knew nothing about life to any extent.

Black market on the island had become a way of life, because the official food rations consisted of approximately 1500 calories per day, or about one half of the calories needed to sustain a working man's health. I am certain that almost every islander, at one time or another, bought and sold on the black market, and I understood their need, but loathed the suppliers, like my mother, who made thousands of Reichsmarks from the miseries of those who hungered. Buying on the black market was often a quick way into deeper poverty for those who could not afford the cost, and many coveted, priceless family heirlooms had been sold in order to obtain a little extra food for the children. It was a heartbreaking time for those who were forced to resort to the black market, which might have been avoided to some extent, had the Occupiers not been so numerous and consumed more than their fair share of the Island's food.

The Island's judicial authorities declared that they were doing their utmost to contend with black marketeers, and it was a fact that some low-level black marketeers were jailed. This was paradoxical, as a senior island judge was one of my mother's customers. He came into the shop quite often to buy: coffee, tea, tobacco and French cognac. He usually walked in very quietly, glanced about, and if no one was in the shop, he coughed discretely. When someone appeared, he always asked for my mother, who went to the rear of the shop, and returned with the judge's goods. Money changed hands, after which the slight, bearded gentleman left, presumably for his courtroom, where he would sentence someone for selling a few eggs or a chicken to a hungry friend or relative.

In October, 1941, I was with Dennis at his father's store, when we learned that a Dennis Vibert had escaped from Jersey in a small boat, and had reached England safely. This raised our rapidly declining morales - a lone islander had defied the Occupiers! He had taken them on and won! His escape gave us ideas of our own, because during the following weeks Dennis and I talked of the possibility of repeating Vibert's feat. It started when we wondered if we had the courage to duplicate the heroic action; after all, England was a fair distance away, and the seas were quite unpredictable, furthermore we had no boat.

The more we spoke of escaping, the more we realized that we needed some help - a strong person, capable of pulling oars over a sustained period of time. With this in mind, we approached Maurice

Gould. At first, he was reluctant, but he later agreed to come along if our plan ever materialized. We were delighted with his answer, but everything was still a dream. We had no means of reaching England at that point, but Dennis Vibert's success continued to inspire us - All we needed was a boat, a good calm night and lots of luck. We had a long way to go and a lot of planning to do, but the idea fermented in our minds.

We knew that the war was not going well for the British, and we did not know how long we would have to put up with the Occupiers. Although we listened to the BBC, there was little or no news about the islands' liberation, and at times we wondered if we had been abandoned by England, and the thought of having to put up with the Germans for many years, or even forever, was unpleasant and demoralizing. I had stronger reasons than Dennis for wanting to leave the island, as I could no longer live with the shame of my parents' collaboration - I desperately needed to put the occupation behind me.

Dennis came from a warm, loving home, something that was missing in my life, and although I had Gran, it was just not the same. Gran was a wise lady who knew what was going on inside me. She had, too frequently, seen the hurt on my face as the Germans stamped all over Winchester House. At times she had whispered, "Take it easy Pip! They won't be here forever! Don't do anything foolish!" How well she knew her grandson.

Most islanders had grown tired of the endless columns of green-grey, German soldiers, parading through the Island's streets, behind their Ohm-Pah-Pah bands, with their silly glockenspiels. These parades were designed to entertain us - German goodwill they called it! I do not think that we were impressed, as we had read too many threatening German orders and States' proclamations, and we, rightly or wrongly, blamed our States' officials for much of our malaise. It was said that some islanders felt that the States collaborated too freely with the enemy; probably because none of the local politicians ever took a stand, nor did they take time to explain their strategies and actions. We may not have understood the pressures the States were under, but their silence fuelled our suspicion and contempt. It seemed as if they simply caved in and proclaimed every German order without question or argument.

After several discussions and much soul searching, Dennis and I made a commitment to escape. We set our course and solemnly shook hands on the dangerous undertaking. We had the spirit to succeed, but we were painfully aware that failure might mean the firing squad. With Francois Scornet still fresh on our minds, we decided to bring in a fourth party, to whom we would impart everything we were doing, and who, in case of misfortune, would tell our parents what had taken place. That person was very dear and close to me, and I disliked involving him, but he had offered to help - I had not needed to twist his arm.





### **Organizing and escape plans**

Due to strict German controls on fishing vessels, we knew that owning a boat would present problems, particularly after having purchased it, because of the security involved. We had decided to go directly to England, about 120 sea miles, including detours and two over-night stays on smaller, outer islands. Buying the boat was no problem, as the Germans had not placed restrictions on boat-ownership, as long as the vessels were registered and used for fishing. However, the size of the boat was important, as there would be three of us aboard, and while a small boat was desirable, we had to consider the amount of freeboard, because of volatile weather conditions.

There were some collaborators on the island, not only among the women who fraternized with the Occupiers, but throughout the island's population. We had heard some shocking tales of denunciations, even among family members; therefore, we knew that our plan had to be kept secret and on a need-to-know basis only. Besides which, we could not confide in anyone until their loyalties were established, as some loyalties had dissolved when the last British ship pulled out the harbour in June, 1940. We were aware that our escape would not sit well with the States, as their Good Ship Passivity would be rocked. We also considered that an escape might threaten the livelihood of the fishermen, but we were determined to leave, as we were sick of seeing the Occupier strutting his stuff throughout the Island.

Dennis and I viewed the occupation as a form of rape, by the very presence of German troops, who still enjoyed the Island's hospitality - Being on beautiful, sunny Jersey was a far cry from the Russian front, and that is, perhaps, one reason that the field grey masses acted with restraint, as they did not want to end up on the Russian tundra, and leave their island paradise.

From the hundreds of abandoned boats in the island's harbours, we might have stolen one, but most sails, oars and motors had been removed. We also reasoned that it would be indiscrete to steal a boat, as its theft would be reported to the local police or the Germans, and that might prompt the German Navy to increase their coastal patrols.

Dennis decided that I was the most likely candidate to get the funds with which to buy the boat, motor and gasoline; given my mother's contacts with Germans and black marketeers. Dennis was working for his father, and was unable to spend much time on the initial planning, and Maurice's time was fully taken up during the week, besides which, Maurice was not yet fully committed, and we were aware that he would not become involved in any dishonest acts, but we respected him for his beliefs.

I was fifteen and still in school, and in order to make time to look for a boat, I often played truant. I wrote my own "excuse" letters, and signed my mother's name to them. This came to a sudden halt when I was confronted with one of my "excuse" letters, which had been sent to my mother by

Brother Edward, the headmaster, for verification. It was less than a perfect forgery! My mother was livid, and the house shook as she screamed about my obvious demise; pointing out that my father and she were "working their fingers to the bone" in order that I get a good education so that I could "go on to bigger and better things." I let her rant and rave, because I knew she would blow herself out as soon as she thought her point was made, or that I looked contrite enough. After a few minutes, I put on my most angelic face, which stopped the yelling, however, I was banished to my bedroom to await my father's pleasure.

I ignored my mother's ranting when she was apprised of several more days of truancy during the winter months of 1941 - 1942. It seems that several more badly forged "Please excuse" letter had been sent home by Brother Edward. There was no malice intended by the Headmaster, he was simply concerned that I would miss my term.

As she shook the excuse letters in my face, my mother's voice rose several octaves, and I was certain that the entire neighbourhood was able to hear her. Her tirades were generally highlighted with such expressions as: "You are an ungrateful wretch!" and "You are going straight down below, where you will suffer the agony of everlasting fire for all the wrongs you have done to our good name!" Her favourite guilt trip was: "What will the neighbours think?" That one made me chuckle a little, as I already knew what they were thinking, and when she spoke of our neighbours' concerns, it brought out the worst in me, as I countered by reminding her that she had turned Winchester House into a Nazi rest home. I enjoyed that one, as it always hit her where it hurt most, and caused her to storm into another room, threatening to report me to my father, or she grabbed her purse and rushed off to the shop. I could not blame my mother, as I certainly caused her some embarrassment, but I did not think she was too concerned about my truancy - she was really upset because I had been caught, and as a consequence, she had been forced to respond to the headmaster.

When Walter Linde socialized in our house, he sometimes draped a fatherly hand over my shoulder, as he drank my mother's cognac with the other; then in paternal tones, he lectured me on my truancy: "You have to stay in school young man! Look what a good education has done for me! You must not upset your dear mother! You have the best mother in the world, and I don't want her upset any more! Verstanden?" (Do I make myself understood?) I suppose that it would have been appropriate to have jumped to attention, clicked my heels, given the Nazi salute and responded in true Germanic fashion by barking at the top of my lungs: "Jawohl Herr Oberwachtmeister Linde! Verstanden!" As I loathed all Germans, it was difficult to sit still with Linde's hand draped over my shoulder, and I usually eased from under it and sneaked up to my room, where I locked the door. I was constantly angry at my father, because he just sat there, and did nothing. I often wondered why Edmund Hassall, formerly of His Majesty's Royal Engineers, allowed Huns to interfere with

our family life. Was he not the master in his home? Unfortunately, I knew that answer, and really had no need to repeatedly torture myself with the question.

The irony of Linde's lectures was never lost on me. Here was a German, in my home, giving me a lecture on morality and the necessity of a good Christian education. Coming from one, who in his drunken moments, belted out Germany's top of the hit parade song: "Wir fahren gegen England (We are marching against England)," or on other occasions boasted about occupying England, and what the Germans were going to do to the Engländers, I found his advice amusing. However, Linde's lectures and my mother's increased collaboration made me more determined to get off the island. I loathed seeing the Huns all over the island, and, furthermore, it deeply troubled me that we had not heard any news of the Island's liberation on the BBC. I wondered if the British were sick of the Jersey's passivity, and had given up on us, or perhaps Mr. Churchill may also have heard how cosy things were for the Occupiers, and was punishing us with his silence - whatever the reason, it did not help our morales.

There was always a measure of comic relief from my mother's admonishments when I acted them out for Dennis. The first time I told him about Linde's fatherly advice, he laughed and teased me: "You vill go to school! Von't you! Or ve vill stand you against the vall!" Dennis always brought out the best in me, but he knew of my haunting shame regarding my mother's collaboration and black market activities.

As I needed more time to work on the escape, I knew that I would be forced to miss school on a daily basis or leave classes temporarily. I, therefore, decided to sell my mother on the idea that I could help her by working in the shop. I decided to convince her, that with me in the shop, it would give her more time to spend in France on her buying trips; besides which, my German was reasonably fluent by that time, and I would be helpful in the shop. I would also use the point that I was family, and would not steal from the cash register. Another selling point would be to tell her that I did not need any wages, apart from a little pocket money for an ice cream and the movies, and having thought over the strategy to employ on my mother, I envisaged no problems. I knew her too well, and having me in the shop would fit nicely in with her scheme of things.

As I unfolded my proposition to a very attentive mother, I saw that I had made an impression, as my proposition was laced with the kind of logic she understood. She initially put on a good act, citing my lost education: "Do you not want to be a doctor, a dentist, a lawyer or whatever?" I assured her that my absence from school would be only temporary, and that I would return to school in the summer term - That one really scored, and her expression told me that I was home free. However, she said that she would need my father's permission, which was, indeed, a joke, as my father had long since been relegated to the dark-room. He was totally disassociated with what went on in the house and shop, and seemed to find his refuge in the dark room.

My father's approval was not long coming, as the next day my mother told that I could start work the following Monday. She also said that she would write to Brother Edward, and tell him of my decision; which involved taking a leave of absence until the start of the next term - however, by that time, I hoped to be elsewhere.

The following Monday, dressed in my best clothing, I went to the shop, where I was shown my duties of: maintenance of the German registration book, general tidiness, dusting, sweeping and window dressing, but my main job was to serve behind the counter, while my mother sat in the small outer office, looking after the accounts and keeping a general eye on things. My mother reminded me to use my best German with the "customers." And so it was that I took up my position behind the counter, and whenever my mother heard me speaking German, she floated from her office, to beam at the satisfied German customers.

My father no longer used his magnesium flash powder as in the good old days. He had acquired a modern flash gun, purchased somewhere in France or Belgium, during one of my mother's shopping trips. As a result of the "buying" trips to France, there were no shortages of films, processing chemicals and printing paper, and there were even cameras for sale to the German troops, and while German Agfa films were no longer available, French and Belgian ones were. The business flourished and the ancient cash register often pealed out its sigh of satisfaction.

I was still hoping for a brick to come through the shop window, as the windows were garnished with portraits of German troops taken in the upstairs studio. At times, my mother placed a few expensive cameras in the windows, but they were watched closely, and no one was allowed to step out of the store to "focus" them, unless they were escorted by one of the staff. The window display comprised studio photos of grinning Germans, in steel helmets. I once, facetiously, suggested to my mother that the display would look better if a couple of German flags were draped as backdrops in the windows. She almost agreed, until she looked at my face. She was not amused at my audacity!

It was a constant embarrassment when locals came in the shop for their black market goods. When they arrived, I always called my mother, who took them into the outer office, where the transactions were concluded. I knew many of them and found the situation rather embarrassing. It was even more embarrassing when she was not there, as they would ask, "Is your mother in? I have an appointment with her. When will your mother be back?" My favourite one was: "Did your mother leave a package for me?" I was forced to bite my tongue so as not to rock the boat.

I had no idea how much money she was making on the black market, but in all fairness, she was not alone in this sordid enterprise, as many islanders made money selling: cigarettes, coffee, tea, hens, eggs, meat and vegetables and a variety of restricted and stolen commodities.

Some of my mother's clients bartered their personal property in order to pay for her black market

goods, but most had money to spare, and price seemed to be no problem. The black market was not confined to the islanders, as many Germans took advantage of it, buying whatever they could at bargain basement prices, then shipping it back to Germany. It seemed that the Occupiers had endless amounts of cigarettes to sell, which were as precious as gold. Some Germans customers even offered to pay for their processed films with cigarettes, and my mother never refused them, as the cigarettes were sold at outrageous prices to the nicotine starved islanders.

My mother always had a small clique hanging around the shop - all waiting to see what they could scrounge or steal from her. She had managed to surrounded herself with a couple of local, unsavoury characters, who were just waiting for an opportunity, which was not long coming, as one winter evening, in 1941, the shop was broken into. Fortunately, Police Constable Albert "Bert" Chardine walked past the shop as the burglary was taking place. Noticing a light in the back yard, he went in and arrested the two thieves: one of whom was my mother's best friend and the other, her younger gigolo, of Jersey soccer fame. I had seen through the woman the first day I met her, at which time I assesses her as a con-artist. The stout, well-dressed woman had always gone out of her way to flatter my mother, who melted at her phony compliments. The woman was sentenced to nine months jail, and I believe that her lover was sentenced to one year.

Early in 1942, the cigarette ration was between ten and twenty cigarettes a week. Residents of legal smoking-age were issued with cigarette ration cards, and even non-smokers were able to buy their cigarette ration, which they usually bartered for essential items; particularly food and clothing for their children. I found it difficult to understand the die hard smokers, who refused to give up the habit, and went to extraordinary lengths to obtain cigarettes; sometimes at the detriment of their families.

After the first few months of occupation, it became evident that our agriculturally rich island could not feed the local population, the Occupiers and their foreign workers. Furthermore, German demands on locally produced milk, butter, grains and vegetables took precedence over the islander's needs. If there was not enough to go around, then the islanders' rations were reduced. There were little or no surplus potatoes and tomatoes, and when there were, they were shipped to France in part exchange for the French goods imported to Jersey by the States.

I was delighted when two hostile natives stopped me on King Street, and told me what was going to happen to my family after the war. I burst out laughing, then congratulated them for having the nerve to speak up. I explained that I had nothing to do with my mother's affairs, and told them that if they decided to prosecute my mother after the war, it would be because she deserved it, furthermore, I said that I would be their main witness. Both men looked a little miffed, and went

away shaking their heads.

With our escape always on my mind, I made friends with just about every German who came into the shop; particularly the Water Police staff, who were in quite often; sometimes for photographs, but mostly for black market purposes. One of them, Konrad, a Leading Seaman, became a nuisance, as he lounged around the store, paying court to one of my father's employees, and despite my best efforts I was unable to get rid of him. I finally suggested that he go back to the processing room, where he could help her work. He did, and that was the last I saw of Konrad in the shop. He had cramped my efforts to organize money for the boat, as I had been unable to dip my fingers in the cash register while he was there.

Walter Linde and his immediate superior, Stromp, were in charge of port security, and controlled the dock area. Sometimes they acted as police and other times as customs officers. Anything that came into the dock area was subject to their inspection. They had their contacts on every vessel sailing between Jersey and France, and this facilitated the transportation of my mother's black market goods, because, Linde, Stromp or Konrad always travelled on the same ship as her "goods," and after the vessel's legitimate cargo was discharged, the black market goods were loaded on military trucks, then driven to my father's shop and Winchester Street.

Walter Linde lived and worked out of the Pomme d'Or Hotel, which also served as German Navy Headquarters. The hotel was just a few hundred yards from my father's shop, therefore, he did not have to walk far to see my mother, around whom he buzzed like a bee around honey, while my father worked in the darkroom, processing Germans' films. It made me very ashamed and angry, but I never heard my father complain about my mother and Linde's relationship.

At nights, because of Linde's obvious relationship with my mother, I sometimes cried to myself: "Dad, you have eyes! Do something about it!" However, he just went about his business while enjoying his Gauloise cigarettes, excellent Normandy Calvados, Armagnac and first rate brandy. What more could an ex-sapper of Royal Engineers ask for, given the circumstances? Much better than being in a prisoner-of-war cage no doubt!

I was never privy to the business conversations between my mother and Linde, as they always took place in the smaller rear office, however, whenever she went to France, Linde went with her, for a week to ten days. In Europe, my mother's Italian passport came in handy, as it permitted her to travel throughout France and Belgium on her buying quests.

I would have been blind not to have seen that my mother and Linde were making lots of money. On occasions, my mother told me to deliver envelopes to Linde at the Pomme d'Or Hotel. The envelopes bulged with Reichsmarks, which were transferable into pounds sterling, when placed on deposit with local banks. Other times, I had to pick up parcels of cigarettes, liquor and other trade

goods from two other Water Policemen - both part of my mother's black market circle. At first I hated going to the Pomme d'Or, but it did not take long for me to see that it was going to be my Ali Baba's cave.

The main entrance to the Pomme d'Or Hotel was on the south side. There were no sentries, as the Germans had become complacent on their Paradise Island, besides which, the troops were in no danger from the locals, who had been told, by the States, to behave themselves.

As open resistance was certainly impossible due to the size of the island and the large numbers of German troops on it, it was always a pleasure to see some islanders cross the street when they saw Germans approaching - One was supposed to step off the sidewalk when Germans passed - God forbid that he got his jackboots dirty. I never did, and the only time I crossed the street to avoid the Hun, was when Jersey women approached, clinging to their arms, and looking up at them with cow-like eyes. I loathed the very sight of the women, and did not wish to share the same sidewalk with them. They had conveniently forgotten that Britain, was still at war with their German lovers.

The German Navy Headquarters had only two on-duty sailors, who were stationed in a little office to the left of the main hotel entrance. The rest of the sailors worked on the docks, attended to their small fleet of minesweepers and warships, or did whatever else had to be done about the docks. Accordingly, between 9:00 am. and 12:00 noon and again between 1:00 pm. and 4:00 pm., the Pomme d'Or Hotel was practically deserted.

The Pomme d'Or Hotel's main building comprised five floors, including the main reception floor. The dining room and recreational areas were on the second floor and the upper three floors contained guests' rooms, all occupied by German sailors. Each of the floors had five large rooms facing south onto the dock complex, and another fifteen, or more, were at the rear of the hotel facing north. There was an large annex to the rear of the hotel, and it was in this annex that Walter Linde, Stromp and the remainder of the Water Police lived. I soon found it more discrete to avoid the main entrance, and use the small, rear door to get to Linde's fourth floor room in the annex.

During my first "courier" visits to the Pomme d'Or, I made it a point of asking the first German I saw to direct me to Linde's room. The ratings did not allow me to go to Linde's room unescorted, but sent someone upstairs to tell Linde that I was waiting for him in the lobby. However, because of my many trips to the hotel, I quickly became an accepted fixture. Within days, no one gave me a second glance as I walked through the corridors on my way to Linde's room. I also came to know some of the naval ratings, two of whom had Jersey girlfriends, and I was astounded when one of them asked me how to propose marriage in English. I wrote it down for him, but chuckled inwardly, as I knew that the woman had a husband in the British Air Force.

I was very careful not to call any attention to myself, as I planned to finance our escape by "organizing" things from vacant rooms, and although friendship with the enemy was distasteful, it



was necessary, therefore I took great care to foster good relations with everyone at the Pomme d'Or Hotel.

I continued to collect coffee, tea and cigarettes from Linde and his pirates, and on return trips I took them their brown envelopes, crammed with Reichsmarks. Linde sometimes asked my mother to pay him in English pound notes, which he said, "I can use when we occupy England." However, as most of the English currency had been stored by banks, taken to Germany or been hoarded by those with an eye to the future, she was unable to grant Linde his requests.

Banking the Reichsmarks was not problematic. My father simply made out his deposit slip to the Westminster Bank, then deposited the occupation marks to his account. They were converted to the pound sterling equivalent, at a little better than 9.30 Reichsmarks to the pound sterling.

Occasionally, Linde invited me to eat in the German ratings' mess, where he and other sailors commented on my appetite, as I generally went back to the counter for a second helping. I particularly enjoyed their ham and pea soup, which was tasty and nutritious. Over a period of time, I think that Linde became quite fond of me, as he often gave me a few Reichsmarks for my troubles.

Other times, when he was not in his room, I would go to the dock area, where I usually found him and Stomp on or near the pilot boat. I also made it a point of becoming a fixture in the dock area, and it was not long before the sentries stopped asking me for my identity card, or where I was going, as they associated me with Linde and Stomp - masters of St. Helier's harbour.

In the beginning of 1942, access to the harbours was only restricted to parts of the Albert Pier and the area, where the Germans moored their warships. Apart from these two out-of-bound areas, islanders could still stroll around the docks, or even fish from their favourite spot. The harbour control tower was on the north side of the narrow harbour mouth on the Albert Pier, and it was tall enough to command a clear view of the port and the dredged channel leading past Elizabeth Castle.

The Germans stationed in the tower, sometimes used bull-horns to talk to incoming and outgoing ships and fishing boats; the latter being required to register in an out of the harbour.

The harbour was a busy place in 1941-1942, because of the fortification construction activity. Many supply barges, loaded with cement and construction equipment, came and went. Some of the barges were those which had been earmarked for the invasion of England - a plan long since abandoned. There was always something going on at the docks, and although the occupiers were there, I still loved the port sounds and smells.

The States Purchasing Committee did an excellent job of buying everything and anything the hard-pressed and hungry French could afford to let the Channel Islands have. It was said that the French did not give up their foodstuffs willingly, because their rations were no better than ours. However, given the relative sizes of France and the Channel Islands, France was better equipped to feed herself and her occupiers than we were. Our scarcest commodity was coal, as most of France's

coal went into the forges and armament factories of the Third Reich. This meant that very little coal was shipped to Jersey, and many of our stately trees had already gone up the chimneys.

Although fish stocks were relatively plentiful, the Island's tides were dangerous and unpredictable. A good knowledge of them was critical, as the tide flows sometimes exceeded thirty feet. It was always necessary to leave sufficient mooring ropes on the boats and ships, particularly during the high equinox tides, when the sea rose to within a few feet from the top of the main harbour. At low tide, most of the harbour was pure mud, except for the dredged channel leading out of the harbour mouth.

On one occasion, as I went to the docks to see Linde, I was refused permission to enter. As I turned to leave, I saw the stern of a barge raised above water, while its bow was down. Dozens of Germans stood around looking at the half-sunken barge. This accident took place because someone had not left sufficient mooring rope, and when daylight broke, the barge was found, quite naturally, bow down. The Germans took several photographs of the barge, some of which found their way in my photo album. The accident fostered rumours of sabotage, but nothing came of it, as it was pure oversight and lack of knowledge of the local tides.

Fortification construction went on at breakneck speed, and the Germans shipped in more artillery pieces. Hundreds more foreign workers arrived on the Island to help with the German construction.

It was also said that there was a grandiose plan to excavate hundreds of meters of rock for a large underground storage facility. The new workers were, of course, fed from the Island's meagre food stocks, and this did not sit well with islanders. Furthermore, in order to house the increasing numbers of foreign labourers, the students from Victoria College were transferred to the Girls' College on Halkett Street, and their stately buildings were occupied by foreign workers. It was not a pretty sight! I had always enjoyed walking through Victoria College's magnificently groomed grounds, but after the foreign labourers moved in, it was no longer prudent to walk there.

There was also a battalion of Reichsarbeitsdienst (German Workers Corps (RAD)) on the Island, made up of young Germans, between sixteen and nineteen years of age. They were obliged, by law, to serve six months working for the Führer under the auspices of the Todt Organization. Instead of rifles, the young men paraded with highly polished shovels, and everyone of them sported Swastikas on their brown uniforms.

When I first went into the Germans' rooms at the Pomme d'Or Hotel, I saw that their cupboards were crammed with French and German cigarettes, liquor, coffee, perfume and other valuable trinkets. I was amazed at the quantities in each room, and assumed that frequent visits to France, coupled with their duties of Water Police, allowed them to obtain many things, not otherwise available to other Germans. And so it was that those German cigarettes and other attractive loot became my means with which to buy the boat, and over a period of weeks I took every opportunity

to "organize" things from their rooms at the Pomme d'Or Hotel. I always made sure that I knew where Linde and Stromp were, and when they were on the docks, I went to their rooms, carrying envelopes stuffed with money or newspaper cuttings resembling the packets of money I usually carried. I was very careful, as local women cleaned the Germans' rooms every day, and I never went to the hotel until after lunch, by which time the cleaners were gone.

I never took too much at a one time from any room. This way, I hoped that the thefts would not be noticed. I also took great care not to disturb any articles in the rooms, in case traps had been laid. My thefts were not confined to the rooms of those Germans whom I knew, as I went in just about every room. As I grew bolder, and perfected my craft, I found that it took less than a minute to enter a room, remove one or two packages of cigarettes, then disappear down the emergency exit onto Mulcaster street. I did not like what I was doing, nor was I proud of myself, but it was our means of getting off the island - after all, I could not ask my mother for the money to buy the boat! I also made liberal use of my mother's personal black market goods. I stole anything I could safely lay my hands on, and when my parents were not in Winchester House, I siphoned off a litre of cognac or Armagnac from the large glass carboys in the living room, then replaced the missing amount with good Jersey water - there was always a ready market for good cognac. If it was not nailed down, I took it. Even the Normandy butter and meat disappeared into the war chest from my mother's plentiful supply. It was never missed, and if it was, nothing was said.

Selling the ill-gotten goods was not problematic, as I sold it to friends at reasonable prices, and no questions were ever asked. I later found a lady, off St. Marks Road, who was quite active in the black market. She took everything I brought her, and always paid cash on delivery. The one stop shopping was safer!

It took less than four weeks to make almost two thousand Reichsmarks, which representing about two hundred pounds. I buried the money in the greenhouse at Winchester House, as nothing but grapes grew there, and no one went in it until the spring, at which time, the vines were pruned.

As soon as we had amassed enough money, Dennis and I made inquiries about buying a boat, outboard motor, compass and whatever else we needed. We were cautious, as the slightest hint of what we were planning would have brought the German Police about our necks. Nothing was sacrosanct on the islands, as we lived in a gold-fish bowl, where most people's business was know by everyone else. Dennis and I had decided to keep Maurice out of the planning, as he would have been offended at our income source - His strong arms were his ticket to England, besides which, we did not want to get him nor his wonderfully warm family involved.

In Jersey, life went on as usual. Food rations were further cut, more proclamations were issued by the States, and the Germans opened a brothel in Maison Victor Hugo, a small, but comfortable hotel. The ladies came from occupied Europe, and it was not long before syphilis reached epidemic

proportions among the Occupiers. In order to cope with the large number of infected troops, a large hotel, the Merton, was turned into a hospital in which only patients suffering from V.D. were admitted. It was a sad epitaph for such a first class hotel.

We had heard from my mother's sister in England through a Swiss Red Cross letter. They were all well! The Red Cross letters were the only means by which separated families kept in touch, and many of the letters were published in the "Evening Post," courtesy of the recipients, who cared enough to let others know that all was well in Blighty.

The Germans also opened a cabaret called "Bel Ami" in the former Plaza Restaurant, next to Wests Cinema, St. Helier. Originally only Germans were admitted, but as there was a lack of German patronage, it was soon opened to the locals, as long as they were old enough and left before curfew.

The cabaret artists were from occupied Europe and comprised: singers, jugglers, magicians and the usual cabaret acts, which lacked imagination and talent. To gain admission, one had to be sixteen years of age. I was barely fifteen when Dennis and I first went to the place out of idle curiosity. I presume that I must have looked sixteen, as I was not asked to show an identity card, or it may have been that I was relatively well dressed and wore a trilby. We went in only four or five times, as it was mainly a meeting place for German troops and the local belles.

Prominent among the local patrons were two of the island's better known petty-crooks, who spent most of their evenings drinking, womanizing and mean-mouthing our local States' officials, whom they blamed for their spells in prison. On one occasion, both Eddie and Tony were resplendent in tuxedos and white silk scarves; which no doubt had been purloined from some Italian waiter, as neither man could have afforded anything quite as regal.

The cabaret acts were third rate, and as curfew had to be observed, the islanders went home leaving the place to the Germans and their local ladies, who were never brought to task for staying out after curfew, as the island's police had no authority over their German boy friends. One or two ugly scenes had already taken place when the local constabulary had arrested some women for being out after curfew. The penalty for being out after curfew was usually a one pound fine, which, unfortunately, was one half of a workman's weekly wage.

In the Bel Ami, I have no idea what madness seized us, but we bought a 9 mm. pistol from a German Anti-Aircraft gunner, August, who was short of money. After firing a few rounds in the countryside, we prudently sold the thing to Kevin LeCocq, a school friend from the Beeches, who obviously had more sense than we did, as he promptly got rid of the thing. He probably knew the consequence of owning a weapon better than we did.

One Sunday, Dennis and I were eating an ice cream in Peppi's, a small Italian restaurant on the Esplanade. Peppi, an Italian, had lived in Jersey for many years, during which time he had become a well-known and respected resident. He had not abused his status as a member of the Axis, instead

he had chosen to eke out a living through his small restaurant, which had very little to offer, apart from acorn coffee and ice-cream. Peppi was always a genial host, and his home-made ice cream was quite delicious. The restaurant was managed by Mrs. "Mac," who had worked with my father at Reg Wills' photo shop in the 1930s. She was a very friendly lady, and we enjoyed dropping in to talk to her.

One day, we casually asked Mrs. Mac if she knew where we could buy a small boat, as we wanted one for fishing. We almost fell off our chairs when she said to talk to Peppi, who had one for sale. We did not pursue the conversation, as we did not wish to attract attention in the small, narrow restaurant, which was quite crowded at the time.

Several days later, when Peppi was alone in the restaurant, we asked him about the boat. He told us that it was for sale because he never used it. When he asked why we wanted it, we told him that we wanted to go fishing. Peppi opined that it sounded like a good idea, and asked if we wanted to see the boat. Later that afternoon we met him at the Old Harbour, where his twelve foot dinghy was dry docked. He explained that he had hauled the boat on the dock after the German bombings in June, 1940, and he suggested that it needed caulking, as it had not been in the water since then. We were not impressed with the boat, and told him that we would let him know if it was what we wanted.

We looked around for a few more days, but were unable to come up with another boat, although there were many unused ones lying around the docks. We were cautious, as the Germans were constantly checking on fishing boats, as they had become watchful since learning of Dennis Vibert's escape. A boat owner was required to register his craft with the Germans at the Rathaus, where it was given a registration number, to be painted on each side of the bow. A fishing-permit was also required, and it identified the fisherman and his crew by personal descriptions, together with an up-to-date photograph. Dennis had already obtained his fishing permits as soon as we made up our minds to escape, and we suggested to Maurice that if he was serious about coming, then he had better acquire a fishing permit as well.

As we had no luck finding another boat, we went back to Peppi, where a deal for twenty-five pounds was struck. It was too much money for the leaky old craft, but beggars could not be choosers. We were pleasantly surprised when Peppi asked if we wanted to buy his ten horse-power, outboard motor, and consequently another deal was cemented, and the Reichmarks equivalent of fifteen pounds changed hands. As we were leaving the restaurant with the boat's ownership papers, Peppi asked if we needed the six gallons of gasoline stored at his home. Not wanting to appear too excited, we haggled a little on the price, then told him that we really had no use for it, but if he did not want it, we would take it off his hands for a lesser sum. That evening, Dennis rode out to Peppi's home, where he was given the cans of gasoline, which were buried in my greenhouse, along

with the other items we were collecting.

A few days later, with the bill of sale clutched in my hand, I went to the Rathaus and transferred the dinghy's registration to my name. No questions were asked, and I left with a grin on my face and the registration in my pocket.

My uncle did not object when I asked him if I could store and repair the boat in his back yard, and he showed only limited interest when I told him that it needed painting and caulking. He was somewhat amused, as he knew I was sea sick prone.

My uncle lived with us at Winchester House, but still kept his family home on Ann Street, which was the ideal place to hide the boat, because the house had two large portals leading into a court yard, through which a truck could be driven. An added feature was that the yard could not be seen from the roadway when the large doors were closed.

We then went to Bellingham, a local cartage firm, where we hired a large horse-drawn carriage, which was driven to the site of the boat on the dock. Between Dennis, the driver and myself, we managed to lift the dinghy on the cart, then away we went through the German infested streets of St. Helier. We must have been out of our minds, as local Bobbies and Feldgendarms were everywhere. I sat up front with the carter, and held my breath, hoping not to be seen by Linde or Stromp, who might have asked questions.

It was surprising, but we were not stopped as we clip-clopped our way through several of the town's main streets on our way to my uncle's house. I noted several curious glances, but we arrived at the house without incident. The doors were opened, and the carter backed his horse into the yard, where we off-loaded the boat, then paid the carter for his troubles, and gave him a package of tobacco as a tip. We then closed the large doors on our secret.

Dennis and I walked around the boat, shaking hands and thumping each other on the back. We were on our way! The first obstacle had been crossed! We knew there was a lot of work to do, but we had time, as we had to wait for the spring's favourable tides.

My mother never spoke to me about the boat, therefore I presumed that my uncle had not mentioned it to her. Perhaps he knew his sister too well. Had she known about it, there would have been questions as to how I had obtained the money for it, and what I needed it for. She had a good nose for intrigue, and no doubt would have sensed that I was up to something which would have rocked her boat.

### **The boat**

There was a lot of work to do in preparation for the escape, but the most important task was to fix the boat's leaky timbers, as it had been on dry dock for nearly two years, and it being a clinker built boat, the planks had warped. There was some dark blue oil paint in my father's shop, and took it, reasoning that it would be more difficult to see from the air, although we didn't know how effective it would be. Maurice took the outboard motor apart, cleaned it, re-assembled it, tuned it, then attached it to a barrel of rainwater in the back yard, and when he pulled the starter rope, it fired immediately.

Whenever my uncle came to his house, he helped with the boat, and seemed satisfied that we were doing the right things. He frequently mentioned that he looked forward to joining us on fishing trips, as he no longer went with Bill, who had given up fishing. My uncle was not an inquisitive man, which was just as well, as he was quite close to my mother, however, I felt certain that he did not suspect the true reason for the boat being in his back yard.

We managed to get some oakum on the docks, and stuffed it between the boat's warped strakes, together with some putty from my father's tool box. When the strakes were sealed, we we painted linseed oil between them, after which we filled the boat with water to its gunwales. The water continued to leak out for almost two weeks, after which it slowed to a trickle, then ceased by the end of the third week. We heaved sighs of relief, as we would have been forced to cancel the escape had the boat not been sea worthy. When the strakes dried, we sanded them, then painted the exterior with dark blue oil paint, leaving the interior in a dirty white state.

The outboard motor was the most essential element of the equipment, as we did not feel that we could rely solely on oars. Maurice suggested that we needed ten gallons of fuel, as he had factored in the head-on tides and currents, which would cause the motor to use more fuel. Our plan was to row out a mile or so from shore, then start the outboard motor only when we thought its noise could not be heard from the shore. We calculated that our trip would be between 125-150 miles, unless we made it to land at a closer point than the Isle of Wight, which was our target. We were stumbling around in the dark as far as distances and tides were concerned, however, by the time we were ready to escape, we hoped to have found someone to assist with the navigation problems.

We had already decided to make the trip in three phases; making short night-runs, and hiding among the small, outer islands during daylight hours. We had confidence that the twelve foot dinghy would be difficult to spot from German air and surface craft, and hoped that if our escape was discovered, the Germans would concentrate their search to the west of the island, while we

were sneaking up the east coast.

We needed more fuel than Peppi had given us, and knew that the only way to get more was to steal it or buy it on the black market. However, we quickly discovered that stealing fuel was quite difficult, as the Germans guarded their transport very well. We had tried to siphon some gasoline from a German truck, and the attempt ended with Dennis swallowing almost a cup of the foul tasting fuel. We also considered stealing some from the local bus company, the Jersey Motor Transport Co., but the bus company had gasoline shortages of its own, having laid up most of its buses, and converted others to charcoal burners. We had also tried to purloin some gasoline from a farmers' truck, however, an alert dog barked, and the vigilant farmer dashed out of the farm house, then chased us through his apple orchard. We were fortunate to elude him, as he was quite fleet of foot; besides which, we did not want to wait around to find out what it was like to have our bottoms chewed by his angry dog.

Dennis suggested that we approach a police officer whom we knew we could trust, but I was against it, as I feared the policeman might not go along with the idea; however, after more fruitless days of gasoline hunting, we threw caution to the wind and spoke to Police Constable Albert "Bert" Chardine. Not wanting to beat about the bush, I asked outright if he could get us some gasoline. When the PC Chardine asked why we wanted the gasoline, we told him the truth. He seemed a little taken aback, then suggested, " You are out of your minds!" He asked if our parents knew what we were doing, and we told him that they knew nothing about it. Shaking his head, the PC said, "I think that you had better tell me the entire truth. You just don't buy a boat then escape without any planning!"

As we unfolded our plan to PC Chardine, we had the distinct feeling that he was becoming sympathetic, as he had not taken a typical policeman's attitude, e.g. bawling us out on the spot. When we had finished explaining our plans, we both held our breaths, because we realised that we were either going to spend the rest of our days in the Gloucester Street jail, or we would be helped. P.C. Chardine then asked a few more questions, after which he pointed out the possible consequences. He also reminded us what had happened to young Frenchman, Francois Scornet, and suggested that our craft was too small such a hazardous trip. We countered his very sane suggestion by telling him that we were waiting for the spring tides, at which time, the seas would be calmer and the daylight hours longer. We also pointed out that Dennis Vibert had made it, although we did not know the size of his boat, however, we suggested that our chances were just as good, if not better than Vibert's. When P.C. Chardine asked about our launch site, we said that we had not yet made up our minds, and were still looking a safe location.

Having heard us out, P.C. Chardine let out his breath, then told Dennis and me that his normal



course of duty should have been to lock us up in order to save our lives, or turn us over to our parents. He then did his best to convince us to abandon the plan, or, at least, obtain a larger boat. We said that we had no time to change our plans, as we wanted to get away as soon as the spring tides came. We had placed the fine officer in a dilemma, which only he could resolve - one way or the other. He spent some moments locked in thought, before smiling and tapping his temple - indicating that we were idiots. He then placed an index finger to his lips, then quietly said, "I'll see what I can do. Now be careful and keep your mouths closed!" A week later, the fine officer handed over four metal cans of gasoline, each containing one gallon of the precious liquid.

Although we offered to compensate him for the gasoline, he refused to take anything. Moreover, each time he saw us about the town, he kept suggesting that we abort the escape, because of the possible consequences. However, by then he knew how strong headed we were, and knew that we were going ahead with the escape. PC Chardine also promised to keep his ears open for anything that might adversely affect us. We appreciated the brave man's help, knowing full well that he had struggled to with his decision. We had torn him between duty and patriotism, and the latter won out.

The lives of all our local police officers were not particularly happy nor motivating. All police officers had been ordered to co-operate with the Feldgendarms, and more disgustingly, they were ordered to salute all German officers. It was heartbreaking to see our Jersey police, in their British, Bobby-style uniforms, salute the strutting, arrogant German officers. There were even occasions when the police were asked to pose with German troops who wanted to send photographs of a British Bobby home to Mutti or the little Frau - Perhaps wanting them to believe that they were already in England. One policeman was charged and reprimanded for having failed to salute a German officer, and this action caused many islanders to question why the States of Jersey, the policemen's employers, had sanction such boot-licking, degrading orders.

As we assembled our bits and pieces: two compasses, binoculars and life-jackets, Dennis and I decided to make our trip worth while and became amateur spies, when we decided to annotate a map with the island's fortifications. We reasoned that the locations and calibre of the weapons might be of assistance to the British. I came up with a relatively detailed map of the Island, which in better days had been handed out to the clientele of Beghin's, a fine shoe store at 51 King Street - it suited our purpose very well.

The map was concealed in Dennis' bicycle carrier, or in the handlebars of our bicycles when we rode around the island in search of the fortifications and defences. We also talked to the workers on construction sites and gained information from them, and whatever we learned and saw was plotted on the map, with short, written explanations in the margins. We were very fortunate not to have been arrested. Perhaps our luck held out as the Germans felt secure, and we did not look like

typical spies. The calibers of the weapons we plotted on the maps, may not have all been correct, but we did our best to describe them and plot their exact locations. Again, we were so youthfully arrogant that we failed to consider the consequences of being caught with an annotated map showing the Hitler's island defences. Dennis and I, as already described, had decided to limit Maurice's knowledge, as we did not know how he might have reacted. We therefore did not tell him about our work with the map, nor about my photograph album full of German war material. Besides which, Maurice did not want to be involved with the day by day goings on, as his main aim was only to get away to England.

Most of the mapping was done by Dennis as he rode his delivery bicycle around the island. The bike gave him some credibility, and when asked what he was doing, by inquisitive or security conscious Germans, he explained that he was making deliveries, or had delivered vegetables to customers in the area. Beyond that, Dennis was never harassed, other than once being told that he was in a "forbidden zone," and should leave it immediately. When we finished plotting all the accessible bunkers on the map, we wrapped it in an oilskin pouch then buried it in the greenhouse with the rest of our equipment.

We also packed my photo album in a piece of oilskin. It was almost full, and contained photographs of almost every piece of German military ordnance on the Island. There were photos of: tanks, the latest night-fighter planes, troops, anti-aircraft guns, ships and even two photographs of the sunken barge. In fact, it had everything of interest that the camera-crazy Germans had lined up in their lenses. There was not one photograph in the album for which we were responsible - the Germans themselves had made fine accomplices, without knowing it.

The next thing was to plot our course to England, and as we had little, or no knowledge of navigation, we sought help from a very qualified islander, when one Sunday afternoon, Dennis and I went to Captain Sowden's home, where we told him of our plans. The Captain listened attentively until we had finished, then quietly said, "Give up the idea! You will either drown or be shot. Furthermore, your boat is much too small for a Channel crossing!"

We should have taken his advice, as he was an experienced sea Captain who knew the local waters intimately. He quietly outlined our deficiencies, not trying any scare tactics. He simply told us the facts as he saw them, and after hearing him out, we grudgingly knew that he was right.

Dennis briefly argued our cause, but Captain Sowden again highlighted the weaknesses in our plan, even if sea conditions were perfect at the time of our escape. He told us that we needed a craft at least twice the size of our dinghy, and that we should either get one or abandon the attempt. We were shattered by his observations, but understood his concern for our safety. Sensing that we could accomplish nothing further, we took our leave, but as we were being shown out, Captain

Sowden quietly said, "If, by any chance, you are foolish enough to go ahead with this venture, come back to see me, and I will do my best to help you. However, I sincerely advise you not to make the trip in that boat. If you are determined to go ahead, get yourselves a larger boat!"

Right there we should have given up the escape based on the Captain's advice. His bravery and wisdom were not in question, and his advice had been sound, but youthful arrogance again prevailed, and when we reached the street, Dennis turned to me with grin on his face and said, "He didn't say he wouldn't help us! Did he?" I said nothing, as I had listened closely to Captain Sowden's, which had somewhat blunted my enthusiasm for the project. I knew the Island's seas only to the extent of having seen them from shore, and canoeing around the inshore reefs. My grandmother had told me stories about many shipwrecks on the outlying rocks, which had been caused by frequent sudden and violent inshore storms. I had deep respect and fear for the sea, and as we stood outside the Captain's apartment block, I came close to telling Dennis that we should abandon the escape, particularly as he was a non-swimmer, but seeing his huge grin, I unwisely held my tongue.

We continued to make plans for the escape, and from time to time, one of us went over to Ann Street to check the boat and keep it topped up with water, as we did not want its planks to warp again. My uncle asked when we were planning to move the boat to do some fishing. I replied that we were waiting for better weather, and that seemed to satisfy him, as he knew that I was very prone to sea sickness..

Despite our preoccupation, life on the island went on as usual. The local Italian population learned that they would not be recalled to serve in the Italian Army, and that made most of them happy, as they were mainly restaurateurs, waiters and cooks, but not soldiers. Other nationals, such as Folk Germans and Sudeten-Germans, who had worked on the islands for years before the war, were privileged, and enjoyed greater food rations than those of islanders. Like the Italians, many of the native Germans had been immediately promoted in their places of employment, where some took advantage to settle old feuds. At least three Folk Germans took to wearing Nazi (NSDAP) party badges on their lapels and dresses. I had to assume that they had been party members for years before the war, although the party badge worn by the female was rather new and still shiny. Some of the newly promoted Aryans loved to give the Nazi salute, and were suddenly very proud of their heritage, having turned from ordinary working-class people to conquerors.

The occupation inexorably ground on its course. Curfews continued, with the hours being changed intermittently, and based solely on German whims or military requirements. At the time of planning the escape, the curfew was from 10:00 pm. to 6:00 am. in non-military zones, and the curfew in the latter being from 9:00 pm. until 6:00 a.m. The changing curfew times were important to us, because we would have to move the boat to its launching place a day or so before the escape.

We also knew that any location chosen for the escape might well be in a military zone, and that there were few remaining coastal areas which were not so classified.

Life at Winchester House went on. My mother became more involved in her black market activities, as she made a few more trips to the Continent. She sent us picture post cards from Paris, Brussels and other European cities, which usually read: "Having a good time! Miss you all! Love Mum." She was usually accompanied by either Linde or Stomp, and when she returned, it followed that the truck arrived at the shop and Winchester House, where the contraband was off-loaded, and the curtains across the road moved ever so slightly again.

German nights and card-parties continued, and the once quiet, respectable neighbourhood resounded with the raucous yells of inebriated occupiers and local invitees. Nothing was sacrosanct in the house. The Hun roamed all over it, and it was not uncommon for a drunken German to barge into my bedroom looking for a toilet, as the large Winchester House had only one such commode on the second floor.

On occasions my heart went out to my father, who had been brow-beaten into submission, or was satisfied with his lot. I sometimes looked at him when the house was full of Germans, and I wondered how the once proud man tolerated the goings on. I asked myself time and time again, "Where is my hero? Where is Sapper Edmund Hassall, ex-Royal Engineer? Kick them out Dad! It's your house." How little I understood the real world!

We were always elated when British planes flew over the island, and cheered when we learned that there had been German casualties. We never saw any British planes shot down, but learned that several airmen's bodies had been washed ashore, when the Evening Post reported that British airmen had been buried on Jersey and Guernsey with full military honours.

Foreign workers still poured in to build Hitler's Festung Jersey, and in order to cope with their increasing numbers, the Todt Organization built camps on or near the construction sites. We heard of a concentration camp being built on Alderney, but did not understand what it could be used for, other than to house slave workers. We also heard that an well known Jersey character, George Le Sueur, had been taken there, because he had continued to pester the Germans by staring at them and making rude noises. This may have been true, as we no longer saw George looking in shop windows, hands behind his back, hair blowing in the breeze and keeping up a constant torrent of abuse at everything and everybody.

It seemed impossible that all the vacant hotel rooms and abandoned houses were filled, but they must have been if the Germans had constructed additional barracks on the islands. There was talk that the Germans had built the camps because they wanted to confine the foreign labourers after work, as anything useful, which was not nailed down or guarded, was stolen by some of the starving workers, who were not viewed favourably by the locals, as we did not understand their

circumstances.

The Occupier mined more of our beaches and at the same time created additional military zones. Even valuable, arable farm land lay fallow, as the Germans prohibited farmers from planting in the military zones due to their weapons' fields of fire and the Germans' penchant for security. This misuse of land did not help the island's already short food supplies. It was said that there were about fifteen thousand troops and labourers on the Jersey, and if true, this was a staggering number of additional mouths to feed, as no doubt, most of their food came directly from Jersey.

In order to facilitate building the concrete bunkers and underground tunnels, a small gage railway line took shape. Some months later, a small steam engine was shipped over from France. The railway was intended as a logistical aid for the building materials and ammunition taken to the numerous gun emplacements under construction.

The States of Jersey proclaimed yet another order - This one against keeping unregistered (edible) animals. The penalties for non-compliance were the usual fines or imprisonment. All farm animals were registered, and farmers had no right to butcher or sell their own animals and produce. Regardless of this proclamation, my mother purchased a piglet; which I named Angus. We kept the little beast in the greenhouse, where Gran and I fed it food scraps, bran mash and boiled potatoes. I became attached to the cute little creature, but my attachment was short lived, as unknown to me, my mother had bought the pig to fatten, and when large enough, she planned on throwing a special party of "appreciation" for her German friends - the main course being Angus. Eventually, when large enough, Angus was killed, dressed and roasted, and with the customary apple in its mouth, was carried into our dining room, in which my mother received her accolades from her hungry, appreciative German guests. When I crept downstairs the next morning, only poor Angus' picked over bones remained. Even had I been invited, I could not have eaten any of it, however, Angus had served its purpose - Madame Emma was Queen of the Ball, and the glass slipper fit perfectly! With heating fuel almost extinct, schools were closed during January and February, 1942, because of the unusual, severe low temperatures. The winter of 1941/42 was particularly chilling, unlike any I had experienced in my fifteen years, although Gran said that we had lived through a very severe winter in the late 1920s.

In April, 1942, by States' proclamation, the Germans issued another yet notice regarding fishing. This one stated that fishing would only be permitted as long as the major portion of the catch was sold to the States' for distributed to the general public. Many, rightfully or wrongly, suggested that the States' members should have lifted their fat bottoms from their armchairs, and try a little fishing of their own. The order was not well received, and many islanders suggested that the perceived, parasitical States' members would get more than their fair share of any fish caught. It was unfortunate, but our local authorities were still generally despised. I was of the same opinion, as I

opined that the States' members did very little to earn respect.

The island's fishermen already had to contend with depleting in-shore fish stocks. They needed to go farther out to sea to catch anything worthwhile, but German orders permitted unescorted fishing boats to go no further than a mile from shore, while escorted boats were permitted to venture as far as three miles out. There were few edible fish remaining in the shallow waters, but their numbers were constantly depleted by German's artillery practices. During the many sharpshooting exercises, fishing was prohibited, and there was no doubt that the explosions killed many fish, as mangled fish were found drifting in on the tides.

There were strong rumours the Occupier was about to ban all fishing and dry dock all boats. Fortunately, it turned out to be just another of an endless string of rumours pervading the island. The Germans were very conscious regarding their defences, and did not want their fortification plans to become common knowledge to British intelligence. In fact, the Germans were very much against any fishing at all, but as their soldiers and imported workers demanded more of the island's food supplies, fishing was allowed to continue.

The latest fishing proclamation affected our plans very little, as we did not intend to do any fishing, even though our fishing permits were perfectly valid. We only intended to leave Jersey once, and that would be the night of our escape, however, if apprehended by a German patrol vessel, we intended to throw everything overboard, then tell our "rescuers" that we had been fishing and became lost. Not very original, but workable, as long as we had time to dump everything overboard. We planned on taking very little with us, primarily because we had very little space on board. We felt certain that when we reached England, someone would give us something to wear. The one small suitcase we intended to take would contain: my photograph album, a change of underwear and socks for all three, some sandwiches, a bottle of water and a white towel with which to attract attention.

Dennis and I spent more time together during the final two months in Jersey. Occasionally he slept over at my house, so that his parents became used to him being away overnight, and to be consistent, I also slept at his house. As Maurice did not want to be untruthful with his grandfather, we told him as little as possible about our plans. Maurice had very strong principles, and disliked any form of deceit, therefore we did not encumber him with any of the planning phases, other than the outboard motor and helping fix the boat.

After cycling throughout the island, in search of a suitable location from which to escape, we finally decided to leave from La Motte, or Green Island - a rocky cove on the south-east point of Jersey. It was not an ideal spot, as there were dozens of large, jagged rock formations all over the area. We knew that the rocks presented very real dangers and also increased water turbulence, however, we

felt that Green Island was the ideal location, as there were no sentries nor gun emplacements being built in the area, neither were there any mines or obstacles on the small beach, which was a most unlikely place for any invasion. We also noted that the nearby locals had not been evacuated, like many others living in military zones, and we knew that we had to be wary of them.

About twenty small fishing boats were moored in the small bay, and we reasoned that an additional one would not be out of place. Another reason for choosing Green Island was that there were several abandoned summer cabins on the small common above the sea wall. Most of their doors were off, or had been kicked in by vandals and thieves, who had stolen all their contents, including most of the floor boards. The cabins were a decided bonus, as we would be able to hide in one of them on the day of our escape, or at least until the tide had ebbed somewhat. We chose the second cabin on the east side, because it gave us a clear view of the roadway and slip. The only possible danger, at night, could come from a local, whose cottage was directly on the north end of the slip, therefore, when we visited Green Island, we were careful not to arouse his suspicions.

In order to establish a presence in the area, we frequently cycled to Green Island, where we spent time in the small bay. We also went there on weekends, hoping that the few local residents would quickly take our presence for granted. We never went near the chosen cabin on those occasions; instead, we hid in a small pine copse, from which we studied the activities of the Germans and locals, however, no one seemed concerned at our being there.

During the trips to Green Island, in March and April, 1942, we braved the cold and went low-water fishing. This entailed following the ebb tide, and turning over rocks and seaweed in search of small fish or crustaceans. No one bothered us, but we always glanced backwards to see if we were being observed. Low water fishing was a common island activity, and we were occasionally joined by a handful of knowledgeable locals. On one occasion we were joined by four curious German soldiers, who watched us with interest. They were amused when we found crabs or eels under the rocks, and even played with some of the crabs, despite our warnings that the feisty small crabs nipped.

Once we had established a presence in the area, we decided it was time to return to Captain Sowden, who was not surprised to see us. He again tried to dissuade us from the venture. When he asked where we were leaving from, we did not give him the exact location, but said that it was from the south coast. He then suggested that if we were still foolish enough to make the trip, then we ought to leave from the west or north coasts, but not the south, as it involved some detailed navigation and increased sailing distance.

Sensing that he could not change our minds, the Captain reluctantly agreed to make us a navigation chart, but in a final attempt to knock some sense into us, he suggested that since I spoke French, I should go alone to France, sink the boat off the French shore, then swim to land and attempt to

cross into Spain. He wisely pointed out that only one life would be at risk that way, but again our arrogance prevailed!

The end result was that a week after the meeting, Dennis and I returned to Captain Sowden's home, where he gave us an annotated chart, containing detailed instructions for every section of the courses to the south coast of England. He had mapped our course from Jersey to Les Ecréous, where we were to hide in the small huts during daylight hours. He suggested that by hiding on the first day, it would give things a chance to settle down in Jersey, if our escape was noticed. The second leg of our trip was another night trip from Les Ecréous to the Casquet Isles - another small group of rocks to the west of Alderney, where we were again to hide during the day. He reminded us that we had to keep well to the west of the main rock formation on the Casquet Isles, as there was a lighthouse manned by German technicians. He also advised us to keep a good look out, and if necessary, by-pass the Casquets, to the east, and shelter among the smaller rocks at Burhou. The final course was charted from the Casquets and Burhou to Weymouth, on the south coast of England.

Captain Sowden cautioned us that the courses might present difficulties, because of the tide rises, but they offered safety because of the hiding places among the little islands, some of which had little stone huts on them. He also opined that if the escape became known, the Germans would probably concentrate their patrol craft to the west of the Channel Islands, and might not suspect us of having slipped between the islands and France. His plan was sound and very wise, as it gave us a margin of safety, although I had a problem with the tidal flows around the small island groups, which might present some difficulties for mooring the boat.

Before we left Captain Sowden's apartment, he cautioned us to keep his name out of it, and to destroy the chart if there was any danger of being captured. His final, well-meaning words were that we should abandon the escape, because he did not want to read about our burials or executions in the local newspaper. He did everything possible to dissuade us from what he considered to be an impossible venture, but we were too arrogant and pumped up to pay any heed.

Jersey was no longer our paradise. The Germans, although still well-behaved, were more numerous and unavoidable. There was only one way to avoid them, and that was to get off the island, which had survived almost two years of vacationing Hun. Additionally, chances were that we would have to put up with the Hun for a few more years, despite the fact that America was now in the war. We did not have the time nor the patience for things to turn in the Allies' favour, besides which, the war was still going very badly for the Allies in the spring of 1942.

I also knew that I would be going back to school after the summer holidays, and although the Germans had made no efforts to focus on the schools, except for the compulsory teaching of German, I really did not want to go back to the Beeches, for no other reason than I would not be



able to hold my head up. I was terribly ashamed that I had been forced to help my mother with her sordid black market enterprise, and I knew that I could not face my school friends, who were certainly aware of my parents' dealings with the Occupiers. It was time to get off the island, and leave it to the Occupiers, the States of Jersey and those who openly tolerated the Germans.

### **Escape and tragedy**

We finally decided to move the boat to Green Island on the morning of Saturday, 2 May, then set sail on the first leg of our journey between 10:00 and 11:00 pm. on Sunday, 3 May. We chose Saturday, 2 May, because Walter Linde had informed my mother that the Occupiers were going to celebrate May Day on that date. No reason was given for the switch from 1 May, but we expected that several parades would be held, after which, if true to character, the Hun would swill copious amounts of beer, then sleep off the effects on Sunday morning.

A slight hitch occurred on 1 May, when the curfew was extended from 10:00 to 11:00 pm. in non-military zones and 9:00 to 10:00 pm. in military zones. The change was of no consequence to us, as our concern was with the weather, however, the German festivities had to be helpful, as there would be less traffic and vigilance.

If things did not turn out as expected, our alternate plan was to try again the following week - seas permitting, however, we were unlikely to learn too much about the seas until the day of the escape, as due to security, no weather forecasts were read on the BBC, but some helpful data was printed in The Evening Post, such as: high and low water heights and times, sunrise and sunset and the moon's phases, and as we could not expect a detailed weather forecast, we had enough sense to look at the sky and sea, then figure out what to expect - a practice many islanders had been doing for years. The spring tides usually rose thirty to thirty-five feet, with the greatest rises being mid-way between high and low waters, at which time the sea rose as much as ten feet an hour. These high tide rises and falls also generated very strong currents, some which reached up to ten miles an hour. It was not unusual for people to be cut off by tides, and be forced to perch on rocks and breakwaters until the sea ebbed, or until they were rescued. We were aware that we could not row against the rise, and that is why we had planned to escape on the ebb.

The shallow sea channel between France and England was constantly affected by winds, which created a great deal of turbulence, therefore, we were hoping that April winds would die down a little, and allow a calm passage for our small craft. We knew that the critical time would be launch time, as the sea would be ebbing, and there would be a certain amount of turbulence among the many rocks surrounding Green Island. We also knew that the higher spring tides would bring about stronger currents, which might present difficulties for our small craft. Dennis and I had spoken about waiting until summer, when the sea would be calmer, but our youthful patience with the

Occupier had run out, and common sense was no longer our strong point.

We planned on taking the gasoline cans and equipment to Green Island on Thursday and Friday, 23/24 April, but not before we had worked out our two alternate plans with Maurice, who was still having difficulty in totally committing himself. The first contingency was to abort the escape if problems arose on the night of the escape, in which case we would have returned to our homes and set another escape date. The second plan dealt with disaster if the boat hit a rock or capsized, after which we would attempt to salvage as much of the equipment as possible, then go into hiding. We had selected a farm on the outskirts of St. Helier, just behind Dennis' home, where we hoped we would be welcome, and although we had not spoken to the farmer, we felt certain we could count on his assistance.

We kept our eyes on the sea all week, which continued to be rough, however, we were hopeful that calmer seas would prevail by Sunday. From the abandoned cabin, we had watched the waves break over the outlying rocks at Green Island, knowing that we would have to steer through them in total darkness. We needed to get an idea of what we were up against, and as we watched, we had cause for concern, as we saw that the waves created a great deal of backlash and turbulence; which would create difficulties when attempting to steer the boat.

The strain of waiting took its effect on us, as we talked over the pros and cons of the escape. We were, I think, testing our will to go ahead, because of the perceived dangers of the undertaking. After Maurice gave his final commitment, no one backed away, although, at times we wavered when we talked about the consequence of failure, but the thought of remaining under the jackboot solidified our will to escape, despite the inherent dangers from the sea.

Life on the Island, had become more intolerable. Food and essential commodities were scarcer, and the Germans spread like cancerous growths, and pervaded every facet of our once idyllic lives - There was no escaping them! I felt hemmed in by them.

With the exception of the barter and consignment shops, most shop windows were empty, and had been covered with paper in order to hide the ugly, vacant scars. Many articles high prices; particularly bicycles, which were almost the only means of conveyance on the island. They could not be left unattended, as they usually wound up under some fat German's backside, and if stolen by petty thieves, the bicycles were re-painted, serial numbers changed, then they were sold on the black market, where they fetched high prices for the uncaring thieves.

A rash of break and entries took place all over the Island, as the foreign labourers made their presence known. Most of them were poorly fed and badly housed, and this caused some of them to make nocturnal visits to farms, where they hoped to find a hen, an egg or even an unguarded cow. To some extent they were successful, as farmers no longer had weapons to defend themselves, and to make matters worse, there was no immediate help from the local constabulary or Feldgendarms,

given the timings of the thefts, which occurred in the middle of the night.

The ongoing destruction of hundreds of Jersey's stately trees turned our once beautiful island into a drab, uninviting rock, but their removal blended in with the drabness of the Occupier, who continued to imprint his sordid stamp, by disfiguring miles of our beautiful beaches with concrete weapon emplacements, barbed wire, trenches, anti-landing obstacles and military ordnance - all part of Adolf Hitler's Fortress Jersey.

The islanders looked seedy in their thread-bare clothes; suits and dresses no longer fit, but sagged over bony shoulders of people who had lost weight, due to the lack of food. However, the Occupiers and their Axis allies still filled out their uniforms and clothes because they received more food than the locals. Weight loss hardly applied to black marketeers, who managed to eat quite well, and shamefully, because of my mother's collaboration, I had not lost any weight, on the contrary, I had gained some and, had grown to five feet eleven inches and one hundred and forty pounds at age fifteen.

Islanders became more frustrated with the lack of news from the BBC, as no one had any idea how long they would have to put up with the Hun, and this lack of news was aggravated by the States, who failed to inform us what they were attempting to achieve through their perceived willingness to co-operate with the Occupier.

During the week before the escape, Dennis and I made several trips to Green Island, at which time we took almost everything from the greenhouse in Winchester Street. We buried the effects in the cabin, then smoothed out the sand so that no one would notice it had been disturbed. On Friday, 24 April, Dennis took out the last of the equipment, leaving only Captain Sowden's chart, the Beghin's map and two compasses; one which was a spare, and the other we intended to place in a prepared setting carved into the boat's front seat.

On Monday, 27 April, I again went to Bellingham, where I arranged for a horse and cart to move the boat from Ann Street to Green Island. I was lucky to obtain the services of the old carter, who knew where the boat was, and asked no questions. I paid the cartage fee up front, and gave both the manager and the carter a package of German cigarettes.

The final week really dragged itself out. We were very tense, as there was nothing to do but wait and contemplate the dangers which lay ahead. Additionally, all three of us still had some searching to do before making the final commitment. I was very much aware that Dennis and Maurice had serious reservations about leaving their families, but I had no such problem, as I wanted to get out of Winchester House, which reeked of stale German tobacco and alcohol, however, I was sad to leave my brother behind, as I was very close to him. I also felt very badly that I had been dishonest with Gran, but I knew she would understand and eventually approve.

At 8:00 am. on Saturday, 2 May, the elderly carter arrived at my uncle's house, and after a lot of pushing and shoving we managed to get the boat and the remaining pieces of equipment on the cart, which we covered with large pieces of sailcloth. Maurice rode ahead to Green Island in order to check that the area was safe, and I cycled a few yards ahead of the cart, in case it was stopped by the police for any reason. If it were stopped, I felt confident that I would be able to talk my way out of any problems, as there was nothing unusual about moving a boat from one berth to another - although such transfers were usually done by sailing boats from one harbour to another. If I was detained for any reason, Maurice was sure to find out about it on his way back. That being the case, he was to go to the market and warn Dennis to abort the escape.

As we made our way from my uncle's yard along Ann Street, not a soul was seen. Islanders were in no hurry to jump out of warm beds, besides which, it was practically useless going to the markets, where there was no extra food to buy. Another possible answer to the deserted streets was that the locals were aware that the German May Day parade would spawn endless columns of marching Huns, and the streets would reverberate with the frightful sounds of German military bands, accompanied by the ding-donging glockenspiels, which, in itself, was enough to keep any self-respecting islander's head buried under the pillow.

The route we had chosen was: south on Ann Street, past St. James' Church, along La Colomberie, down Don Road, then along the Greve d'Azette coast road, which led directly to Green Island. We clip-clopped past several German occupied hotels, but did not attract the attention of the few troops roaming the gardens, and although some of them stared at us, we were not challenged. The approximately two mile trip took an hour or more, but it was one of the longest hours of my life. When we were half way along Greve d'Azette coast road, Maurice came back and said that there were no signs of danger, and that our buried equipment was still intact.

The old horse took its time, as it, like most of the Jersey's population, had lost weight. Its ribs were skeletal, and I wondered how long it would last without proper food, or how long it would be before it was taken to the slaughter house, from which it would end up in the foreign labourers' cook pots. I hated to see any animal suffer, but the old horse was representative of most of the island's domestic animals.

As we progressed, I imagined that everyone knew what we were up to. I had visions of breast-plated Feldgendarms carting us off to jail, however, my fears eased as our journey continued, and much to my surprise, nothing happened! Not one German truck overtook us, and only four military trucks passed us in the opposite direction. We appeared to have chosen the correct route and time!

When we arrived at Green Island, we guided the carter down the slip, then along the beach

to the location we wanted to moor the boat, which was south of all other boats, but when we tried to get the boat off the cart, it was too heavy for us. The old carter was unable to help too much because of a recurring bad back, and I had visions of waiting for high tide to float the boat off the cart; which might have attracted attention. Fortunately, as we struggled to get the boat off the cart, four young German soldiers walked down the slip, and seeing our difficulty, offered to assist us. In no time, with the help of this willing crew, the boat was off-loaded, then dragged along beach to its berth. I thanked the soldiers, and gave them each a cigarette. This was a mistake, as they all lit up, then stood around talking, asking what we intended to do with the boat. I told them that we were going to fish in the area, as fish were scarce around St. Helier, where we had previously fished. I also showed them my fishing permit, in case they harboured any suspicions, which, fortunately, they did not. When they left, two very shaken young men tried to stop their knees from knocking. We had not expected any Germans, nor did we know where they came from. With the Germans gone, we asked the carter to drive to the cabin, where we off-loaded the outboard motor and oars; after which we sent him on his way with another package of cigarettes and a few extra Reichsmarks.

Maurice and I spent some time observing the fisherman's cottage, but saw nothing to alert us of any danger. I asked Maurice to stay in the cabin until 2:00 pm., in case the fisherman had seen something suspicious, and came to check the cabin. We had spoken to the man several times, and he had always seemed quite friendly, but we could not afford to take chances. I rode back to town, where I talked to Dennis before going to my father's shop, where I established a presence for my mother; even though I had begged off work for the day. At 1:00 pm. I went back to the fruit market, where I talked to Dennis, then returned to Green Island, and relieved Maurice.

Having nothing to do, I took compass bearings on the main rocks, and before I knew it, it was almost 6:00 pm. No one came near the cabin, and although I saw the fisherman outside his cottage several times, he did not appear to be aware of our presence. When he went inside his cottage, I climbed out the back window, then rode home as fast as I could pedal, as I wanted to get back home ahead of my parents.

Later that evening I briefed our special confidant on what had taken place. He was extremely surprised to learn the closeness of our departure, as he had not expected us to leave before summer time. It was essential that he know everything in case of disaster, and although he was saddened, he assured me that he would take care of everything for us. I hated myself for implicating him, but he was the only one I could trust.

That evening, as planned, the three of us told our parents that we were going fishing the next day, after which we would sleep over at each others houses. We had decided to leave our homes early on Sunday, and to make things look genuine, we laid out our fishing tackle, in which we hid the

Beghin's map, the compasses and the Captain's chart. The two maps had to be kept handy, as it was imperative to destroy them if problems arose. We had discussed what actions to take if intercepted at sea, and had gone over the drill of throwing everything overboard: if the boat sank for any reason as we were leaving, we planned on staying together to help Dennis get back to shore, after which we would wait in the cabin until daylight, then salvage whatever equipment we could find, then, if we were still in the clear, we planned to return to our homes and tell our parents that we had met with a fishing accident. Our greatest fear was that some compromising articles might be found at low tide, and traced back to us.

Dennis and I had previously decided not to inform Maurice about the photographs nor the Beghin's map, as we did not want to compromise him nor place him in any greater danger. We did not think that of our escape as an act of heroism nor one of aggression; we simply wanted to get out from under the heel of the jackboot. Free of restrictions, deprivations and arrogant, humourless Germans. However, we all had the common agonizing thought of our families being arrested through of our actions, but having come so far, we were forced to purge that thought from our minds.

On Sunday morning, 3 May, shortly after 9:00 am., we met at the Howard Davis Park main gate, carrying only our fishing lines and a haversack containing sandwiches and a flask of milk. I was relieved to join Dennis and Maurice, as I had been unable to sleep all night, but from the look on their faces, I knew that they, too, had spent a very traumatic night. We stood for a few minutes near the large park gates talking about the final steps to Green Island, and Maurice and I were talking when Dennis asked, "Are we going to stay here all day? Let's go for it!" His words helped to sweep away any reservations we may have had, and like the Three Musketeers, we rallied to the occasion, then set out to keep our appointment with destiny.

When we arrived at the cabin, we dug up most of our equipment, and found everything intact. We then went down to the beach, where we took off our shoes and socks, rolled up our pant-legs, then turned over rocks and seaweed, ostensibly looking for fish. We kept up this act until for some time, then we were forced to stop, because strong winds chilled us to the bone. Back in the cabin we ate a sandwich, drank some milk, and during the rest of the afternoon and evening, we huddled together trying to keep warm, as the wind was chilling, and whistled through the flimsy cabin walls and broken windows.

As the tide rose, we were alarmed to hear the waves crashing on nearby rocks, and when we looked out the window, we saw that the sea was too rough to safely launch the boat on time. There was nothing to do but sit tight and wait for the sea to recede; hoping that it might calm somewhat.

However, that was not the case, as the winds became stronger, the waves higher and the sea rougher, moreover, we were running out of time, and either had to leave or abort the escape.

We knew that high tide was at 9:31, but Maurice was unable to leave the cabin before 11:00 pm, at which time he took four gasoline cans with him, and when he came back for the outboard motor, Dennis and I followed with the life jackets, suitcase and oars, after which, we went back to the cabin for the last bits and pieces, leaving Maurice to attach the outboard motor to the boat's stern. Back in the cabin, Dennis and I buried all evidence of our presence, then smoothed over the sand for the last time. We then joined Maurice at the boat, where we crouched and looked at the rough sea with a great deal of trepidation.

After 11:00 pm., we could wait no longer, as the sea was ebbing fast. We dragged the boat along the beach, then into the turbulent sea. When the boat was afloat, Dennis jumped in and inserted the oar-locks, then shoved both oars in them. He then tried to pull the bow into the waves, but the waves were too strong, and he was unable to. Seeing Dennis' trouble, Maurice jumped in and grabbed the oars, and with his strength, he managed to bring the boat about into the waves. As I climbed in, Maurice yelled at us to take an oar each. He had decided to start the motor, regardless of noise, because the sea was pushing us towards nearby rocks, and he knew that we would not get past them on oar-power alone.

Dennis and I took off our bulky life jackets, and threw them under the seats, as we found it impossible to row with them on. We then pulled hard on the oars, and managed to keep the bow into the sea, and as we struggled with the oars, Maurice attempted to start the motor, but with each receding wave, the boat was pulled farther out, and closer to a large jagged rock, which we would hit unless Maurice was able to start the motor and bring the boat under control.

Large waves pitched and tossed the boat around like a matchstick, keeping the bow out of the water, and making it impossible for us to make too much headway with the oars, furthermore, occasionally, we had to use the oars to push the boat away from rocks. We were in deep trouble, and I yelled at Maurice to hurry and start the motor. By that time the sea had pulled us some four hundred yards from shore, and each successive, receding wave pushed us closer to the large, jagged rock formation near Green Island itself.

We were within two or three feet of it, when the motor roared to life. Unfortunately, the motor, which also acted as a rudder, was turned in the direction of the rock, and at the same moment that it roared to life, a large wave broke over the port bow of the boat. Its force, coupled with the propeller's power, thrust us against the rock, and left the bow high and dry; then another incoming wave broke over the boat, and swamped the motor, which cut out. The boat keeled over to port, and



the next wave filled it with water, leaving us pinned against the rock. The next set of waves then capsized the boat, and threw us in the sea. Dennis, who was sitting on the port side, went in first. I jumped in after him, and grabbed him by the collar, but we were in deep trouble as our life jackets disappeared in the turbulent sea.

Initially, Dennis was quite calm, and held on to the haversack, which was still around my shoulders, however, he pulled so hard that the strap almost choked me. I yelled at him to let go and to roll on his back so that I could tow him to shore, then when he was on his back I screamed, "Kick Dennis! Use your legs! Help me! Kick out!" He did, and his actions gave me time to slip out of the haversack.

I kept Dennis afloat, but made very little progress because of the heavy ebb tide. I was also hindered by my clothes, but managed to slip out of my shoes and jacket, which made things a little easier, but I knew that we were in deep trouble. I frantically called Maurice's name, but there was no answer. I had no idea what had happened to him, but I knew that I needed help with Dennis, as by that time, the tide had carried us farther from shore - I was losing the battle!

Refusing to give in, I clutched Dennis firmly under his chin, and struck out towards the sound of waves crashing on the beach. The night was pitch black, and I had no guiding lights, due to German imposed blackouts. Heavy waves kept tearing Dennis out of my hands, and I occasionally lost sight of him, but was guided back to him by his calls. I kept talking and re-assuring Dennis, and was able to get him closer to shore, but it was an unequal battle, and another large wave tore him from my hands. I heard him coughing, and when I swam over to him, it was obvious that his strength was spent. When I placed my hand under his chin, he grabbed me and pulled me under the water, and as I was not prepared, I swallowed a large amount of sea water. As I was trying to clear the water from my lungs, Dennis grabbed me again and pulled me under, and in the desperate struggle for life, he kept using my torso to climb above the waves, but all this did was imperil both our lives. Again and again, I called for Maurice's help, but the silence was ominous, and I felt that Maurice had lost his life. I was left to contend with saving Dennis by myself, and I was losing my own strength. Another large wave wrenched Dennis from my hands, but I found him again and kicked out again for shore. Dennis kept struggling, but only succeeded in pulling me under water several more times, and each time I swallowed more water. Perhaps, because of the amount of water I had swallowed and the effort I had put into saving Dennis, I momentarily lost my sense of direction, and at that precise moment, another large, outgoing wave tore him from my hands. After that, I was unable to see or hear him, but I swam over to where I had last seen him. I frantically called his name, but there was no answer, only the howling of the winds and the crashing of the waves, and as I sensed that I had barely enough strength to save myself, I struck out alone for the shore - I had lost the battle for Dennis' life.

I had no idea how far I was from shore, and although I could have made it to some nearby rocks, and outwaited the tide, my tortured mind was focussed on reaching the beach. I had very little strength left, but I instinctively kept swimming towards the sound of waves breaking on the beach. When my strength gave out and my arms were too tired to lift above my shoulders, I trod water, and waited to regain a little strength, then went on with the battle of saving my own life.

At one point I was so overcome with fatigue that I am certain that I fell asleep for a second or two. I felt that I had no hope of reaching the shore, and I resigned myself to drowning. It was not a bad feeling - on the contrary, it was one of relief. My past flashed before my eyes. I saw my Gran and my brother standing over my open grave, and as they looked down, I saw that they were crying. This ugly vision jump-started me back to life, and I reached down and found some hidden strength, then struck out for shore determined to save myself.

Minutes later, totally exhausted, I was about to give myself up to the sea again, when I was picked up by an ingoing wave which carried me towards the shore, and when I came down from its crest, my foot touched ground, then from somewhere, a spark of energy kicked, and I swam a several more strokes. Then joy of joys, both feet hit bottom! I clawed my way through the surf, then collapsed on the beach, where I let the waves wash over my body. For several minutes I lay in the water coughing and spitting up large amounts of salt water, then when I was able to, I got to my feet, and called my companions' names - There was no answer. I then walked back into the sea, where I called again. There was no answer from seaward, but I almost jumped out of my skin when I heard Maurice's voice directly behind me. As he stood there panting, he explained that he had swum back to the beach, where he had momentarily passed out from sheer exhaustion, and when I told him what had happened to Dennis, he broke down and sobbed. He suggested that there was a chance that Dennis might have made it to a nearby rock, where he would wait for the tide to receded, but having been with Dennis, I had very little hope of that being the case.

As we started back to the cabin, where we intended to wait until daybreak, I remembered the Beghin's map. I took it from its pouch, then tore it into little pieces, after which I walked back into the sea, where I threw away the pieces and, for a second or two, I watched them drift away on the waves - It was a little after midnight, and I suggested that Maurice go back to the cabin, and I would wait on the beach for any sign of Dennis, but just as Maurice turned to go back to the cabin, all hell broke loose.

Two cars came to screeching halts on the slip, and several figures scrambled from them. Shots were fired, and in between shots, guttural German screams could be heard. Powerful flash light beams snaked over the beach, and loud cries of "Halt! Hande Hoch! (Stop! Put your hands up!)" rose above the noise of the sea. We flopped down in the surf, and tried to make ourselves invisible, but as the Germans came closer, we were caught in their flashlight beams, which caused them to scream

even louder.

Too tired to run, Maurice stood up and raised his hands, but I took off like a startled hare towards the pine-trees. This brought about a fusillade of shots, none of which came close, but in the darkness I ran into a pine tree, and fell on a sharp rock, which pierced my left knee. When I picked myself up, and prepared to keep on running, I was grabbed by a German sailor, who shoved his pistol in my ear, and screamed that he would shoot me if I tried to escape, and as I felt the the business end his pistol in my ear, no such intention entered my mind.

The sailor dragged me back to where Maurice was standing with his arms raised. He was surrounded by five sailors, all of whom had their weapons trained on him. I was startled to see that among our captors were the German Water Policemen: Linde, Stromp and Konrad - all my mother's black market accomplices. As I approached, Linde ran over and screamed something at me in English, but I was too exhausted to pay any attention to him, and as we were being dragged off the beach, two Feldgendarms arrived, and they, too, started yelling, as only Germans can. One of them asked Stromp what was going on, however, it was Linde who explained that he had been informed about our escape, and had driven to Green Island to prevent it. The senior Feldgendarm then switched on a little flashlight, which was attached to his uniform, and by its light he made some entries in a small note book. He then shackled us together, then shoved us up the slip towards his car, which was parked on the roadway.

As we were about to be driven away, Linde walked over to the car, and opened the door. He glared at me for a moment, then yelled, "I would like to put my foot up your arse! Look at the problems you have caused your dear mother! She was crying when I left her!" With those words of comfort he slammed the door, then went back to his car. I was quite surprised to hear Linde say that he had seen my mother before driving to Green Island, however, with his words, I immediately knew that she had denounced us - How else could the Water Police have arrived so promptly at a location, known only to four people?

Due to Linde's intervention with the Feldgendarms, we were driven to the Pomme d'Or Hotel, where we were put in the watch room, which contained two small cots. We were ordered out of our clothes and into bed, and as I undressed, Linde saw the wound in my left knee, and sent for an orderly, who cleaned and bandaged it. When this was done, Linde handed our clothes to the sailor and told him to lock them away, but before leaving the watch room, he asked where Dennis was, and when I said that I believed him to have drowned, Linde merely shrugged and left.

When Linde had gone, I suggested to Maurice that it would be better to keep silent until we found out what had really happened to Dennis. We also agreed to stick to the story that we had become lost while fishing. We cursed ourselves over and over for not having put on our life-jackets, and

before falling asleep, I told Maurice to put as much blame as possible on Dennis and me, and to tell the Germans that he had only been along for the ride. There was merit to my suggestion, as we had kept Maurice out of things, but he chose not to answer me.

At 8:30 am. on Monday, 4 May, Linde kicked his way into the room followed by his superior, Stromp. He threw some fresh clothes at me, and gave Maurice back his damp ones. I gathered from the fresh clothes that he had been to Winchester House, or someone had brought them to the Pomme d'Or Hotel. Linde again berated me for the trouble I had caused my mother. He concluded by saying, "You are both in deep trouble, and will be lucky if they don't shoot you!"

Linde then took us to the ratings' mess where we were given something to eat and drink, while two nervous German ratings sat nearby with open pistol holsters. As we were eating, Konrad came over, put his hands on my shoulder, then said, "Tough luck boys! Your friend Audrain drowned! I'm sorry."

The confirmation that Dennis' body had been found was shocking. We both stopped eating, and stared at each other as tears ran down our cheeks. Seeing that we were no longer interested in our food, the sailors took us back to the watch room, which was occupied by two Feldgendarms and two men in civilian clothes. They said nothing as we went in, but all four stared at us as if we were vermin or cattle at an auction. One of the civilians finally said, in German, "Take them to jail and bring Hassall up tomorrow morning!" We were handcuffed, then led out to a small car, which took us to the German wing of the Gloucester Street jail.

When we arrived at the administrative office, we were greeted by a friendly German Army sergeant, who wrote our names in a ledger. When asked for our dates and places of birth, Maurice glanced at me in surprise when I pretended not to understand German, however, one of the Feldgendarms spoke a little English, and told us to give the sergeant our birth dates and places of birth.

When Maurice was documented, he was led away, and from where I stood, I heard a cell door slam on the ground floor. When I was through I was taken to the second floor by a fat German corporal, who, instead of locking the door, shoved me in the cell then closed the door. He grabbed me by the front of my shirt, then slammed a ham-like fist in my nose. Blood spurted all over the place, even on the man's uniform, but he kept punching and screaming: "Terrorist Schwein! Du bang, bang!" Which I took to mean that I was a terrorist pig and would be shot.

When I had partially recovered from the assault, I looked around the granite cell, and saw that it measured about ten by ten feet. It was furnished with a low bed-board, on which there was a raised wooden head piece, which served as a pillow. There was also a wooden stool, but it was chained to the wall opposite a legless table in front of a small glass panel, through which a naked light bulb glowed. It was not as grand as my bedroom in Winchester House, but I had been aware of the consequences of being caught!

Unknown to us, this was to be our last day in the real world for some time - A recent Nazi decree having categorized us as Nacht und Nebel (Night and Fog) prisoners, and when we entered the German wing of Gloucester Street prison, we were swallowed in the darkness of Hitler's criminal "Nacht und Nebel Erlass (Decree)." No one even bothered to explain that we were prisoners whose: "Detention, sentence and death was to defy all research." - Such were the words in the Decree!

### **Hitler's Night and Fog Decree**

By July, 1940, the German occupation of Western Europe was complete, but unfortunately for them, their love affair with occupied countries was not destined to last. As soon as the initial shock of defeat wore off, acts of resistance, against the Occupying Power, started almost immediately in France, Belgium, Norway, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Denmark and Poland. On 18 June, 1940, General Charles de Gaulle's "Call to Honour" was broadcast from London over the BBC network. He assured his listeners that France was not defeated, but had suffered only a temporary setback, which did not mean that she had lost the war. He called on his countrymen to join his cause, and ended his speech by saying, "Whatever happens, the flame of French Resistance must not and shall not die!" The broadcast was directed specifically at those French who had managed to escape to England and the French colonies, and was not intended for listeners in France who, at the time, did not regularly listen to the BBC, however, there were a few in France who heard his speech, and they assumed that the General's speech had been directed at all Frenchmen. As a condition of the Franco-German armistice of June, 1940, the southern part of France was left unoccupied, and became known as Vichy France, because the town of Vichy was home to the French government. The German "Occupied" Zone extended throughout northern France to the border of Spain and France on the Atlantic Ocean.

Limited resistance, against the Occupiers, started soon after the occupation of France, however, General de Gaulle's "Call to Honour" did not bring about an immediate escalation of resistance activity. Furthermore, before Germany attacked the Soviet Union, the French Communists sat on the sidelines, respecting the Russian-German alliance, however, when Hitler launched his fateful "Operation Barbarossa" against the Soviet Union on 22 June, 1941, the Germans were no longer Soviet allies, and thousands of Communists were added to the blossoming French Resistance.

When the initial shock of defeat wore off, many French people took time out and looked inward, concluding that France's honour had to be restored, and the only road was to join de Gaulle's Free French Forces. Initially, only a trickle of patriots took to the road, but the smouldering spark of resistance turned into a blaze when thousands of patriots drove, rode, cycled or walked to join de Gaulle's Free French Forces. They came from all walks of life, and many ended up in harsh Spanish jails and camps, where they were forced to wait to be bailed out by British and French diplomats. Many made their way to Britain by sea, across the dangerous English Channel. Others took small boats and braved the Mediterranean Sea on their way to Africa. All had one common purpose: to join General de Gaulle and his Free French in London or Africa.

Within a few months of their escape to North Africa and Britain, many Frenchmen and women returned to occupied France by clandestine methods. Those who came back were among the first

Special Operations Executive (SOE), and once back on French soil, they made contact with their comrades in the French Resistance - the SOE's main task in France being to organize French Resistance into viable combat groups in readiness for France's liberation - however, even before they were finished organizing themselves, several local resistance groups had already carried out acts of sabotage against German military installations and lines of communication. It was not done on a large scale, and, at the time, was no more than a thorn in the side of the occupying Germans. Anti-Nazi slogans were painted on walls, German military sign posts were turned around or defaced, tires were slit, holes punched in gas tanks, an occasional railway line was wrecked and several underground newspapers appeared, but every act of sabotage led to another, and encouraged others to do the same, or to exceed. Most importantly, the acts of sabotage served the Occupying Power with notice that the men and women of France were no longer prepared to accept their lot. At the same time, their courageous acts demonstrated to the uninvolved population that the spirit of France was alive and active. The French, on their way to work, must have smiled when they read the numerous anti-Nazi slogans painted on walls, and, no doubt, some of them recognized that the acts were the beginnings of a national resistance against the Occupiers, and being French they knew that young vines, sooner or later, produced a good vintage.

The early, fragmented actions of the French Resistance might not have constituted a national resistance movement, but the embryo would grow to maturity, and expand into the Resistance of the Interior (France) and the Resistance of the Exterior (Overseas Possessions), all united under the Cross of Lorraine - the personal symbol of General de Gaulle. Almost every family in the Occupied Zone would eventually have someone, or know someone in the Resistance or with the fighting Free French.

Beginning in September, 1940, German reprisals for acts of sabotage, took the form of collective responsibility. The punishments entailed: curtailing civil liberties and taking innocent hostages from families, whose sons and daughters had committed known acts of resistance. The Germans also rounded up hundreds of innocent hostages off the streets, however, the authority to execute them rested with the General Officer Commanding France, General Otto von Stülpnagel, and until he ruled on their fates, they were remanded under terrible conditions in German controlled, French jails and camps, where they waited in fear, until their turn came to be tied to the bloody, splintered execution posts.

As French resistance intensified, the Germans became more brutal in their methods of repression. Their placid facade, imported when they marched into France in May, 1940, vanished, and the true face of German brutality appeared when General von Stülpnagel authorised German Military District Commanders to take hostages from the ranks of teachers, professors, lawyers, students and other professional groups. This occurred when Von Stülpnagel and his staff decided that it was the

intellectuals who were mainly responsible for leading the Resistance. The Germans' conditioned minds were unable to conceive that ordinary French men and women were capable of organizing themselves into resistance groups. Von Stülpnagel also directed each Military District to hold a certain number of hostages to be shot, on orders from Paris, if the French did not march to the sound of the Nazi drum, but as they no longer marched to its tune, the conqueror's savage character manifested itself more and more each day, as hundreds of French were led to the Nazi's killing grounds.

Meanwhile, Hitler and the German High Command in Berlin had become disillusioned with the military's efforts to curb the growing tide of resistance throughout Europe. They felt that things had to change, and as the Führer was Commander-in-Chief, he and his lackey Chief-of-Staff, Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, decided that enough was enough, and they took it upon themselves to resolve the matter of European resistance.

On 16 September, 1941, Keitel signed an order directing German Military Courts to use extremely harsh methods, which were designed to curb the rising tide of European resistance, furthermore, he was very specific that the trials of Resistants should be brought to speedy conclusions. Having issued his edict, Keitel felt reassured that order would be restored, and unruly populations brought to heel when they learned of the swift Nazi justice.

The Military Courts (Oberkriegsgerichte) in question were attached to all German Military Commands in France, which were divided into four Military Districts. Three were under the Command of Oberfeldkommandanturen (Senior Field Commands) and one under the jurisdiction of the Commander of Gross-Paris (Greater Paris). The Senior Field Command Headquarters for the North West District of France was located in Saint-Germain en Laye, just outside Paris, and it was from this Headquarters that the Channel Islands were administered through Feldkommandantur 515 (Field Command Headquarters 515), located at Victoria College grounds.

Keitel's 16 September, 1941, order also stipulated that for each German soldier killed, fifty to one hundred hostages were to be shot, and that the executions were to be carried out with the greatest degree of publicity. The Field Marshal also ordered that each person sentenced to death by Military Courts, would be executed immediately, and that the methods of execution were to be intimidating, as they were designed to act as deterrents for other Resistants.

It did not take Hitler and Keitel long to discover that the application of their new order could not be carried out by the Military Courts alone, as there were too many Resistants waiting to be tried in jails throughout Europe. The criminal pair then decided that others means had to be found to curb the growing tide of European resistance. Therefore, in October, 1941, Keitel amended his order of 16 September, 1941, and issued new instructions which stipulated that Military Courts could still



try Resistants, as long as the Resistants were tried, convicted and executed within eight days. However, with the numbers of Resistants in European jails, the German Military Courts could not cope with the stipulated eight day cycle. As a result, prisons throughout Europe bulged at the seams with Resistants waiting to be tried.

Keitel's original order of 16 September and its amendments of October, were extremely explicit, and applied to: espionage, sabotage, active communist and resistance groups, people attempting to cross demarcation lines, those trying to join the Allied armies, possession of illegal arms and even for professing an enmity against the Third Reich - No unfriendly act was to be tolerated by the Occupiers!

Hitler's mistrust of the entire military had, by this time, grown to such proportions that he finally decided to limit its jurisdiction in the trials of Resistants. The stipulated time limit of eight day gave Hitler an excuse to preclude the military from all Resistant's trials, but he had to find a method whereby he could overcome the military's incapability of pursuing his dictated goals, and it was not long before the megalomaniac came up with another new and sinister idea.

At about the same time as Hitler wrestled with the Military Courts, he had received word that a prominent, female French Resistant had been arrested and sentenced to death by one of the Military Courts. She had been accused and convicted of operating a resistance cell, which had assisted escapees in crossing into Vichy France, through which they travelled to Spain or North Africa. Hitler, being the Commander-in-Chief, was the final authority regarding all death sentences, and he personally had the woman transferred to Germany, and although she was not executed, he did not relieve her. Instead, he ordered the woman to be kept in complete isolation. No one was to know where she was - She was lost to the world in Germany's night and fog. The motive behind Hitler's personal involvement and extraordinary action was an attempt to subdue the woman's family, friends and accomplices from committing further acts of aggression against the Occupiers. Hitler's sick mind had reasoned, that if the woman's relatives and friends did not know her whereabouts, or that she was even alive, they might behave themselves, or even discontinue their acts against his occupying troops.

The woman's family, the clergy and even the Vatican attempted to find out what had happened to her, but all attempts met with stony silence, as Hitler had personally directed that she ceased to exist beyond the walls of her cell. Not one letter was answered, and no telephone calls gave any hint of the woman's whereabouts or status. Hitler's criminal action had some short-term effect in the area of the woman's home, however, it did not stop resistance, which continued to increase, and as it increased, Hitler, in another of his well-known furies, became incensed, and decided to step up the fight against Resistants.

To this end, the Führer and Keitel used the original order of 16 September, as the basis for a newly

thought up decree, which stated that the military were not only required to arrest all Resistants, but they would now deport prisoners into the "Night and Fog" of Germany, where they would be kept in total isolation and shut off from the outside world. The new order compounded the Military Courts' problems by stating, "...unless arrested Resistants can be tried and executed within eight days by the Military Courts, they will be deported to Germany under the new decree!"

This new order, promulgated by Keitel on 7 December, 1941, was known as the Nacht und Nebel Erlass (Night and Fog Decree.) It was to be the single, most draconian measure imposed on the repressed peoples of Europe, but as it had been promulgated on the Führer's order, the Military were obliged to implement it to the letter, despite their disgust for it.

A number of new charges were added to the NN Decree, and covered all and any hostile action against the German occupiers, and under the new NN Decree, every charge carried the death penalty, or lesser sentences. Furthermore, so that no Resistant could slip through the Decree, Hitler gave new meaning to the word "Deutschfeindlich" (Enemy of the Reich), as the new NN Decree stated that even a simple dislike for the German Occupiers, warranted a death sentence.

The NN Decree also ordained that all NN deportees would remain the responsibility of the OKW, but they would be tried by Special Courts, under the direction of the German Ministry of Justice (MOJ). The fact that NN prisoners were to remain the Military's responsibility, rankled the Gestapo, who put pressure on the OKW and the MOJ, through the Reichsführer, Heinrich Himmler, to have all NN prisoners placed under their jurisdiction. Mercifully, the Gestapo's efforts were partly thwarted by the OKW, who, no doubt, were aware what the conclusion would have been. After Keitel's promulgation of the NN Decree, it was sent to the MOJ for implementation. The MOJ was also instructed to set up special courts and to co-ordinate the transportation of NN deportees to Germany. Hitler had also decided that all NN deportees to Germany would be tried by Sondergerichte (Special Courts), which had been in existence in Germany since Hitler came to power; at which time he had suspended Germany's Constitution.

The Military did its best to keep as much control of its prisoners as possible, and this caused some bickering, which ended with the Military agreeing that all prisoners to be deported would be categorized by the Special Courts. Both parties also decided that the more serious cases would be handed over to Germany's higher court: the Volksgericht (The People's Court), which was an inquisitional court set up by the Nazis in 1934, and had been created to try cases of high treason. This decision was to have unfortunate consequences, because of all the NN cases tried by the People's Court, almost forty percent received death sentences, whereas, only five percent of those tried by the Special Courts received similar sentences. When all the bickering ceased, the NN Decree was circulated to the German Courts, the German Provincial/County Courts, the Military High Commands and the Attorneys-General in Berlin, Cologne, Dortmund and Kiel - The last four

cities having been nominated as Special Court Headquarters.

The decision to have People's Courts try NN deportees was to have unfortunate consequences, as it removed them totally from any semblance of law and order; other than the law according to the infamous Nazi Chief Justice, Roland Freisler of the People's Court - a man devoid of compassion and justice. The People's Court had been instituted to deal with cases of high treason, which, legally, could only applied to German nationals, and not foreigners, however, that did not deter Hitler from his goal. The Führer's word was law!

The stage was set, and the administrators of the decree then ordered that all French NN prisoners would be sent to Cologne for trial; the Belgians to Dortmund; the Netherlanders to Kiel and the Norwegians to Berlin, which was the seat of the German MOJ. The Decree did not reach all the involved authorities until 26, April, 1942, just one week prior to Maurice and my arrest in Jersey.

The MOJ set up several Special Courts, which were charged with the compliance of the Decree's instructions. There were, of course, several changes, and after numerous meetings between the OKW and the MOJ, it was decided that: French NN would be tried by a Special Court in Cologne; the industrial city of Essen was to be the location in which the Netherlanders and Belgians would be tried; the Norwegians would be tried in the German port city of Kiel and NN prisoners, from all other occupied countries, would come under Berlin's jurisdiction; which was designated as the main seat for both Special and People's Courts. When all was in place, roving Special Court judges were dispatched throughout Germany to carry out the edicts of Hitler's NN Decree.

When the logistical and administration decisions for handling NN were in place, the OKW and MOJ issued a directive to the Ordnungspolizei (The Order Police - Regular uniformed police comprising the Municipal and County uniformed police). The directive stated that the Reichssicherheitshauptamt (The Central Security Department of the Reich (RSHA)), made up of the Gestapo, Kripo (Criminal Police) and the Sicherheitsdienst (SS Security Police (SD)), under Obergruppenführer (SS General) Reinhard Heydrich, would decide where and when NN prisoners would be processed. This was because NN trials would be held in German cities and towns, which were all under Heydrich's jurisdiction.

The first phase of a French NN's life began when he or she reached the German Military prisons in Paris: Fresnes, La Santé and Cherche Midi. From there, many of the deportees were sent to Trier. From which some were taken to the SS Sonderlager Hinzert (Special Camp), which was but a few miles away, while others were deported to the many concentration camps and prisons in Germany. Generally, the NN women were sent to Flüssbach, a woman's camp near Trier.

During the initial detention periods, Special Court administrators categorized the prisoners, then sent them to prisons in Wittlich, Cologne, Diez, Aachen and Wolfenbüttel - to name but a few. In

the meantime, the Special Courts carefully selected the most serious cases for prisons with very harsh regimens, and docketed them to be tried by the People's Court.

Hundreds of special magistrates were recruited to deal with the NN Decree. Many had no legal training, and were mainly selected on the basis of their fidelity to the Nazi Party. They were all sworn to secrecy, as was everyone having anything to do with the NN Decree, which was given Germany's highest security classification.

The application of the revised NN Decree changed the prisoners conditions dramatically. The main changes being: (a) That after eight days, if untried, the NN were deported for trial in Germany. (b) No news was to be given to their families or governments. (c) Their whereabouts were kept secret. (d) The NN were to have no news, no letters, no food parcels and (e) No death certificates were to be issued to the families - Some NN, to that time, had been permitted to write to their families, who had sent them clean clothing, extra food and cigarettes.

The amended Decree of 7 December, 1941, also gave the Reich prosecutors the power to deny NN prisoners the right to have witnesses appear in their defence, and in another travesty of justice, the NN were seldom told why they were being detained, and first learned of the charges against them a day or so before their trials. To make matters worse, all NN trials were held in camera, and in some instances translators were not provided.

The Nazi "justice" was so farcical that it prompted one of my fellow prisoners to say, "When I went into the courtroom I found the Reich prosecutor and my court-appointed defence lawyer arguing in front of the judge's bench. They argued for about ten minutes without even looking at me. Finally, when finished, one of them abruptly left the courtroom, and did not return. I stood in the dock, wondering what was going on. Finally, one of the trio looked at me, held up four fingers, and in broken French said, "Trois ans de prison" (Three years simple prison). Then, in broken French, I was told that I should consider myself very fortunate that they had been so lenient." My friend further said, "If the situation had not been so serious, it could have been the setting for a comic opera."

Field Marshal Keitel, the signatory, and one of the architects of the NN Decree, in an effort to distance himself from the Decree, explained at the Nuremberg War Crimes Trial in 1945, that the final disposition of the Decree rested with the Führer, who wished to dissuade persons from perpetrating acts of aggression against the Occupying Powers. Keitel also told the Allied judges, that it was the Führer's viewpoint that as long as acts of resistance were committed against German troops, a mere sentence of life imprisonment, or even a long jail term would signal a degree of weakness on his part. In short, the Führer demanded the death sentence for all NN, as he felt that only that resolution would be understood by the populations of occupied countries. Keitel further explained to the Nuremberg judges that by deporting the NN to Germany, they would remain

incommunicado and their silence would cause concern among the populations, which might translate into fewer acts of resistance, especially by the families and friends of the deportees.

When the Decree was promulgated, all existing laws governing Resistants were revoked. The text of the NN Decree was sent to the Heinrich Himmler, however, Keitel did not want the SS to be involved in its implementation, although they were already and did become totally involved towards the end of the war, when all NN trials were suspended in September, 1944. Many NN, whose sentences exceeded four years in prison, or had been sentenced to "hard labour," often became wards of the SS, however, sentences not exceeding four years usually decreed that the prisoner was sent to a "Strafanstalt" (Maximum security prison). On occasions, those sentenced to five years or more "simple prison," were sent to jails where the regimens were severe and where day to day conditions were unspeakably brutal.

The first recorded trial of an NN prisoner took place on 31 August, 1942, in Essen, where the Special Court handed down a death sentence. There were earlier NN trials, but no records have been found, as most NN court documents vanished before the end of the war.

One of the first official MOJ reports, regarding the NN trials stated "... by 1 September, 1942, German prosecutors had charged some 1,450 NN prisoners, made up of 860 Belgians and Netherlanders, 330 French and 265 Norwegians." Despite the increased activity of the courts, it was established that only a few thousand, of the approximately 45,000 NN, ever came to trial. The others remained "Untersuchung" (being investigated), and usually stayed with those who had been tried. All NN tried and declared not guilty or had their cases dismissed through lack of evidence, were not liberated. They either remained with those who had been tried, or were handed over to the Gestapo, who sent them to concentration camps. Some NN were sentenced to short prison terms, but they, too, were not liberated, and generally disappeared into one of the many concentration camps or prisons. There was no escaping Hitler's Night and Fog Decree!

The manner in which those under remand were treated did not differ from those who had been sentenced. One important factor of note is that all NN prisoners were considered guilty unless they could prove otherwise, and seeing that it was not possible to call witnesses in one's defence, the odds were very much against the accused. The People's and Special Courts were unlike any courts in the civilized western hemisphere, as the panel of three judges acted as prosecutors, defenders and ultimately as executioners. They were a law to themselves, and a mockery of justice.

As Allied aerial attacks intensified in 1943, the Nazis were forced to move the location of the western NN courts. In October, 1943, the MOJ ordered the transfer of the Cologne Special Court to Breslau (now Wroclaw, Poland). This came about as Cologne, to which the French NN had been sent for trial, was heavily damaged by air raids. The damage to the prison caused the French NN prisoners to be sent back to the prison of Wittlich for three months, after which the Special Court

moved to Breslau, taking its charges with it.

Similarly, the Essen Court was moved to Oppeln (now Opole, Poland) because of heavy air attacks.

As a result of these moves, the NN being held at Pappenburg, Anrath and Lubeck were also directed to the jurisdiction of Breslau and Katowice. The NN placed at the disposition of the Breslau Special Court, were generally held in the Kletschkaustrasse and Freiburgerstrasse prisons in Breslau, as well as prisons in the towns of Jawor, Schweidnitz and Hirschberg. Those placed under the jurisdiction of the Oppeln Court were sent to the prison of Gross Strelitz and nearby concentration camps, but prison transfers were effected only after meetings between the Military and Special Court magistrates from Breslau.

German defeats, the landing in Normandy on 6 June, 1944; increased resistance in occupied territories and the arrest of those who had attempted to assassinate Hitler, brought about a new directive against active partisans and Resistants. This directive paralleled the NN Decree, but placed those arrested directly under the Gestapo's jurisdiction. These unfortunate prisoners were summarily tried and executed, and in many cases, the victims were never tried. They were merely told that they had been convicted and sentenced to death, without attending their own trials.

On 2 September, 1944, when the Germans sensed that they were losing the war, the OKW transferred almost 25,000 NN in preventive custody, advanced trial stages or whose sentences had been pronounced, to the Gestapo, and on the same date the OKW and MOJ suspended all judicial action against the NN. Shortly thereafter, the infamous NN Decree was abolished, as the Russians were approaching and the British and Americans were on Germany's western frontiers. It was time to cover up the NN Decree, and the SS and Gestapo did just that, by destroying most of the NN related documents and murdering many NN who had previously escaped their clutches.

In the final months of the war most NN were transferred to concentration camps throughout Germany. Those remaining in Silesia, were sent to the large, notorious concentration camp of Gross Rosen, not far from Breslau. Others, who had been sentenced, and were employed on military projects or working on Kommandos (outside working parties), stayed where they were. Female NNs were sent to the SS camp for women at Ravensbrück - clearly one of the most horrifying and degrading concentration camps in Europe.

The most degrading and criminal acts inflicted on the NN sentenced to death by the tribunals took place during the final days of their lives, as the condemned men and women were never apprised of their executions date, or even if it would ever take place. They were isolated and kept in chains in the same prison, near, or where they were sentenced, and the night before their executions, a warder usually went to their cells and told them that they were to be put to death the next morning. The condemned were then unchained and moved to cells near the yard in which the guillotine waited. Executions of convicted NN took place about every two weeks. The condemned were allowed

to write a final letter home, but most were never delivered. Tragically, in Breslau, every one of the condemned could hear the guillotine's blade fall as it severed the head from one of their comrades. Then, finally, it was their turn to be taken outside, where they were strapped on their backs to a gurney, face upwards, and generally without blindfolds. Their last sight of mother earth was the bloody blade, and their last sound was the click as the executioner released it. Their severed heads then fell into a large, metal bucket, after which their mutilated bodies were rudely disposed of. Such was the fate of the NN who were executed according to the criminal NN Decree.

After the war, the trails of former NN prisoners were difficult to pursue, as the Nazis had destroyed most of the evidence. Information was scant in 1945, and unfortunately, part of the German State of Silesia was annexed by Poland, which was in the Soviet sphere of influence, and those who attempted to obtain post-war information on the NN, received little or no help from the Polish justice system, as it was not the practice of the Communists to divulge any information on prisoners. It was not until two decades later that facts surrounding the imprisonment of the Silesian NN, finally began to leak out of Poland, and as it leaked out, it became clear that any NN survivor was fortunate to be alive.

Below is a translation of the Night and Fog Decree.

### **NIGHT AND FOG DECREE**

#### **S E C R E T**

The Reichsführer -SS and the Chief      Munich  
of German Police, Principal Office      4 February, 42  
of the SS Tribunal 1B 154 I      Distribution:  
Index Number 70/43 Secret      List A and B

----- REGARDING: The pursuit of unlawful acts committed against the German Reich or against the German Occupying Powers. The following order has been adopted by the Chief of the German High Command (OKW) on the 12 December, 1941 and is circulated for your information:

Having given long and careful consideration to the matter, it is the Führer's wish, as well as that of the Chief of the German High Command, that this Decree be implemented.

### **DIRECTIVES**

This Decree is aimed at the pursuit of unlawful acts committed against the Reich or Occupying Powers in the occupied territories and is dated 7 December, 1941. At the outbreak of the Russian campaign, communist elements and other anti-German elements intensified their attacks against the Reich and the Occupying Powers.

Because of the dangerous character of these attacks, for reasons of intimidation, it is necessary to impose stringent measures against the population of occupied lands. It is therefore necessary to comply with the following directives:

1. In the occupied territories, it will be the general principle to impose the death sentence against those committing unlawful acts against the Reich or against the Occupying Powers, as well as any action that could be considered to be a menace to the security of the German Armed Forces.
2. The offenses set out in Section 1. are to be enforced in the occupied territories only when it is probable that the death sentence can be pronounced against the perpetrators, or at least against the principle perpetrators, and only if the prosecution and death sentence can be carried out with the maximum speed and diligence. In all other cases, the perpetrators, or at least the principle perpetrators, will be deported to Germany for trial.
3. The perpetrators deported to Germany will not be subjected to the normal procedures of war if it is in the military interest. Should there be requests for information concerning these perpetrators coming from civilian powers or foreigners, this decree forbids passing along any form of pertinent information.
4. The Commanding Officers in Occupied Territories and the magistrates, within the sphere of their respective authority, are responsible for implementing this Decree.
5. The Chief of the High Command shall determine in which occupied territories this Decree will apply. He has the power to guide, to stay the laws of execution and any further resolutions. The Reich Justice Minister shall also have the authority to stay executions in his area of responsibility.

By order of the Chief

of the German High Command:

Keitel.

It is difficult to perceive how the German judiciary collaborated in such an illegal decree, but take part they did, and post-war observations show that they took part with a great degree of relish, as they sat in judgement on the People's and Special Court benches, dressed in their black, silk robes, adorned with the German eagle and swastika. These pompous prosecutors strutted and screamed at the emaciated prisoners in their court rooms, and some even smiled when they pronounced death sentences.

In his deposition to the Nuremberg War Crime Trial, Field Marshal Keitel stated that he was appalled at the severity of the NN Decree, and had done his best to slow it down before it was promulgated. The former Field Marshal stated that he had no desire to issue such an order to the German Military, but as the order came from higher authority, namely Hitler, he was obliged to issue it or be shot for disobeying it.

To mitigate his defence at the Nuremberg trials, Keitel stated that his understanding of the NN



Decree was that it would only last a short time, and that the NN prisoners would be set free when the war ended. Keitel pointed out that the decree was issued at the height of German victories and, at the time, it was his impression that the war would not last. Finally, Keitel acknowledged that the secret deportation of the NN had been crueller than pronouncing a death sentence on them.

The NN decree grew out of accepted Nazi policy and beliefs of creating collecting places for European Resistants and holding them without news. The Nazis firmly believed that by holding the NN incommunicado would start rumours, which would bring the deportees' families and friends to heel. They also felt that the more effectively a prisoner was isolated, the wilder the rumours would become, and this to some degree, would subdue further action against the Occupying Power. The theory of using the "unknown" element as a psychological weapon, was part of the SS Totenkopf's (Death Head) training. The SS guarding the NN were told nothing beyond the fact that their charges were enemies of the Third Reich, and were the most violent of all terrorists. It is no wonder that these men, whose motto was "Meine Ehre heisst Treue" (My Honour is my Loyalty) took such sadistic pleasures in exterminating the NN.

.....as the cell door at the Gloucester Street prison slammed on 4 May, 1942, my head ached, and I could not see too clearly because of Corporal Hans' beating. I had never experienced such brutality, and I was not aware that the beating was merely a prelude to the sinister oblivion of Hitler's Night and Fog Decree, into which we, and countless thousands of others, had been cast.

### **Interrogation and imprisonment**

No one came to my cell during the first few hours, which left me alone to think of the possible consequences of our actions. My main vision was of being blindfolded, tied to a stake, then shot - just as they had done to Francois Scornet. I felt helpless, and the cell door added to my paranoia, as it told me that I was no longer free as a bird. I could not run any more, being confined to about ten paces in any direction, but worse of all, I was shut off from the freedom I had always known. I was not too frightened about being shot, as I had known in advance that it had been a distinct possibility, however, I had made up my mind to die bravely, without shedding a tear in front of Germans. I had a glimmer of hope that my mother might convince someone in authority that it had been just a boyish adventure, but the cell door remained locked. The only sounds came from the guards' screams, as they barked at German military prisoners in the corridor and exercise yard.

Unteroffizier (Corporal) Hans' brutal assault also confirmed my beliefs about German's inbred cruelty. Furthermore, I could not understand how the grown man had taken such a sadistic delight in brutalising me. I came to the opinion that Hans should be in an institution for the criminally insane, but then, I still had so much to learn. As I stood in my cell, feeling really useless and sorry for myself, I knew that I did not have too much going for me, but I was proud of having withstood Hans' assault without a whimper.

As I had consumed copious amounts of milk and coffee at breakfast, I had a painful need to urinate, however, there were neither a toilet nor sink in my cell - not even a bucket or chamber pot. For a while, I sat on the stool, crossing and uncrossing my legs, in an attempt to ease the pain in my bladder. I tried to see my bruised reflection in the small square window in the inner wall, but could not see my face clearly. However, I knew my nose was broken, as I felt the searing pain when I moved it gently from side to side.

As time went on, my need to go became greater, as my bladder had expanded to bursting point. Something had to be done, but there were no means of attracting the guards' attention from inside the cell. I had banged on the door several times, with negative results, and I knew that something had to give. Looking down, I saw a three-quarter inch gap between the bottom of the door and the floor leading into the corridor, so I lay down, put my mouth to it and shouted. Again no one came. Instead, my shouting provoked a German prisoner to bark: "Ruhe! Schnabel zu!" (Be quiet! Keep your trap shut!)

I climbed on the six inch heating pipe, which ran the entire length of the cell, and used it to raise

myself to the cell window's narrow opening, then with my mouth close to the open window I called Maurice's name several times, and I was elated when I heard him reply. I told him what had happened with the German guard, then I explained about the lack of toilet facilities. Maurice then told me, "Pee under the door! That's what I did. They wouldn't come when I banged, and I couldn't hold it any longer." He also told me that the door between the cell blocks and the guards' quarters was closed, and that was probably why they couldn't hear us.

I asked Maurice if he had been given anything to eat, but he had not. He suggested that we both bang on our doors and ask for something to eat. I agreed, and after jumping down, I banged on the door with my shoe. Moments later there was a commotion in the corridor. A key grated in the lock, the door was thrown open, and burly Corporal Hans hurled himself into my cell. He grabbed me by the throat, kicked my legs from under me, then began to kick and pummel me again. I rolled myself into a protective ball, but the bully continued kicking me in the groin and kidney areas. All this accompanied by guttural German screams of, "Terrorist Schwein. Maul zu halten!" (Terrorist pig. Keep your trap shut!)

He did not leave until he was too exhausted to beat me any longer, and when he had gone, I could no longer hold back the tide, much of which had leaked into my trousers during Hans' battering. I threw caution to the wind, and from a kneeling position, I emptied what was left in my bladder under the door, into the corridor. It was a blessed relief, however, I said several "Hail Marys," then crawled back to the wooden bed board, where I said more Hail Marys and an Act of Contrition. I was fully aware of the retribution my passing of the waters was about to bring. I was also a superstitious islander, and believed in clichés, such as: "Never two without three." It had never failed before, and did not this time. My cell door was again thrown opened, and in stomped Corporal Hans. He threw me against a wall, then pummelled me with a metal bucket he was carrying. Through bloodshot eyes I saw sweat pour off Hans' bucolic face, and the stench of his body odour was overpowering - Hans was certainly not the stereo-type Aryan, but he must have taken their course on how and where to hit.

Still screaming at me, Hans staggered to the door, where he dragged in a middle-aged, German military prisoner. The soldier carried: a mattress, two grey army blankets and a pillow; all of which he arranged on the wooden pallet, then when he had made up the bed, he reached over and rolled me onto the bed, then pulled the blankets over me. His gentle action was accompanied by Corporal Hans' furious screams.

When the door closed, I took stock of my injuries. I felt every part of my body, as I attempted to locate broken bones or damaged organs. It felt as if I had been hit by a ten ton truck, but the most painful injury was my nose, which seemed to have been Hans' favourite target. It was definitely

broken in several places, and throbbed painfully. His heavy jackboots had also found my injured knee, and it, too, was extremely painful and bleeding. It had been difficult not to scream with pain, but I had not wanted to show pain in front of my German tormentor. I knew that I was in need of medical assistance, but I was too pig-headed to let Hans know that he had hurt me.

I had always been a fighter, particularly when some students dropped the "H" from my surname, and alleged that I was a part of my anatomy, which I was not. Each muted "H" had been answered with a quick repartee, and if that failed to elicit an apology, I had backed up my indignation with my fists - not winning every contest, but the majority of them. This was, however, a different situation. I had been unable to fight back, for had I done so, I am certain that Corporal Hans would have drawn his service pistol and gladly used it. I was acutely aware that my present situation had to be handled quite differently from those at school. School was out! However, I wondered why a mere Corporal had beaten me, as if he had full right to. Was it the German way of doing things? Was Hans a reflection of German philosophy that "Might is right?" I could understand that he had been upset when I peed in the corridor, but the smoldering fury on his face showed me a mask that I had never experienced. I had seen anger on many faces, but never had I seen a combination of hatred, fury and enjoyment. He had actually enjoyed beating me! I wondered how Maurice had made out, and if Hans had to climb on a stool to reach his nose.

Day number one of my captivity drew to a close - I had experienced the "Teutonic fury," and as day turned into night, my fears intensified. I ached all over, and during short periods of sleep, I had recurring nightmares of us being strapped to posts, after which a well-dressed officer tied bands of black cloth about our eyes, but before the darkness engulfed me, I saw the firing squad, after which I heard the rattle of Mauser breech blocks, as rifles were armed. I heard the officer give his final, guttural commands: "Anlegen! Feuer!" (Aim! Fire!)

The imaginary rifle fire brought me back to the real world, where I tried to push the past forty eight-hours from my mind. To some extent I succeeded, because I managed to drop a shutter across one side of my mind, and what remained on the other side, were memories of my former idyllic life, and when I went back to the other side of my mind, I realized that it was time to restrain, but not give up, my youthful arrogance - for without it, I already knew that I would not survive.

I needed consoling, as only a fifteen year old could, but I also knew that my only comfort would come from prayer and my inner strength. I got on my knees, despite the pain, and asked, "Lord, teach me how to pray again! Teach me how to forgive my enemies! It's difficult to forgive them. Is it wrong to hate those who hurt me?" As I sought The Lord that night, I was thankful for my Christian values taught by the brothers of De La Salle College. I had strayed from The Lord over the past six months, but not far enough away that The Good Shepherd had been unable to find me. He must have heard my bleatings, because I imagined that a hand reached down and touched my

shoulder. It brought me inner peace, and I knew that God was my refuge and would guide me through the Hell to which I was committed, and that night, mainly out of fear and feeling sorry for myself, I believed that I returned to the Altar of God.

When I lifted one of the shutters from my mind, and went back to the other side, I found hundreds of questions which needed to be answered - the most important ones being: "How had the Germans arrived at Green Island so quickly? Why Linde, Stromp and Konrad of the Water Police? Was our arrest not outside their jurisdiction? Why not the Feldgendarms or even the local police? Who knew the location of our escape? Who knew the timing of our escape? There had to have been a leak. If so, who had it been?" That my mother had been one of those involved, was inescapable given the timing of our arrest and the arrival of the Water Police.

I did not need a crystal ball to know that my mother had gone to the Pomme d'Or Hotel, where she had betrayed us. That was certainly the reason for the arrival of her German friends at Green Island. It was difficult to accept that we had been betrayed by my mother, but that's what had to have happened. I wondered if she had done it because she wanted to save her younger son from prison, and had turned to her German friends in an attempt to keep me out of trouble? I felt better with that thought, and reconciled myself to it, however, I wondered how she had known to direct her friends to Green Island, when only one other person knew of our escape location.

My nightmares continued as I re-lived my attempt to save Dennis' life. "Had I tried hard enough to save him? Had I thought more about my own skin than his? Why did we not keep on our life jackets as planned? Where had Maurice been? Who had been in charge of the whole thing? Who was to blame? Someone was sure to be blamed!" And that night, rightly or wrongly, I felt that I had to assumed the entire blame for the disaster.

My heart reached out to Dennis' family, and as I thought about them, I became ashamed for having spent so much time worrying about my current problems. I tried to imagine what was going on at Dennis' house. I had no need to think too hard, as I knew the answer. I also knew that there would always be a terrible longing and emptiness in their hearts. They would never get over Dennis' death, and no doubt I would have to shoulder the blame for it, despite his willingness to have been a full partner in the venture.

Somewhere between my racing thoughts, confessions and fear, I became aware of prison sounds: keys turning in locks, bolts being pushed back, doors opening, people running to empty their slop buckets, and everywhere, guttural German screams. I asked myself if Germans were able to speak normally, without screaming and yelling at the top of their lungs.

Tuesday, 5 May, 1942, a new day, and a new life began. I had a new life in which I had to become

chameleon-like and blend into my surroundings, hide my youthful arrogance and obey my German masters. I had no other choice, which was painfully obvious already. A voice seemed to whispered in my ear, "Use what the Lord gave you Peter! Use it well and trust in Him!" And as the prison sounds intensified, I had no need to be reminded that I was not in my bed in Winchester House. For a fleeting moment, I again hoped that it was all a nightmare, and that the events of the past two days had been only dreams. But the pain, the whitewashed ceiling, the barred window, the steel door and the guttural German barks heralded the facts.

I had no way of knowing the time, but at about 10:00 am., my cell door was opened by a short, German sergeant, who told me to follow him. On the way downstairs, he stared at my face, opened his mouth, as if to say something, but no words followed. He took me to the downstairs' office, behind which was a small bathroom, and there he gave me a towel and bar of soap, and told me to clean myself as, ".. someone was coming to fetch you."

When I looked in the mirror over the washbowl, I was unable to recognize myself. My face was cut, bruised and swollen; like that of a heavy-weight boxer who had taken a terrible pounding in the ring over twelve rounds. My hair was matted and dried blood was caked all over my face and hands. I was unable to use hot water as it smarted too much, and the best I was able to do, was to sponge my face with cold water, which eased the pain a little. I took off my pants, then unwound the bandage from my left knee, and when I looked down, I saw the ugly hole, which was about the size of a walnut. The flesh around was rotting, and it was clear that it needed medical attention. I was sitting in my birthday suit on the edge of the bath, rinsing my underwear, when two Feldgendarms walked in. Both wore large breastplates, embossed with the Nazi eagle mounted over swastikas and bearing the word "Feldgendarmerie." As they stared at me, they looked at each other. The junior one suggested that they take me to the Military Hospital, before taking me "up there," however, the senior policeman, a Corporal, said that there was no time, as they had to get me "there" by noon, and "bring the other one back." As I listened to them, I assumed that Maurice had been taken "there", and was to be brought back by the two policemen after I was delivered. I felt smug as I eavesdropped, and resolved never to speak German nor show any sign that I understood it - I had a hidden advantage already!

When I was dressed, minus my underpants, the corporal took some handcuffs from his briefcase, then shackled my wrists behind my back, and after signing for me from the prison sergeant, I was escorted out of the German wing; along a path to a small door which exited on Gloucester Street, where a small, black car waited. I hated having my wrists shackled behind my back, as it made me so feel helpless and vulnerable.

After fifteen minute's drive along all too familiar streets, the car stopped at College House, formerly

part of Victoria College, but now part of Feldkommandantur 515. As I got out the car, some German soldiers looked at me, with what I perceived to be, a certain amount of sympathy. However, it was no degree of comfort as my nose, knee and every part of my body hurt so much that I could barely walk. This did not impress the Feldgendarms, who hustled me up a stair-case, then along a wide corridor. Finally, I was grabbed and made to push my aching nose against a wall, just outside a door. I was told not to move or I would be shot, then the corporal went into an office, taking a manilla file-folder from his brief case as he went in. Moments later he came out, took off my handcuffs, then motioned me into a large room, in which the two men I had seen at the Pomme d'Or Hotel were seated behind desks.

One of them, Kurt Biele, stared at me for a while then in very passable English said, "By the look of you, you have not co-operated with the prison authorities. Are you a born troublemaker, or don't you have anything better to do with your time?"

"I am not a trouble maker, Sir," I replied. "I only tried to get some attention because I had to urinate rather urgently, and when no one came, I peed under the door. I meant no disrespect." I pointed to my face then said, "I do not think it warranted this, as there was no bucket in my cell!"

The men exchanged glances, then seeing, what I presumed to be a little sympathy on their faces, I pulled up my left pant leg, and showed them my bloody bandage. Heinrich Wolff, possibly the senior of the two probable Sicherheitsdienst (SD) men, walked over and took a look at my knee. He then turned to his partner and said in German, "I think he should be taken to hospital. We can deal with Gould first." This surprised me, because I had believed that Maurice had already paid them a visit.

Heinrich Wolff crossed the room, opened the door and called the senior Feldgendarm in. He instructed him to take me to hospital to have my injuries treated. Wolff also told the man to go back to the prison, and bring Maurice back to College House. He instructed the corporal that I was to be brought back at 9:00 am. the following day. As I was leaving, I heard Wolff ask Biele to telephone the prison and find out why I had been beaten up. It was small comfort after the fact! I was driven to the General Hospital, on Gloucester Street, which was adjacent to the civilian and German Military prisons. There we were met by a German nurse, whose starched, white uniform sported a Nazi party broach. I recognized her as a nurse who had worked on the island for many years before the war, and who, on one occasion, had administered a series of rabies' shots to me after I had been bitten by an Irish Terrier. Knowing her English to be fluent, I was cautious and kept my mouth closed. The nurse took me to an office in which a German military doctor sat. In perfect English he told me to strip down to my underpants, and smiled slightly when he saw that I was not wearing any. In defence of my nudity, I told him that I had left my only underpants hanging on a towel rack in the prison bathroom. As he was examined the multiple bruises on my

face, arms, legs and body, the doctor asked, "How did this happen?"

I explained about Corporal Hans, and watched as he made notes in his desk diary, while exchanging glances with the nurse. When he finished writing, he asked the nurse to remove the bloody bandage from my knee, and when this was done, she swabbed the ugly wound with alcohol, then probed out a few splinters of broken bone. The doctor came over, wiggled my knee cap around, then said, "You are lucky, as it is not too badly damaged, the hole is too deep to stitch, but it will eventually heal itself. Don't worry young man! You will live!" The doctor then took some surgical scissors, cut off the grey pieces of flesh, then sprinkled some yellow powder on my knee. He then probed the large gash in my hand, and when the nurse had cleaned it, he put in three stitches, without any freezing. I felt no pain, as the rest of my body ached more than the hand. When the doctor was through, the nurse put some yellow ointment on my hand and knee, then bandaged both wounds. She then turned her attention to my face, and when the dried blood was sponged off, the doctor examined my nose. He had no need to tell me that it was broken, but he said that there was little he could do, other than to remove the cartilage. He then gave me six aspirins, which he said, "Will ease the pain somewhat." Then, after pushing, punching and pummeling the rest of my body, he told the nurse to make sure that the Feldgendarms told the prison authorities to bring me back to the hospital in forty-eight hours.

As I was leaving his office, the doctor asked, "How old are you young man?"

"Fifteen, doctor."

He shook his head in disbelief, and again exchanged glances with the nurse, after which she took me to the hospital's foyer, where the Feldgendarms waited. As I was about to get into their car, the nurse said, "You've caused quite a bit of fuss. You are in deep trouble. Believe me!" I did not need to be reminded of that fact by an expatriate German female, who had gleaned a good living on the Island in the past, and now sported a NSDAP membership broach on her starched, white uniform.

Back at the prison, the duty sergeant signed for my body, then went into an outer office, from which he returned with my Grandmother's wicker shopping basket. In it were several packages of wrapped food and a bottle of milk. The sergeant told me in broken English that my family had to feed me, as the German prison could not include me on its rations. In the basket was also a change of underwear and fresh socks. Things were looking up! I felt better already now that I had a piece of home with me. Subsequently, a basket of food was brought to my cell shortly after 10:00 am. each day, and because of my mother's black market activities, it contained more than enough food for me. Later, in sign language, I asked the sergeant if he would take some of it each day to Maurice, and he agreed.

When the prison noises ceased that night, I climbed up to the window and called Maurice. His cell



was on the ground floor and two to the left of mine. He replied almost immediately, and his first question was, "Peter, are you OK?"

I answered, "I'm OK, but what happened to you today?"

"They took me to College House, where two detectives questioned me for about four hours. I have a feeling that they were Gestapo, Peter."

"I don't know, but how did it go? What kind of questions did they ask?" I queried.

"They mostly wanted to know who was actually behind our escape. They didn't believe that we had done it by ourselves, and kept insisting that there were adults behind the escape. By the way, did you bring some photographs along? They both asked who had taken the photographs of military fortifications and planes."

"Yes we did, but we didn't tell you, because we felt that the less you knew, the better it would be for you," I replied, feeling bad about our deceit.

"They also said that Den's body had been recovered, and that they had also found other incriminating evidence on him, but they would not tell me what it was."

I did not answer, but I presumed that it was Captain Sowden's navigation map, as Dennis was carrying it, while I carried the Beghin's map.

At that point, Maurice was interrupted by a German prisoner who screamed, "Rühig Engländer! Maul zu!" (Keep quiet Englishman! Keep your trap shut!) Before I got down from my perch I told Maurice that I would call him back in an hour or so, or whenever the loud mouth was asleep.

An hour or so later, I was back at the window talking with Maurice. He said that the two interrogators had spent most of their time asking about accomplices, but he had stuck to his story, and told them that he was just along for the ride, and had not had anything to do with the planning, other than to tune up the motor. He also said that the men had asked where all the equipment had been acquired. However, he told the men that he was just along for the ride, and had not helped with the planning nor the acquisition of any of the gear. Maurice also said that one of the men told him that what we had done was punishable by death. At that point, we were again interrupted by the same loud-mouth, who asked a guard to shut us up.

On Wednesday, 6 May, the same two Feldgendarms took me to College House, and to the same office, where Heinrich Wolff and Kurt Biele waited. I suspected that they were SD, however, I had learned somewhere that the SD were the political police of the Third Reich, and their duties were generally internally related. I had also learned that the SD had a section, which was responsible for counter-espionage abroad, and I decided that the two men could have been from that section, as I had been given to understand that there were no Gestapo on the island.

During the first part of the interrogation, I attempted to convince the men that we had gone fishing

and became lost. They did not bite, saying that they had proof to the contrary. When I asked to be shown the proof, I was sharply reprimanded and told that it was none of my business. Part way through the interrogation, an officer in military dress came in, and asked how things were going. The men told him that they had just started, but would send him a report as soon as they were through with me. Before leaving, the officer reminded both men that it was "imperative" to conclude the interrogation as soon as possible, as "Paris" had already inquired about the case.

About noon, the men took a break. I was given some milk and a pork sandwich, then left in the care of a small, rat-face soldier, who threatened me with the usual "shooting" if I tried to escape.

During the afternoon, both men fired dozens of questions at me. They said that they already knew the answers to their questions, and were only asking them to see if I was capable of telling the truth.

They kept returning to the theme of adults having helped us escape, and one of them even suggested that retired British officers had planned the whole thing for us. Kurt Biele even suggested that we might have been in contact with British parachutists, and was not amused when I scoffed at his silly suggestion. They just could not get it into their thick German skulls that Jersey's young men were capable of planning such events.

When they asked where the money had come from to buy the boat, I said that I had stolen it from the shop's cash register, but admitted that I had bought the boat and motor from Peppi, who, I assured them, had sold it to me because he thought it would be used for fishing. I reminded them that Peppi was an ally of theirs, and would not knowingly have helped the enemy. At this they burst out laughing, and in German, they derided Italy's war efforts. I felt that no harm would come by telling them the source of the boat, as it was easily traceable through the Rathaus, where it had been transferred from Peppi's name to mine.

I was also questioned about being a member of a sinister Jersey Resistance movement. I assured them this was not the case, and that we alone were responsible for our actions. When asked why we wanted to leave the island, I said that I wanted to continue my education in England, and that no disrespect had been intended to the Germans. I also told them of my disappointment of not having competed in running, and of the trophies I had missed winning through the cancellation of school sports. I rambled on and on, and even pointed out, somewhat facetiously, that I had a German name and did not dislike Germans. They did not buy that either, and reminded me that our actions had been decidedly unfriendly.

Neither man spoke about Dennis or Maurice's part in the affair, but in German they discussed Captain Sowden's map, however, I showed no signs of having understood. Not only was I not questioned about the map, but they made no mention of the suitcase or photo album, as they had done with Maurice. I looked at the floor most of the time, as I did not want them to notice any change of expression, as they formulated their questions in German. I had two things going for me:

I spoke German, and they were unaware of it and I knew that Dennis had drowned, therefore I put as much of the blame on him as was possible. He was beyond harm, and I felt that he would have approved of my tactics.

When asked, for the fourth or fifth time, how I had obtained the money to buy the boat, I reiterated that I had stolen it from shop's cash register. I also told them that there was a bill of sale for both the motor and the boat in Winchester House, and when they asked where the gasoline came from, I told them that Dennis had obtained it, and had not told me how he had got it.

As they conversed in German, I learned that only three or four cans of gasoline had been found, and when they again asked me where we had obtained it, I said that Peppi had given us some and Dennis had purchased the remainder elsewhere. I kept returning to the story that we had gone fishing and become lost, but they did not believe me. After a while, it was apparent that the men knew most of the answers, and had pieced everything together, however, I did not want to help them any more than necessary.

The men went over names, dates and places as they attempted to trip me up. They also tried to bluff me by saying that Maurice had confessed to everything, but I knew different and kept returning to my fishing theme. Finally they became exasperated with that one and told me outright that the next time I repeated that silly lie, they would punish me. They even suggested that Peppi was the "mastermind," and were extremely angry when I burst out laughing at the ridiculous allegation. It was obvious that they had not yet interviewed their bluff, jovial ally, Peppi.

My interrogation lasted three days, during which most questions were asked over and over again, as the men tried to get me to vary my answers. Neither man raised his voice, nor did they make any more threats, other than to say that we were in deep trouble and could be shot for our effort. In German, they spoke about a "fisherman" who had found our suitcase and other articles, and had handed them over to the police. That was a little hard to take. Whoever he was, he should have hidden the stuff, and if he had been on Green Island's beach on 4 May, he must have realized that an escape had taken place, as the place must have crawled with troops and police.

At the end of three days I was beginning to think, by the tone of their voices, that I might be allowed to return home. Sometimes, both men were very friendly, particularly when they asked, "What about your poor mother? Did you stop to think about her before you embarked on your folly? She is a good ally, and you have really hurt her." I wondered what they meant when they said that my mother was their "ally." I could only think that as my father processed their films, this made my family their allies.

I felt quite smug, as I thought that I had done a good job defending myself, when in reality I had played into the hands of two skilled interrogators, who were aware of most of the facts before they

began to interrogate me. The process might have lasted only a few hours, had both men not been so obsessed with the theory that adults were behind our escape. Just before my interrogation concluded, Heinrich Wolff came over to me and gripped me firmly by the shoulders. He stared into my eyes then asked, "Tell us the name of the fourth person with you that night? We know that there were four of you in that boat. Who is he? Where does he live? Tell us, and I promise, that you will get only a short prison term!"

I assured him that there was no fourth person, and that only three of us had been involved, but I could see that neither he nor his partner believed me, but it gave me an opening to say, "Perhaps Dennis Audrain was working with someone else, but he did not tell me if that was the case. I did not know everything, as I was the youngest. Most of my responsibility was to get the money for the boat and motor" The men glanced at each other, but said nothing.

On the fourth day, Saturday, 9 May, 1942, I was again taken to College House, where Heinrich Wolff handed me some typewritten sheets of paper, then said, "That is your statement. Read it and sign it!"

"It's in German," I retorted. "How do I know what's written?" I thumbed through the pages, pretending not to understand what had been typed, and from time to time I asked, "What does this say? What does this mean?" Heinrich Wolff patiently translated some parts of the statement, but not all. As I flipped through the pages, I saw that there was a two page conclusive analysis signed by both agents attached. It basically summarized that it was possible that we had acted alone, but the probability of a fourth-party having been involved was high. The latter part of their conclusion was based on the fact that my mother had told them that there was no money missing from the cash register; therefore, the money had to have come from elsewhere. I was shocked at my mother's cooperation - It seemed that she was deliberately trying to put a noose around my neck.

When Kurt Biele noticed me looking at their conclusion, he snatched the papers from my hands. He then leafed through it, and stopped at the page on which my name was typed, and dated Saturday, 9 May, 1942. He folded the statement in two, then shoved it in front of my face, and ordered me to sign it. I stubbornly shook my head, and asked that it be typed in English before I signed it. For the first time I saw signs of anger mounting in both men, but as I had nothing to lose, I demanded a complete translation of the document. I also asked them to allow me to have our family advocate present. This made them furious, but seeing my determination, they calmed down, then went over the statement word for word, running their fingers under each word, and showing me a German-English dictionary when I pretended not to understand what was typed. The statement was very straight forward, and with my knowledge of German, I saw that they had not inserted nor delete anything that may have caused me any embarrassment. When finished, Heinrich Wolff shoved a pen in my hand, then told me to sign. Still objecting strongly that I did not know

what I was signing, I scrawled my signature on the paper, but purposely signed my name "Hassell" instead of Hassall. This deliberate error went un-noticed by both men, who seemed relieved to get it over with.

A relieved Kurt Biele then made a telephone call to the Feldgendarms, and as I waiting for them, both men apprised me of ongoing German military victories. Jokingly, Heinrich Wolff suggested that we should have waited a few weeks, by which time England would be occupied, after which we could have made the trip without the inconveniences we had gone through. The humourless pair must have thought they had cracked a good joke, as they laughed quite heartily. Such was German humour!

Before the Feldgendarms took me away, Heinrich Wolff came over to me and said, "Your are in deep trouble! I hope that it doesn't happen, but you will possibly be shot for what you have done. I hope not as we do not usually shoot schoolboys, however, the possibility exists. I really feel sorry for your mother, because she does not deserve a son like you!" Which made me wonder what else my mother had said and done to expedite our execution.

That evening I called Maurice and told him about my interrogation. He asked what I thought would happen to us, and I said that I was pretty sure we would be sent to France, as one of the interrogators had suggested that we would be "put away" for a long time. I also told Maurice that one of them said that what we had done was serious enough to warrant a firing squad, but that he had added that Germans did not shoot schoolboys.

I asked Maurice if he had seen any of his family. He said that he had not. He also said that had heard my father's voice, when he came to deliver my food one morning - Unknown to us, the Night and Fog Decree was being applied to us.

Having nothing to do in my cell, I spent many hours perched at the window. My cell overlooked a small stone house with a neat little garden, in which female prisoners relaxed and sunned themselves. On one occasion I was cheered to see my mother's former friend, Mrs. N., relaxing on a deck-chair, as she served out her sentence of several months in jail for having been an accessory to a break, enter and theft at my father's store - I called her name, and when she looked up, I shoved my hand over the top of the window and waved. She did not reply. Instead, she packed up her deck-chair, and move to another position with her back turned towards me - No doubt thinking that it was a dirty old voyeur calling from a cell. I did not realize it, but what I later called "the window syndrome" had infected me already, and I had only been inside a few days.

Neither Maurice nor I had any idea of knowing what was happening, but unknown to us, our case had already been sent to Paris for a decision, and acting in accordance with Hitler's Night and Fog Decree of 7 December, 1941, that decision was not long coming.

Early on Wednesday, 20 May, 1942, the German sergeant opened my cell, and told me to pack everything and follow him. Apart from my signet ring, the clothes on my back, a towel, toilet articles and an Oxo tin full of green hair brilliantine, which I needed to slick down my unruly, straight hair, I had no other effects, and whatever I had on me when I was arrested had not been returned. I followed the sergeant downstairs to his office, where a glum looking Maurice waited. It was our first meeting since our arrest, but it was not comforting to see his bruised face, which was no different to my own.

Seated in the office were the same two Feldgendarms who had been our escorts since day one. They were equipped with their metal breast plates, pistols, brief cases and, as usual, the confining handcuffs. From their conversation with the sergeant, I gathered that we were to be taken to Paris, where we would be tried for our offenses. I whispered this bit of news to Maurice, and reminded him not to tell anyone that I spoke German and French. When the senior Feldgendarm had signed the necessary forms, he put them in a brown manila folder, then shoved them in his briefcase. With the formalities over, the handcuffs were put on behind our backs and we were cautioned that we would be shot, should we attempt to escape. We were then herded out of the prison block; along the narrow path; then into the small, black car, which waited in the dusk of Gloucester Street.

In English I asked one of the Feldgendarms, "Are you taking us home?"

Both Feldgendarms snickered, and in German, one of them said, "He'll soon find out what kind of a house he's going to. That one's a real joker, but he'll soon learn!"

We were driven south on Gloucester Street, then left along the Esplanade. At the Weighbridge, the car turned towards the docks, where a cargo ship, full of troops, labourers and supplies was berthed - it was the SS Normand. After boarding the vessel our handcuffs were removed, and we were made to climb down into the ship's hold. Once there, our handcuffs were replaced, and we were led to an vacant corner of the empty hold, where we were told to sit. This was followed by the usual threats of shooting.

It was the first time we had been together without supervision, and we used it to catch up with past events. There was not much to say that had not been said through the cell windows, but we were concerned about our total isolation and lack of visits by our families. We found it strange, as even convicted criminals were allowed to have weekly family visits. Maurice said that he had asked the sergeant about seeing his family, but was told to keep his mouth shut, and that he had no right to see anyone. Maurice also took me to task for not having told him everything, particularly about the photographs, however, he relaxed when I again outlined our reasons for keeping him in the dark. After an hour or so in the hold, we felt the ship's engines come to life just after 6:00 a.m. according to Maurice's watch. Fifteen minutes later, jack-booted legs climbed down the iron ladder. They

belonged to one of our Feldgendarms, who removed the handcuffs, and ordered us on deck. We reached it in time to see that the ship was rounding the White Rock, on its way to France. We were left to roam the ship unguarded; probably because the policemen felt that we were not going to jump overboard. We walked to the ship's stern, from which we saw the Town St. Helier getting smaller, and smaller. We both knew that another phase of our life had begun. Tall, genial Maurice put an arm around my shoulders and said, "Wipe away the tears! Don't let them get you down!" His words got rid of my self-pity, and my tears ceased.

Later, as we steamed into the Normand port of Granville, we were again handcuffed before disembarking. We were then herded along the town's main street, where some French citizens glanced fleetingly at us, their eyes full of sympathy, but unable to help. Along the way to the station, we were motioned into a restaurant, where the Feldgendarms ordered a meal for themselves.

When the restaurant owner asked if he could give us something to eat, he was told to look after his own affairs and not meddle with those of the German police. The thoughtful, kind man gave us a sympathetic look, but wisely returned behind his counter.

After our escorts finished their meal, we were taken to the railway station, where we were put on a Paris bound train, in which first class accommodation had been reserved for us. Inside the compartment, the Feldgendarms pulled down the window blinds, and soon both men were asleep; probably from the overload of food, wine and cognac they had downed in the restaurant.

They were very irritated when we roused them and asked to use the washroom. Maurice went first, accompanied by the junior Feldgendarm, and when it was my turn, I was told to leave the toilet door open. The rest of the trip to Paris was passed in darkness and silence. Neither Feldgendarm spoke, other than to tell us to be quiet when we asked questions, but in the silence, we both knew that we were racing towards the darker side of Hell.

On arrival at the Gare Montparnasse (Station), Paris, we were taken to a "Soldatenheim" (soldiers' canteen), located on the first floor of a station building. One of our escorts asked an official if he could use the telephone, and was directed to a rear office. When he returned, he ordered us to sit in a corner of the large dining-room, and with a lecherous look, he told his partner that they had time to make a trip to the local brothel, because the car coming to take us to the "Gefängnis" (Prison), would not arrive for more than an hour.

We were each given a bowl of thick soup, a large chunk of black bread and a mug of acorn coffee. Our handcuffs were removed with the usual threats, then the Feldgendarms left us in charge of an armed German sailor, who was told to keep an eye on us during their absence, "...which would last no longer than an hour or so."

When I was through eating, I was again bursting at the seams, and asked to use the washroom. The sailor told me to go downstairs to the platform, then turn right, where I would find the men's

washroom. When he showed no signs of coming with me, I looked at him, but he merely waved in the general direction of the exit, and told me to hurry up and come back. Understanding that I was to go un-accompanied, I quickly ran down the steep stairs, turned right, and a few yards away I found the men's toilets. After relieving myself, I went onto the platform, turned right and walked towards a sign which said "Exit." Montparnasse Station was crowded with French civilians and German troops, all coming or going towards the platforms or exits, and no one gave me a second glance.

I stood for a minute or two looking at the large iron gates, which exited onto the Boulevard Montparnasse. As I looked around, I contemplating making a run for it, but the thought of reprisals against my family made me hesitate, as I did not want to get them in trouble. I had caused enough trouble already. As I took another look around, I saw that there were no sentries at the main exit, and French civilians and German troops were coming and going without being stopped or asked for papers. It was at that time that I thought about Francois Scornet, and that cast off any concern I had about for my family. With Francois Scornet in mind, I decided to join the crowd and disappear into the streets of Paris, where I hoped to find someone who would put me in touch with the French underground, or could help get me into Spain, and eventually Gibraltar.

Just as I moved towards the exit, a heavy hand grabbed my coat. It belonged to the senior Feldgendarm, who screamed, "Thunder and lightning! What in God's name are you doing here?" I did not answer, as I was too stunned at having missed my golden opportunity to escape. Both men almost carried me back to the Soldatenheim, where I was quickly handcuffed to Maurice. A screaming match ensued, as the Feldgendarms cursed the German sailor for his stupidity. They screamed, "These two are terrorists, and you were told to guard them, not liberate them!" The German sailor, not prepared to be yelled at, courageously told them that he had only been ordered to look after us, but beyond that he had not been issued any other instructions, therefore, when I asked to use the toilet, he assumed I would come back. He also told the policemen that I looked more like a frightened schoolboy than a terrorist. The shouting match went on for a few more minutes, and before it ended, the Feldgendarms wrote down the sailor's name and station. We were then dragged down the stairs, along the platform to a cobble-stone parking lot, where we were shoved into a black Citroën car driven by a German soldier.

The car then roared through the streets of Paris and its outskirts, until we reached a sign reading Domaine de Fresnes. Soon after the sign, we came to a long avenue, bordered with tall poplar trees. When the car stopped at a huge gate, the senior Feldgendarm got out and disappeared into a small office. Moments later he emerged, and got back into the car, which was waved through into a courtyard. The car stopped at a side door, where we were ordered out, then dragged through the door into a spacious, but darkened basement, lined with small cupboard-like cubicles.



Our handcuffs were taken off in front of the cubicles, then disappeared back into the senior Feldgendarm's briefcase. He then took out the official-looking, manila folder, which he handed to a German Army staff-sergeant. Again, our bodies were signed for, after which the Feldgendarms were wished a, "Gute fahrt!" (Good trip) Then our guardians left without giving us a second glance.

The staff-sergeant opened a small cubicles and motioned me into it. Not one word was spoken. I hear another cubicle open and close and knew that Maurice was also in his new home. We had, unknowingly, arrived at the Military Prison of Fresnes, one of France's largest prisons. It had been taken over by the Germans, and had become a central holding place for French Resistants and enemies of the Reich; many of whom had, unknowingly been categorized under the NN Decree and brought to Fresnes for deportation to Germany into Hitler's Night and Fog.

As I sat in the small, dark cubicle in Fresnes, I knew that another saga of our lives was unfolding. We had lived in a fool's world, and knew only the German Occupiers on the island, who had been mostly well behaved. But in Fresnes, I sensed that the gloves were off and the ground rules changed. I looked up and asked The Lord to look after us, as I knew we would be needing Him more than ever. I listened to the loud, guttural German screams and the sounds of blows; which told me that the "Eingänge" (Newcomers) were being accorded a typical German welcome.

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### **Fresnes and the Gestapo**

Alone in the dark cubicle, my fears and imagination soared to greater heights. I could not believe that the cupboard was to be my permanent place of imprisonment, as there was no room to move about in it, worse still, there were neither light nor toilet facilities. I sat on the floor and listened to the resounding noises of jackboots, as Germans walked past the doors, and nearby I heard an large iron gate being opened and shut. It was intimidating, but I suspected that it was part of the German entry ritual, which seemed carefully orchestrated to intimidate newcomers.

I also hear constant, barking commands of German guards: "Los! Schnell! Ruhig!" Their vocabulary was limited as in Jersey, and I assumed that the guards knew nothing but monosyllabic words, however, from time to time, a linguist among them would bark in French: "Silence!" When more prisoners arrived, and there seemed to be a constant flow of them, the same ritual took place: doors opened and slammed, and each time there were the same short, guttural warnings, as yet another prisoner was pushed into a cubicle.

When I had been in my cubicle about thirty minutes, I put my mouth to the door frame then called

Maurice. His voice floated back across the hall, "Are you OK Peter?" I said that I was, but the joy of hearing his voice was short lived, as a guard pounded on my door and told me to keep my trap shut, however, I no longer felt alone. I found it somewhat difficult to be brave all the times, but I had made my bed and intended to lie in it as bravely as I could.

I had no idea how long I was in the cubicle, but it was finally unlocked by a corporal, who ordered me to follow him. When I stepped out of the cubicle, I looked for Maurice, but he was nowhere to be seen. I followed the corporal across the hall, then along a dimly lighted corridor to a huge, iron gate marked: "German Military Prison," which led to yet another corridor, and eventually into a long prison range, where the light came mainly from large end windows and skylights. The wing had four floors on both sides of tiled stairs, and there was wire stretched between each range, probably to stop prisoners from committing suicide, however, the sheer size of the Fresnes' Second Division took my breath away. I had never been in such a large building.

Reaching the fourth floor, the guard made a right turn past several cells, which all bore white cards with black printing on them. He finally stopped in front of a cell, which was to be my new home, and slid a white card in the door's metal slot. I managed to see some of the printing on the card, but apart from my surname, I had no time to read the rest, however, the four stars on the card set me wondering and reactivated my paranoia. The corporal gestured me into the cell with his thumb, and I was no sooner inside, when the key grated in the lock - It sounded very final.

I stood in the centre of the cell where I took stock of my newest home, which was about fourteen by eight feet. There was an iron bed on the left wall, which was folded and attached to a hook in the wall. On the other wall was a collapsed, hinged table, and chained to the wall was a heavy stool, but joy of joys, there was a toilet in one corner, although there was no paper. On the opposite side to the toilet was a cold water tap, under which was a small sink. There was also a central heating pipe in the cell. Other things in the cell were: a hand brush, an enamel wash basin, a brown soup bowl and eating utensils - Sparse but practical given the circumstances.

I was still taking stock, when a corporal and a prisoner trustee burst in. The trustee, in blue work-fatigues, carried two grey blankets, a pillow and a stiff white sheet, all of which he threw on the floor. He then pointed to the small hand brush, and told me to use it and keep my cell clean. He also handed me a roll of coarse toilet paper, which would have made good newsprint. The German corporal put out his hand and asked me to give him my small parcel of clothing which I had brought from Jersey. In it were a change of underwear, socks, a clean shirt and some toilet articles. He was a little puzzled at the Oxo with its aromatic, green brilliantine, which he probed, then wiped his index finger on my towel. I was ordered to stand with my nose against the wall, and was searched again. The corporal came up empty, but ordered me to take off my signet ring, which, he told me, would be returned when I left the prison. When the man was through, he placed my effects in a

large manila folder, but left me my toothbrush, soap and towel, and before he closed the door he jokingly suggested that I should not try to hang myself with the latter. I pretended not to understand, but German humour had struck again.

As soon as the door closed, I unhooked the bed and made it up. I had hardly finished, when the door flew open, and the same corporal rushed in. He yelled at me that the bed was to stay attached to the wall until after "Abendbrot" (Supper). I pretended not to understand, and spread my hands in a gesture of hopeless resignation. When the man asked if I understood German, I shook my head. Then in fractured French he asked if I understood that language. I again shook my head, then pointing to my chest I said, "I am English - England." He stared at me for a few seconds then in German said, "Young man, I can't help you. You are "Untersuchung" (being investigation) and have no privileges. No exercise, no visits, no mail, no food no parcels, nothing! Compris!" I shook my head, pretending not to understand, but what he said re-kindled my fears.

As the guard stared at me, he would have been blind not to see have recognized a frightened, fifteen year-old, who was certainly not your average terrorist. Before leaving my cell, he patted me on the back and said, "I have a son your age. Do you know that?" I did not answer, but I had no doubt that he had.

Sometime later the grill in the door was thrown open, and a French voice asked for my soup bowl. I pretended not to understand, and remained in the middle of my cell. The door was unlocked, and a French trustee came in, took my bowl, then disappeared with it. Moments later it re-appeared on the small shelf under the grill in the door. I stared at its contents which appeared to be a watery, brown soup with a few lumps of flour at the bottom. It tasted like a weak flour gruel, but it filled my empty stomach. Not long after, the grill opened again, and a small piece of sausage was placed on the shelf. A hand gestured for my bowl, and when it was returned, it was half-full of herbal tea, which tasted foul.

When I finished eating the piece of sausage, I went over to the window, which was high up in the wall. Its small fanlight was my only source of fresh air, and it was opened and closed by means of a long pole attached to it. I was of a mind to break one of the opaque panes of glass so that I could see outside, but on close examination I saw that the lower left hand pane of glass had a small crack in it, and on closer examination, I saw that there was a small, removable segment of glass embedded in a gummy substance, which almost matched the putty. I decided to wait until morning to examine it and any other secrets the cell held. I was very tired, and wanted to sleep, as it had been a long and stressful day - It seemed hard to believe that my day had begun in Jersey, and ended in a French prison - Quite an adventure for someone who had travelled no farther than Guernsey.

I washed myself, then sat on the bed and reflected on the corporal's words that I was: "Under investigation and was entitled to nothing." That brought on another crisis of self-pity, and I kicked myself for not having escaped at Montparnasse Station. I sat and cried for the longest time, until I realized that self-pity would destroy me, and as I needed some form of help, I turned to the only source of consolation, The Lord, whom I asked for strength. I had already accepted my misfortune as God's will and punishment for my past transgressions, but that evening, I made a pact with The Lord and offered Him my sufferings in return for my life. I wondered what was beyond death, and hoped that death would only hurt for a split second, after which I could join Dennis - There was no doubt in my mind that we would end up in front of a German firing squad.

Satiated with my incessant, morbid thoughts, I finally took off my clothes, then climbed into bed. I was unable to sleep, as all night long, the light in my cell was switched on and off, and sometimes an inquisitive eye appeared at the peep-hole. As I lay awake, I listened to the inner sounds of Fresnes. Two or three times during the night, I hauled myself up to the window, but could see nothing through the frosted glass. I quickly became aware that the guards muffled, or removed their jackboots, because they were able to sneak up to my door and switch on the light without my hearing them. I listened as French prisoners called for news about the war, mothers, wives, sweethearts and comrades, while others cursed every German from Hitler downwards. Guards pounded on doors, and shouted at the occupants to keep quiet, but their yelling did not quell the shouting - Fresnes came alive at night.

I listened all night as determined French prisoners passed messages from cell to cell, range to range and division to division. It was impossible to sleep, and as dawn broke, I trotted around the cell, trying to ease the stiffness from my joints. After I had run about for about thirty minutes, I I stripped off, and sponged myself all over, then took the bandage off my knee, and washed it. When it was partially dry, I put it back over a somewhat improved wound. I also took care of my hand which showed signs of healing.

Then it was time for the breakfast trolleys, and this time I was ready with my bowl, which was grabbed by a trustee, then returned half full of ersatz coffee, which tasted like burnt acorns, however, it was hot and welcome. Moments later the grill opened again and a piece of black bread, smeared with a little jam, was put on the shelf. When I had eaten, I climbed up to the window, and using the end of my spoon, I started to removed the piece of glass from the corner pane. It popped out quite easily, and I saw that the "puttee" was only chewed bread, which almost matched the original puttee's colour.

When I peered through the hole, I made out several tall poplar trees and some semi-detached, stucco houses to my right; which I assumed to be the French warders' houses. Behind the houses were several garden allotments, and beyond them, more cultivated garden allotments. To my right

was a low prison block, and below my window was a small quadrangle. To the left was, what appeared to be, a workshop of sorts.

I thought that my view was better than any movie I had ever seen, as for the first time in over two weeks, I saw green grass, blooming flowers, trees with leaves and people walking along paths and roads - all enjoying their freedom. It was a much better sight than the little cottage in the Jersey jail, where my mother's former friend had sunned herself.

As I looked out, a door in the right hand building opened, and a German Army corporal, complete with a pistol on his belt stormed out of it. He was closely followed by three ranks of Germans in various forms of military attire. Some were obviously sailors, others soldiers and there were also one or two airmen; about thirty of them, and all with razed skulls. When the corporal ordered them to halt, they froze at attention, all staring at the small door, through which a short, fat German Army sergeant appeared. He marched to the front of the prisoners, halted, turned left, then began barking guttural commands. I, and I am certain many other prisoners, were then treated to a demonstration of German military foot drill.

The youthful prisoners were marched and drilled for about thirty minutes, and, at one point did the "goose step" - legs raised at 45° angles to the ground, then the feet driven into the cobble stones. Suddenly, by word of command from within the ranks, the strange group started singing German marching songs, some, of which I had heard on the streets of St. Helier, where other groups of Germans had paraded for Jersey's entertainment with their glockenspiels and what-nots. The strange little group sang their hearts out, as if they were on parade in front of the Führer himself. With their lungs bursting with effort to impress their jailers, they sang: "Schwarzbraun ist die Hazelnüss (The hazelnut is dark-brown), Madagaskar, Erika, Lili Marleen and other German marching songs, which I did not recognize. The harmonious singing was accompanied by guards screams of "Lustig! Lustig!" (Put more heart into it!) My favourite became one in which there were many "Halli, Hallo Ho Ho Ho Hos!"

Unfortunately, my legs cramped with the strain of holding myself up at the bars, and I was forced to get down and run on the spot to bring the circulation back. When I climbed back up, my entertainment was cut short, as the German prisoners were returned to their cells, however, with the exception of Sundays, I enjoyed the daily entertainment.

Later that morning, my cell door opened and a dirty, evil-looking, trustee-barber came in. He dabbed a little foul-smelling, shaving soap on my face, and with two or three deft strokes of his open-razor, whipped off my youthful stubble. After that distraction I sat on my stool and waited for the noon-hour trolleys, but not before I had swept my cell, and cleaned the wounds in my knee and hand again. I did not ask to see a doctor, as I did not want a repetition of Corporal Hans' savagery.

As I waited for my meal, I read the graffiti etched all over the cell's walls. Some of it, by its crudeness, had obviously been written by former criminal prisoners, while other writings were addresses and messages left by French Resistants, who were about to be shot, deported to Germany, or interrogated. There were four very ornate and distinct etchings which read, "Mort pour la France," followed by the names, dates of birth and the probable dates on which the former occupants of my cell were shot. Several etchings gave departure dates, but showed no destinations. I found something new on the walls every time I sat on the toilet, and I also noted that several of the names appeared to be English and Polish.

There were constant tappings on heating and toilet pipes, and I quickly understood that prisoners were passing messages by splitting the alphabet in two sections. My first clue was "A," which was one tap. The second clue was two quick taps, followed by one tap or five taps. I distinguish the feminine and masculine articles: "le" and "la," and as days went by, I learned that one tap was "A" two for "B" and so on up to "K", which was 11 taps. After "K" came "L" which was two quick taps, followed by one tap. Then came "M," which was two quick taps and two regular taps, and so on up to "Z". The messages were mainly queries for news of detainees and families, and the only time the tapping stopped was when a guard became exasperated, however, as soon as his barking stopped, the tapping resumed. The toilets and heating system also served as conduits along which verbal messages were passed. On one occasion I heard adult, English voices, one of which was trying to get a message to a female in another division. I wondered who they were and how I could get in touch with them.

On the third day in Fresnes my cell door was thrown open. A French trustee poked his head in and yelled, "Douche" (Shower). I was delighted, as I had not bathed since I had been arrested. I also hoped to see Maurice in the showers, however, before I could grab my towel and soap, the door slammed shut in my face. I then heard an authoritative German voice say, "The detainee, Hassall, is not allowed out of his cell under any circumstance!" This was the second reference to my peculiar status, and it reactivated my paranoia.

I could have cried with frustration for not having been allowed to take a shower, but there would be other times for showers; beside which, I had made it a point of stripping down each day, and washing my body with cold water - May was not a cold month, even in the chilly cell. I had also washed my underwear and shirt, however, they did not come out as clean as when Gran had washed them. Thinking of Gran made me wonder how she was taking my arrest.

On Maurice's 18th birthday, Sunday, 31 May, I tried to make contact with him by calling through the vents, however I was unsuccessful, despite the assistance of several French prisoners who attempted to locate him.

The day after Maurice's birthday, 1 June, my cell door was opened by a German sergeant who

told me to follow him. He said only one word, "Tribunal" (Trial), which I took to mean that I was about to be tried. I found this rather strange, as I had not been afforded the opportunity of talking with a defence lawyer, but then I had a lot to learn.

I followed the sergeant to the main hall, where I had been placed in the small cubicle-like cell. There I was told to face the wall, touch it with my nose and keep my trap shut. When my escort spoke to another guard, I heard him say that I was to be taken to a rue des Saussaies for interrogation. I had no idea what that meant, but it did tell me that I was not about to be tried, and that gave me a small degree of comfort. Minutes later I was handcuffed, roughly swung around, then ordered to follow another soldier through an underground tunnel route, which eventually led to a large courtyard, in which a black Citroën waited - a German soldier behind its wheel. The guard told the driver to "Abfahren!" (Drive on!), then we were on our way back to Paris.

As we drove through the Parisian suburbs, I did not find the streets romantic and beautiful, as my geography books and many songs portrayed them to be. I had never been in Paris, other than to speed through it on my way to Fresnes, and even though the sun was shining and French people were going about their every-day business, I found no solace in the change of scenery. Paris, to me, appeared dirty, smoky and drab, but this impression may have been caused by my state of mind, or by the many German troops who strutted their stuff, just as they had done in Jersey.

Life in occupied Paris appeared to be relatively easy going, and if it had not been for German military trucks and strutting troops, one might not have known that there was a war on. Parisians sat at small tables, outside their favourite restaurants, as they drank their morning ersatz coffee, smoking their foul smelling cigarettes and reading their newspapers. It was a distraction, but the world outside the Citroën was no longer mine to enjoy.

When the car arrived at the rue des Saussaies, I was bundled up some steps into a large, forbidding-looking building. Inside, I was herded up a carpeted stairway, then into a large room on the third floor, where I was told to sit down opposite a table, behind which sat two very obvious Gestapo agents. There were two lamps on their table, one of which was aimed directly in my eyes. The silhouettes of the two men told me that one was of average height and the other quite short, but with enormously wide shoulders. At another table, to their left, sat an attractive woman, notebook in one hand and two pencils in the other. I could not determine if she was French or German, but I assumed that she was a stenographer.

When my soldier escort left the room, one of the Gestapo asked me, in English, to identify myself, and when I had done so, he loosely translated into English the statement I had signed in Jersey. When he finished translating it, he asked me to verify my signature; which I did. The shorter agent then asked, in English, if I wanted to add anything. I said that I had nothing to add, but told them that I had been coerced into signing it, and that I did not agree with it as I had no assurances of its

contents.

For the next hour or so, both men concentrated their questions on the adults mentioned by the Jersey interrogators. I was made to repeat my involvement with Peppi, my uncle, the carter and even my father's knowledge of the escape. Again, I used my age, and the fact that Dennis was no longer with us, to get around most of the questions. It was obvious that both men also believed that there had been adults behind the escape, as they kept coming back to the question of others having been involved, particularly former British officers.

Captain Sowden's map was placed on the table and I was asked to identify it. I said that it had been acquired by Dennis and that I knew nothing of its origin. I again played the role of the youngest, whose sole participation had been to come up with the money to buy the boat. I told them that I had played a minor role, and had only gone along in order to continue my education in England. I could not see their faces because of the light in my eyes, but their comments in German, told me that my story had not gone over too well. Several times, the young woman asked the men how certain names were spelled, and I was asked to confirm the spelling of several Jersey place names which were mentioned in the Jersey interrogators' report. Apart from that, the woman appeared to be totally bored.

As the questioning drew to a close, the short Gestapo agent told me that I was accused of some very serious crimes. I asked him what they were, but was told, "You will soon find out, but I can tell you that espionage is among the charges. I wonder if you realize that you can be shot for being anti-German? It would be better for all concerned if you told us the truth."

I was not too concerned about being anti-German, because I still assumed that all British were Germany's enemies, as we were still at war with them, and I failed to see disliking, or being opposed to the Third Reich as a crime.

I told them that I was not guilty of espionage, and asked to see the proof of their allegation. The question made the short man angry. He jumped up from his chair, then pointing to a bulky manilla folder on the table, yelled, "We have the proof. You will see it at your trial! Now once and for all, tell us who put you up to this! Who made this map? You did not do all this by yourselves! Who gave you the money? You lied when you said you took it from the cash register in your parents' shop, because your mother has stated that no money was missing. Now tell the truth or else it will go badly for you!"

I repeated that no one else was behind the escape, and that I had no idea where Dennis had obtained the map. One of the men stepped from behind the desk, and by his look, it was easy to see that I was not believed. I expected that he was about to do a Corporal Hans' on me, but instead I was dragged into a small room, in which there was a bath almost full of cold water. After being trussed



up like a chicken, I was dunked under the water several times, until I almost drowned. The men must have done it before, because I was always pulled out before I drowned, however, after several dunkings, the men saw they were getting nowhere with their sport, and I was untied, then dragged back to the room, where the shorter man said, "We had better cut this short as we have to be in Compiègne this afternoon to pick up that woman. We will bring Gould over tomorrow, then see what we have when we look over both statements." The small one agreed, then went to the door where he asked my guard to come in, and take me back to Fresnes. Out came the handcuffs and moments later, completely soaked, I was in the same Citroën, on my way back to Fresnes.

My nights at Fresnes were stressful, as sleep was almost impossible. I often wished for some ear plugs to blot out the sounds. My adolescent need for food also caused severe hunger pangs which kept me awake. Then there were the cries of those sentenced to death - Their screams echoed across the ranges with final messages for their parents or wives. One of the condemned men yelled out that he was about to be moved to another part of the prison, where he was to be held until it was time for his execution, but before he left, he yelled, "Give my love to my wife. Tell her to be brave!" It was a very disquieting time, and it often caused me to think of Francois Scornet.

Like many prisoners in Fresnes, I also sang to relieve the pressures. I was young, my voice was pleasant, as I had been in a church choir, in which I had been able to reach high notes, until puberty took over. It may have been my youthful vanity, but I sensed a quietness on the range when I sang. I did not know who was on the range, but during the refrains, I dubbed in the words, "Can you hear me Maurice?" - There was never an answer, but oddly enough, no guard ever banged on my door to tell me to shut my trap. Perhaps they enjoyed my singing, or they were fast asleep?

At the end of one song, a muffled, educated British voice asked who I was and what I was doing in Fresnes. I was reluctant to reply because I feared a Gestapo trap, however, the man persisted until I finally told him who I was, and why I was in Fresnes. When I asked who he was, he told me that he could not say, but I never heard from him again, although I tried to reach him.

I heard French prisoners tell others that they had received food parcels, and I wondered if they came from their homes or the Red Cross. Some of the prisoners even spoke about getting letters from home, and this made me wonder about my status, which apparently denied me everything. It seemed so very harsh and unfair.

Four days after the first Gestapo interrogation, my door was opened, and a jailer told me to get dressed for the "Tribunal." As I knew where I was going, I was not as apprehensive as the first time. When I reached the lower hall, I again looked around for Maurice, who was nowhere to be seen. The usual procedure followed: through the tunnel; outside, into the courtyard; in the black Citroën, driven by the same soldier and accompanied by the same guard; across Paris to the ugly

building on the rue des Saussaies; up the carpeted stairs, then into the same room in which the same trio sat.

After the handcuffs were removed and I was seated, the smaller Gestapo handed me several typewritten sheets, which he said was the statement I had given them. I retorted that I had not given them a statement, but simply answered questions. At that point, the short Gestapo shoved his face in mine and gruffly ordered me to sign it. I repeated that I would not sign, as it was written in German, and I was not about to put a noose about my neck by signing something I could not understand. I was enraged, and having nothing to lose, I told them pair to tear it up as I would not sign it.

My refusal to sign made the smaller Gestapo lose his temper. He jumped up, threw his chair against the wall, ran around the table then grabbed me by the throat with one hand and pounded my still-sore nose with the other. I managed to focus on his bulbous eyes and the saliva dripping from his mouth, but I was unable to understand a word he said, as my head was spinning. He tightened his grip on my throat and screamed, "You are a dirt-bag and a filthy terrorist, but I assure you that you will sign before they strap you to the firing post, you swine!"

I almost blacked out, but still tried to pry his fingers from my throat. That made the maniac madder and he squeezed harder. I thought he fully intended murder me, as he had totally lost his self-control. It was not until I began to vomit that the taller Gestapo, still seated behind the desk, sharply said, "Aufhören Karl!" (Stop Karl). He must have been the senior of the two, as Karl's fingers slowly unwound themselves from my throat, then panting like an angry bull, he kicked me in the groin before returning to the desk, where he picked up his chair, then sat down panting like a wounded bull. As he was punching me, I had smelled the same foul body odour, similar to that of Corporal Hans in the Jersey, and I wondered if all Germans smelled that way when angry.

When the situation quietened, the senior Gestapo told me to move my chair closer to the table, then, sentence by sentence, he translated every word on the sheets of paper. He stopped at the end of each paragraph, and asked I had understood. I saw no errors or insertions in the statement, as the man's finger slowly moved along the lines, and although nothing more incriminating had been inserted, I asked if his translation was accurate. He chuckled, then said, "You are fortunate that you are so young Englishman; besides which, I am in a good mood, because I am going on leave tomorrow. Now sign the damned statement if you know what is good for you!" I sensed that I was on thin ice, so I took the proffered pen, and signed the statement.

With the formalities over, the military escort was called; the handcuffs were snapped shut behind my back, then the usual drill followed: into the Citroën with the same driver; across occupied Paris; up the poplar lined road to Fresnes; through the gates; into the hall, then finally into my cell. "Safe

at last!" I breathed. Even my cell felt safer than the rue des Saussaies, which had echoed with the cries of Resistants being tortured elsewhere in the building. Not only had I hear men's voices screaming in agony, but I had heard the agonizing screams of women - Sounds which had made the hair rise on the nape of my neck.

The Gestapo sent for me only once more. This time it was for me to verify my name, because someone had notice that I had misspelled my name on the Jersey statement. I was made to re-sign the original document, and when asked why I had signed my name incorrectly, I blamed Corporal Hans and his beatings for my state of mind at the time. I was not called back to the rue des Saussaies, probably as the Gestapo had all they needed.

Back in my cell, the marching and singing continued in the little square, as did the starvation diet, as there was so little food in Fresnes. The soup was so watery that it could have been sucked up through a straw, and only occasionally did I find a piece of turnip or vegetable in it. I never found any meat, and perhaps that is why all the German guards were so robust, as they ate our rations. I presumed that I was supposed to save some of my bread for the evening meal, but as soon as it arrived I ate it, as I was starving. I had lost quite a bit of weight, and had been forced to tightened my belt three notches.

No one came to my cell; the door was never opened and no one communicated directly with me again. I found this strange, as I again heard several English voices, but none of them ever answered me, despite my efforts to contact them.

On 11 June, my cell door quietly opened, and in walked a German officer. There was a religious cross on his uniform lapels, which was a little out of keeping with what I had experienced. The officer placed a finger to his lips, in a gesture for silence, then very quietly, in French, asked if I was being well treated. When I did not answer, he asked in English, "You are OK?" When I nodded that I was OK, the German minister reached in his pocket, and handed me a small French language bible. He told me to keep praying and singing, and to keep my faith in The Lord. Then he was gone as quietly as he had appeared.

For a moment I felt as if I had been visited by an angel. I could not believe what had happened until I squeezed the little bible. I wondered what kind of man could spread the word of God on one hand, and wear a swastika adorned uniform on the other. I also wondered if it was he who gave the condemned men their last rites. Notwithstanding these thoughts, I spent the rest of the daylight hours reading the bible and praying, and in the solitude of my cell, I began to understand that not all Germans were Nazis, as I had so categorized them. Perhaps the German minister was a good man, or perhaps he come to look me over before I was taken out to be shot. Would there be a coffin? Or would I be stuffed in a hole without one? So many ugly thoughts.

The next day, Friday, 12 June, my door was open by a guard, who ordered me to pack everything

and follow him. The little packing I had to do took all of thirty seconds, and as I stood in the middle of my cell, with my effects rolled in my towel, the guard opened a large enveloped, from which spilled my silver signet ring and my few confiscated possessions, such as: my tie, fresh underwear and the Oxo tin with green, smelly brilliantine. He thrust a receipt and a pencil at me, telling me to sign for everything. I took a last look around, put all my possessions in my towel, then followed my gaoler downstairs to the main hall, where I was delighted to see Maurice's head towering above some twenty prisoners, who milled around, shaking hands, hugging and talking. I ran over to Maurice and hugged him for the first time in weeks. When I looked up I noticed that his face was badly bruised, but before I had time to ask what had happened, we were screamed at and told to: "Keep your traps shut!" A German staff-sergeant then appeared with a list in his hands. He told the assembled prisoners to line up and answer their names. This brought about some semblance of order, during which I quickly tucked myself in next to Maurice. When the shuffling ceased, the staff-sergeant began to call names from a two-page, typewritten list: "Anciaux, Raymond." Someone replied "Present." The staff-sergeant droned down the list and read several more names until he came to: "Gould, Maurice." He looked up when Maurice replied, "Here", but said nothing. One more name, then "Hassall, Peter." I, too, answered, "Here." Again the staff sergeant looked up, but said nothing. Each time a name was called, the guard made a tick on the list, and when he was certain we were all present, he ordered us to pick up our luggage and follow him, however, before being led into the courtyard, French trustees arrived with a food trolley, from which they handed each prisoner a large piece of black bread and a chunk of cooked sausage. Once in the courtyard, we were shepherded into a large armoured cell-truck. On each side stood a row of German soldiers; rifles aimed at us, as if we were desperate criminals. Inside the truck, I looked at the other occupants, most of whom appeared to be middle-aged, although there were five or six young men among them. They all were very apprehensive, but as I was beside Maurice I felt happy again. It was good to be with my big friend. When we were all in the armoured truck, four Germans soldiers also crowded in with their rifles and machine-pistols at the ready, and it was not long before the truck's motor revved up, then we were on our way to our unknown destination. I turned to the nearest prisoner and quietly asked if he knew where we were going. He answered, "Probably Germany." I told him that we were English, but he was unimpressed, and from his attitude, I had to assume that he disliked the English.

As we drove towards Paris, Maurice updated me on his stay at Fresnes. He had been interrogated on two occasions, and from the description of his interrogators, he had my shorter Gestapo and a different agent as his inquisitors. He told me that when the short, squat man became exasperated with his answers, he called the guard in from the corridor, and shackle his arms to a chair. Maurice said that the smaller Gestapo then accompanied every question with a blow to his face, but finally

gave up as Maurice's answers coincided with those he had already given the interrogators in Jersey. Maurice also said that he had again followed my advice, and told the Gestapo that he had gone along with us only because he wanted to go back to his home in England. Our conversation ended when the truck stopped and the back doors were thrown open. We had arrived at the Gare de l'Est (East Station), and as we jumped out of the truck, we were ordered to line up between two rows of heavily armed soldiers, who looked as if they meant business.

As I looked around I saw that French every-day life was proceeding normally. Civilians, with and without baggage, went about their businesses of arriving and leaving station platforms. Some of them threw curious, sympathetic glances at us, but no one was allowed near us; although two prisoners threw rolled-up notes into the crowd, which were immediately pounced on by soldiers, then given to the German officer in charge of us.

We were recounted, then marched into an armoured railway carriage, which appeared to be coupled to the rear of a civilian passenger train. Keeping close to Maurice, I climbed into the carriage, which was made up of miniature cells along each side of a narrow corridor, and in which, we were lucky to be put in the same small cell, which was about a meter square. On one side of the little cell was a narrow bench on which one of us could sit while the other sat between his legs. The seat could also be used for looking out the tiny-grill in the outside wall.

It felt good to be with Maurice again, but it was very apparent that imprisonment had affecting him, because from time to time, he shook his head from side to side and both eyes had developed frequent twitches. I again reminded Maurice that I would not speak German nor French unless it was really necessary. I also told him about our special designation and treatment, and he became aware why he had been treated like a leper.

When we were talked out, Maurice squatted on the seat and was soon asleep. I stood up and strained my ears for something which might tell us about our destination, although I was certain that it was Germany. I heard French voices calling for others to have courage, and as I listened, I learned that our companions had come from the three prisons of Fresnes, la Santé and Cherche-Midi. There was a sudden burst of activity when some prisoners threw notes onto the railway tracks through the small ventilation slots, but I was not aware if the Germans found them, or if they were picked up by railway workers. We might have thrown a message ourselves, but had no means with which to write; besides which, what was the use, and how many Parisians knew where the Channel Islands were?

An hour or so later the train lurched forward, and when the couplings took up the strain, the train move eastward. When he felt the train's motion, Maurice woke up and jokingly asked, "Are we on our way to Switzerland?" I assured him that I had serious doubts about it.

By the time the train reached its cruising speed, there were no more tall buildings to be seen through

the grill. We were out of Paris, but we did not particularly care where we were, as long as we were together, besides which, we could do nothing to stop the train from pulling its cargo of prisoners towards the Third Reich.

Some time later, our door was opened by a soldier who pointed to his fly buttons, and indicated that we should follow him to the toilet. It was about time! When we returned to our small cell, the guards left the doors unlocked, but secured them by means of six inch chains. They warned us not to talk across the corridor, or the doors would be bolted, and on that hot summer night of 12 June, we needed all the air we could get.

When I came out of the toilet, I showed my wounded knee to the guard, and asked him if he had a fresh bandage, as mine was filthy and bloody. He did not say anything, but about ten minutes later he threw a military field-dressing into our cell, and I was able to put on a fresh, sterilized bandage. We dozed, munched the dry German bread and sausage and talked of future plans. In the middle of the night the train came to a halt, at which time our cell-doors were bolted. We heard a prisoner yell that we were still in France. Another suggested that we were in the Strasbourg, while others said that we were in Metz - a main junction for east-bound trains. I told Maurice what had been said, but neither Strasbourg nor Metz meant anything to him, as his French geography was even worse than mine.

There was no doubt in anyone's mind that we were on our way to Germany, but the French seemed to draw solace from the fact that we were still in France, and I am sure that it must have been comforting, as I remembered my feelings when I saw Jersey disappear over the ship's stern. It had been a very traumatic moment, because I did not know if I would ever see my little island again. Maurice then astonished me by saying, "Peter, promise me that you will get back and let Pop know what happened to me! Don't die on me!" I reached for his hand and said, "Don't be such an ass!" "Never mind Peter," he said, "Just promise me that you'll do your best to get back!"

I was worried at the tone of his voice, because he sounded so serious. I said, "Maurice, we'll both get back, but if you want my promise, for what it's worth, you have it!"

Meanwhile, as the train rolled eastward I wondered if our unknown destination would be any better than Fresnes. My Jersey superstition re-surfaced when I thought, "Never two without three! Jersey had been bad and Fresnes was worse. Could number three be worse still?"

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### **SS Sonderlager Hinzert**

As the journey into Hell continued, our muscles cramped and our fear increased, mainly because we had been given no explanation about our destination and fate - not one word in the weeks we had been in prison, and when we talked about it, neither of us could think of a logical reason for the

unusual situation. Maurice asked me if I had been able to learn anything from the French conversations, and I was obliged to tell him that they were no wiser than we were. Furthermore, they had all gone through the same experience as ourselves, although some had been arrested a few months earlier than we had been. I also told him that the French were very mistrustful, either because we were British, or they did not trust foreigners in general.

We took turns peering out of the grill, trying to find a recognizable place name, but as we did not know France very well, I had to listen to the French to establish where we were; which was not very enlightening, as they, too, did not know eastern France very well. From their previous comments I learned that the French expected less from our captors than we did. They had spoken about hostage taking, indiscriminate shootings and deaths by firing squads. Some of them had been in two or three prisons before being taken to Paris, and one suggested that we had been held in Paris only long enough to make up sufficient numbers for a transport for Germany.

We kept changing positions from the narrow seat to the floor and back again. There was not much sleep - The click-clack of the train's wheels, our cramped position, loud French conversations and hunger pangs precluded any. Neither of us were claustrophobic to any extent, but we felt very constrained in the small cell. My mind, as usual, planed in various directions, and I wondered how I would feel in the months ahead. Would I have enough intestinal fortitude to survive? I already knew that survival depended on attitudes, and I had determined that I would be a fighter all the way. One French conversation was particularly worrisome. It came from a young man from la Santé prison. He told his listeners about his younger brother's execution. The brother had been on his way home from high school, when German troops rounded up hostages from the town's main street. The hostages were held in the local jail, and when a German soldier was assassinated by a local resistance cell, the younger brother and nine other innocent hostages were taken out and shot - of particular worry was the fact that the young martyr had not reached his eighteenth birthday. When I translated this atrocity for Maurice, he shook his head, then asked, "What have we got ourselves into, Peter?" I had no answer for him, but with every kilometre, we were learning more about the Nazis and their penchant for brutality.

As I listened to the French prisoners, I learned that some of them had been in organised resistance groups, while others, like us, were arrested for individual acts against the Occupier. Some young prisoners had been in the same resistance cells, but it was not long before the Gestapo had arrested them all, as their groups had been infiltrated by French traitors, who sold them out to the Germans. It was a terrible way to learn about Nazi savagery, and as the conversations were compelling, I saw no reason to disbelieve them. Again it was disheartening to learn that the Nazis were equally as brutal with women, who suffered the same fate as their men. After hearing the tales of horror, Maurice commented on how gentle Jersey's occupation had been.

Although I spoke French, I did not know the French people well at all, as I had never left the Island, other than a visit or two to our sister island, Guernsey, but I had understood the French to be excitable and capable of exaggeration, but when I listened to them talking across the narrow corridor of the armoured train, I knew that they were not stretching the truth. They only stopped talking when interrupted by guttural screams to keep quiet, however, they remained silent only a few minutes, after which they started again. The guard detachment from the German Army finally gave up on them, and closed the door to their compartment. They had not been brutal, nor had they been insensitive to our needs. The sergeant in charge often went to a particular cell, in which there was an older prisoner, and asked, "Ca va Grandpere?" I assumed that he was checking the well-being of an older prisoner who had been assisted into the cell-wagon.

During one of my trips to the toilet, I asked a guard where we were going. He was a little startled by my fluency in his language, and asked if I was German. I explained to him that I came from the Channel Islands, where I had learned German. He said that he knew the islands were occupied, and asked what I had done to be arrested. When I told him what we had done, his response was chilling, as he suggested that we would be fortunate if we were not shot. The man was quite serious, and when I asked if Germans would shoot a fifteen-year old, he answered, "Age is not important in Germany, only the seriousness of the crime matters." Before being locked up, I again asked him where we were going, but he said that he could not tell me.

When I told Maurice about the guard's conversation, he smiled, then jokingly said, "I knew I should have stayed in bed, and I almost did." Then, as if to re-assure me he added, "Things aren't so bad Peter, at least we still have each other." We then chatted about exotic menus and large amounts of food, particularly: bacon, eggs, tomatoes and toast. To cheer me up Maurice suggested that the war would not last too long, given the size and might of the British Empire, the Soviet Union and the United States. He suggested that it would be over in six months, and in a mulled, happier mood I agreed, but my mood soon changed as our chattering French companions brought me back to reality. I wanted to close the cell door, but Maurice asked me to leave it open, as I might miss something important.

Maurice managed to doze a little on the floor, while I continued to listen to the French chatter. From time to time, as my legs cramped, I stood on the seat and looked out at the darkened landscape; hoping to see a light, a road or a human being. I needed some reassurance that we were still in the same world which had existed before 3 May, but I drew a blank as the train rushed along its bands of steel leading to our next place of imprisonment. Sometime in the night the train slowed down, and moments later the sound of couplings crashing together was heard. Through the darkness I made out the dimmed lights of a large station. Our guards came alive, and told us to



poke our heads back in the cells, after which they locked the doors.

When the train shuddered to a halt, I heard a German announcement over the station's loud speakers. The voice said that we were in Metz, and went on to say that the train was proceeding to Brussels, Berlin and other stops along the way. When I translated this for Maurice, he suggested that we might be going to Berlin, but no sooner had he said that, when our cell wagon was uncoupled, and after a bump or two, it was shunted to a freight yard and attached to another locomotive, and it was not long before we were on our way again, but this time the wheels made different sounds, and the train's speed was slower - unfortunately, it still went eastward.

Within the hour the train stopped, and searchlights were directed on our wagon. We heard dogs barking and a lot of German screaming, and as the train inched forward, I made out a red and white barrier, which appeared to be a frontier post. Loud, guttural screams and dogs barking followed us for a few seconds, then the doors were re-opened and the French started their chatter again.

One of them asked, "Does any one know where "Abort" is?" I put my mouth to the door and asked how the word was spelled. The reply came back, "A-B-O-R-T." I looked at Maurice and said, "We are definitely in Germany Maurice, as Abort is the German for toilets." I told the Frenchman that the word meant toilets. He asked if I was certain, and I confirmed that I was very certain. Someone else asked, "Tu est certain, Anglais?"

"Oui! Je suis bien certain," I replied. My reply seemed to dampen the French spirit, and silence set in as the French absorbed my answer - their native land, their dear France, was finally behind them.

They were in the hateful land of their sworn enemies - Their silence was ominous, but was broken when a young voice cried, "Te casse pas la tête! On les aura! Bientôt la fuite!" (Don't worry! We'll get them! We'll soon be out of here!") The French were back on track!

The train did not travel too far before it slowed down again, then came to a stop. Our doors were locked again, and guttural commands echoed up the narrow corridor. It seemed as if the guards were competing to be the loudest and most Germanic; which I found strange, as they had acted decently throughout the trip. But now, wherever we were, they found it necessary to postulate.

No sooner had the train stopped, when it was illuminated by flood lights mounted on police vehicles. We were kept in the little cells while preparations for our exit were made; then finally, the doors opened, and we were ordered off the train, and as we were herded onto the platform, our once affable guards acted like Attila the Hun's hordes, as they screamed their war chants: "Raus! Los! Maul zu! Ruhig!" The contrast was unbelievable!

There was a large, black and white sign on the platform, and although partly painted over, it told us that we were in Trier - a German border town. I remembered it from my school history books, and recalled that the town had been occupied by the Romans, and one of their arches, the Porta Nigra, was still there. I also remembered that Trier was in the Mosel, Germany's wine making area, and on

that note I entertained hopes of working in the vineyards.

We were assembled in columns of three, then surrounded by about fifteen Schutzpolizei (Schupo - Regular policemen from county and municipal police forces). They were resplendent in their two-tone, green uniforms and large silver gendarmerie shakos, embossed with silver eagles and swastikas. In the searchlights' beams we noted that some of them carried sub-machine guns and rifles, but for the most part they were armed with side-arms, and like all their race, they made enough noise to awaken the dead.

After calling the roll from four or five typewritten pages, and being counted three times, our bodies were signed for by the senior Schupo. This was followed by a round of handshakes and numerous "Seig Heils." Then our military guards re-boarded their little train, and went out of our lives. Our final link with France was severed, and our feet were firmly planted on Nazi soil. Then, after more yelling we were marched out of the station, surrounded by Schupo.

The cobble-stone roads were narrow and all windows were blacked-out, making it impossible to see more than a few feet ahead. In the night's fog, one sensed, rather than saw, many stone buildings. I made out two church spires against the skyline, and from their design they appeared to be very old, however, we could see very little as the fog quite dense.

It did not take long to reach a large, double gate, over which a low wattage, yellow light bulb glowed through the fog - it was the entrance to another prison. We walked through a short archway into a small cobble-stone courtyard, where we were met by a diminutive, barking warder, who wore a long sabre, which almost dragged on the ground. From his golden epaulettes and barking tone, he was clearly someone of great authority. The swordsman ordered the Schupos to take us into the prison through a small door, and once inside, the usual roll-call and counting of our fifty-two bodies began all over again - it seemed that counting was a sacred German ritual, as the only sound was the names being called, while the only movement came from the senior warder's pencil, which ticked our names off his lists.

When the sabre-carrying warder was satisfied that we were all accounted for, he signed for our bodies from the Schupo sergeant, then escorted him out of the prison. When he came back, he split us into two sections, then crammed us into two medium-size cells. Neither had enough floor space for us to lie down, and our cell stank of stale urine and feces, which came from a large portable toilet in one corner of the cell, and in front of which, a line soon formed. The odour soon became unbearable, and there were yells asking if anyone had any toilet paper. When the dawn's light crept through the barred windows, we saw that the toilet had overflowed and added to the woes of those who were compelled to stand near it.

It had been impossible to sleep, because of the lack of space and incessant chatter, and during the night several younger prisoners came and introduced themselves to us. They expressed surprise that two "Anglais" were locked up with them. But then, so were we. I told our questioners that we were from the Channel Islands, but it was necessary to explain where the Islands were and the facts of their occupation. After listening to our story, they shook our hands - it appeared that we were accepted into their fraternity.

I was quite concerned for Maurice, as there were no English speakers among them, but he did not seem to mind as long as I translated for him. When he asked how difficult it was to learn French, I assured him that he would learn it by listening and asking questions. I suggested that grammar was unnecessary, as long as he was able to make himself understood. Maurice said that he had taken a little French at school, but had been confused by cases and verbs, but most of all, he could not grasp the formal and informal ways of speaking French.

Before noon we were each given a bowl of thick soup and a slice of black bread. The soup was better than any we had eaten at Fresnes, and was most welcome, given the fact that I had eaten all the bread and sausage given to me in Fresnes. In the cell wagon, I noticed that Maurice ate a only little at a time, but I had devoured everything almost as soon as it was given to me. I was surprised that he still had more than half his bread and sausage, and when he offered to share some with me, I declined, but resolved to eat slower and save some - It appeared to be the better way.

As soon as we had eaten that morning of Saturday, 13 June, we were ordered to get ready, as we were about to leave. I asked one of the warders where we were going, but was told, "Keep your trap shut!"

An hour or so later we were marched into the prison yard, where our Schupos from the previous night waited. Then, three abreast, we went through the usual roll call, and when everyone was satisfied, we were marched out of the prison onto the streets of Trier. As our little "terrorist" group trudged along the cobble-stone streets of Trier, we passed many Germans going about their daily tasks - they barely gave us a glance. I suspected that it must have been an every day occurrence for them to see dirty, unshaven, and obviously foreign prisoners, being hustled through their nice, clean streets. Maurice remarked on the cleanliness of the town, and I concurred, as the town had a look of rural affluence, unaffected by war.

When we arrived at the railway station, several more Schupos waited for us. We were counted and again verified, then Maurice and I were put into a third-class passenger compartment, along with four other prisoners. There we were joined by an armed Schupo, who appeared to be in his sixties. He looked sympathetic, but when I asked him where we were going, he told me to keep my trap shut - it seemed that keeping one's trap shut was high on every German's list of priorities.

No sooner were we all aboard, than the little train lurched out of the Trier station. As there were no

blinds nor curtains on the windows, we were afforded a wonderful view of green vineyards, small hamlets, beautiful coniferous forests and groomed fields in which people toiled. Some of them even waved as we chugged past - they might not have done so had they known that the little train was full of terrorists.

We had been on the way for less than an hour when the train slowed. I looked out the window and saw that we were approaching a small, red-brick station house, on which there was a faded sign reading, "Reinsfeld Hbf" (Reinsfeld Main Station). I had no idea where Reinsfeld was, and neither did anyone else. In the station yard we saw two groups of prisoners loading trucks and farm carts with lumps of coal and wooden planks. They were dressed in a variety of former military uniforms: some khaki, some black and others green. Some wore jodhpur-type pants and long jackets with large pockets, some of which had large yellow stripes sewn down them, while others had similar stripes sewn down their pant legs. One of our group suggested that they were Russian or Polish prisoners of war, however, those closest to the "Russians" were shocked when one of the emaciated prisoners spoke to them in pure French. The skeleton advised us to eat all our food before arriving in the camp, as it would be confiscated there. The skeleton also suggested that if we carried anything incriminating, it should be disposed of before reaching the camp. Those within earshot, including myself, were stunned by the "Russian's" perfect French.

As soon as our luggage was piled on a military truck, the march to our newest destination began. Along the way, one of the Schupos suggested that we might be employed in a forestry station. I hoped he was right, but suggested to Maurice that it was said it to placate us. The roads were bordered with tall pine trees, which gave off pleasant aromas - a pleasing change from six weeks of foul-smelling cells. We marched through a pretty little village, where, again, we were hardly given a glance by some women and children outside a baker's shop. Finally we reached the top of a hill overlooking a small camp, which was enclosed by a chain-link and barbed-wire fence, however, it looked clean and inviting.

I counted eight large barracks and several smaller huts in the main camp, all built around a parade square. The huts were covered with dark shingles, and their roofs were tarred. It was impossible to miss the large wooden gate at the camp's entrance, nor could we avoid seeing the watch towers, but it seemed tranquil enough and hardly a soul was visible. On the other side of the road across from the camp, were eight or nine smaller barracks, however, no fence surrounded them, and I presumed them to be the guards' quarters. The main camp looked neither ominous nor frightening; considering what we had been through. On the contrary, it looked clean and pleasant, and on seeing such a pleasant camp in its pretty rural setting, it washed away some of my fear. I thought that the Schupo might have been right, and that it was a forestry camp. However, I began to worry again, because the Schupos' attitudes changed as we came closer to the camp. To that point they had been

reasonable, but as we approached the large wooden gate, they were loud, guttural and screamed until we were halted in front of the large gate. The SS sentry neither moved nor looked at us. He seemed quite unconcerned at our arrival.

Above the gate was a painted wooden sign which read: "SS Sonderlager Hinzert." I knew that "Sonderlager" translated to "Special camp," but I knew little about the SS, other than that which I had read in magazines, which had indicated that the SS, or "Schutzstaffel" (Protection Detachment) had been formed as the personal bodyguard of Adolf Hitler. I surmised that "Hinzert" was the name of the camp, as it was near the village of Hinzert, through which we had just walked. The large gates finally opened, and we were marched past a guard room, then assembled in two rows, facing, what appeared to be, the administrative block. Two of our Schupos went into the office, and when they came out, they were accompanied by a short SS officer and a SS non-commissioned officer. We were counted and signed for again, and when this ritual was complete, the Schupos scurried out of the camp as if the hammers of Hell were at their heels. That should have told us something, but we remained unsuspecting as we stood and breathed in the pine-scented air.

The tension could have been cut with a dull knife, and as I held my breath, I knew that I was not the only tense one. Nothing was said by the two SS, who silently looked us over, as if inspecting a herd of cattle about to be slaughtered, but from time to time they glanced over their shoulders at the office block, which made it obvious that they were waiting for a superior to arrive. Not one of us moved! We were frozen in time, and stared straight ahead, all sensing that something unusual was about to happen. The silence was deafening, and in my frozen state, I recalled the scriptures, which had told about a place called Purgatory, where the souls of the just had to wait until enough prayers had been said to redeem them from Hell - I recalled Purgatory very well, as I had run my fingers over hundreds of rosary beads praying for their release. The scriptures had explained Purgatory, but I could only remember: "Purgatory is a place in Hell, where the souls of the just departed through the Mercy of God rest.....". I racked my brains for the rest of the description, but could not remember, but Purgatory is exactly where I thought I was, and I knew that the Devil was about to make his appearance.

I was right, because it did not take long for Hell to unleash its fury on us - but then I had been warned, and knew that a rosary would not do any good, no matter how many Hail Marys I said.

**Induction, SS psychology and quarantine**

Jersey's newspaper had been heavily censored, printing only that which the Germans wanted us to read, however, we had previously read about SS savagery in Czechoslovakia and Poland, in British newspapers, prior to the occupation, but I had not associated the SS with concentration camps. British newspapers had portrayed the SS as Nazi fanatics, sworn to carry out Hitler's orders to the death. One article had inferred that the SS had their blood type tattooed under their armpits in order to show their Aryan pureness, and as I stood frozen on the spot, I knew that we could expect nothing but the worst from them, although, at the time, the officer and NCOs appeared tranquil enough.

When our French comrades had talked about the SS on the train, they had portrayed them as a brutal bunch of thugs. An older Frenchman had said that there were several kinds of SS, but he had not mentioned that the Death Head SS were specially trained as concentration camp guards.

Apart from the short SS Obersturmführer (SS Lieutenant), there were four other SS standing near our group. One was an Oberscharführer (Staff sergeant), another an Unterscharführer (Corporal) and two Rottenführers (Lance Corporals). They all had silver "Totenkopf" (Death's Head) cap badges on their hats, and their right lapels had black patches with embossed silver SS runes. The left lapels were adorned with their ranks and the piping around their shoulder boards was black. They were obviously waiting for someone in authority to come out of the block, but from time to time, one or the other, barked, "Look to your front! Keep your traps closed!"

Out of the corners of my eye I saw several emaciated prisoners run past. They appeared to be Polish or Russian prisoners of war, wearing an assortment of military uniforms, similar to the ones we had seen at Reinsfeld. When they ran past the SS, they snatched off their caps, then snapped their heads to the left or right, which I took to be a form of salute, however, the salutes were ignored. Some of the running men were terribly emaciated, and their movements looked uncoordinated, as if they were being manipulated by puppet strings - it did not require a doctor to tell me that they were suffering from advanced stages of malnutrition. I, too, had lost considerable weight in the past six weeks, and had added three holes in my belt to keep my pants from falling down.

When the SS Lieutenant stopped scribbling on the sheets of paper, I heard him tell one of the Lance Corporals to fetch the "Lagerführer" (Interior Camp Commander). He told the man to tell the Lagerführer that the new arrivals were ready for inspection. I was puzzled at the lack of interest shown in us by the SS, who, apart from a guttural command or two, ignored us completely, probably because we had done exactly what we had been told to, however, I was soon to learn that

this was not the case, and that we were experiencing a deliberately planned "Eingang" (Entrance) procedure which was designed to intimidate and show who was master.

Finally the Lagerführer strode out the office. He was a middle age man with a grey Hitler-type moustache. Behind the Lagerführer stalked a stocky man, dressed in a well-pressed tailored khaki uniform, complete with a Foreign Legionnaire's képi and white sun-protector down the neck. He seemed to be out of place, and I was unable to keep my eyes off him, because he looked as if he belonged in some French colony, fighting hostile Arabs; just like in the movie "Beau Geste."

The "Legionnaire" came to a halt directly in front of our group, then in harsh, heavy German-accented French, introduced himself as Hinzert's "Lagerälteste" (Senior Kapo), Eugen Wipf. I did not understand what was going on, as the man was obviously a prisoner, like ourselves, but somehow, he seemed to put fear into the SS - it was an unusual scenario!

Kapo Wipf told us to remain at attention and answer our names as they were called. He also said that when we were called, we were to line up in that given order, or, as he said: "I will deal severely with you." The strange man also told us to keep our eyes to the front at all times, "Or else I will deal with you!" I did not have to stretch my imagination to figure out what "dealing with us" entailed, as he held a heavy club in one hand.

When Wipf was through, he marched over to the group of SS, saluted smartly in military fashion, then reported to the Lagerführer that we were ready for the "Appell" (Roll-call). The Lagerführer, Karl Martin, then ordered Oberscharführer Willi Kleinhenn, the camp's Rapportführer (NCO responsible for the head count) to call the role. Kleinhenn then began calling our names, and as each prisoner answered, he glanced at his list, ticked the name, then scribbled something besides it. When the roll call was over, Wipf informed us that we would be given numbers, and would answer to them while we were in the camp. He grinned from ear to ear as he added that we had lost our names and were now numbers. Still grinning, he said that we had to know our numbers in German by the following day, or else he would deal with us, and as if to make his point, he lunged at one of the prisoners in the rear rank, and gave him several swift blows with his cudgel. Wipf explained that: "...the dirt-bag turned his head while standing at attention." He continued, "Remember, you have been brought here to be disciplined and work. You will obey every order! I won't say this any more, but when you are at attention, you keep your eyes to the front! You are no longer in school! This is not a spa! Here, you do what you are told!"

I found it unusual, because the SS had showed no interest in the beating. They had not even turned their heads at the man's cries of pain. They just stood in their small groups, or looked at the lists in the Lagerführer's hands. When Wipf was back in place, the Lagerführer walked past the front rank and stabbed at chests with his pencil. When he came to the last man he said, "Genau Zwei und

fünfzig Schutzhäftlinge!" (Exactly fifty-two prisoners in protective custody). When he walked past me, I tried my best to look invisible. My fingers were stretched the length of my pants, and I stood as still as a statue, but scared out of my wits, as I sensed that we were only passing through the calm before the storm. I had always been a little psychic, and I fully expected the explosion to take place when the right moment arrived, which was not just yet, however, the atmosphere was chilling, despite the sun's warmth.

I knew that my comrades were brave Resistants who had fought the German occupiers, and I could not think that there was a coward among them, however, the unusual situation had paralyzed all of them. I knew that many of the French had experienced physical abuse and mental torture while in the Gestapo's hands, but our induction into SS Sonderlager Hinzert induced an inexplicable and different kind of fear. I could not explain it, but I sensed that if I displeased the SS, they would happily murder me, not giving it a second thought. Their silent, truculent glances told me that they had the power of life and death over us, and although they were not typical Aryans, with blond hair and blue eyes, they all had one thing in common: cruel, hard eyes, devoid of pity.

Suddenly Wipf started screaming, "You have been brought here to work or die! Take your pick! If you want to leave here alive, your attitude will have to change! You are all dirt bags and French terrorists, but you will learn respect, or you will leave here feet first! Let me make that quite clear!" Not one peep came from our ranks. We were still frozen stiff and upright, eyes locked straight ahead. From time to time Wipf lashed out at a prisoner whose looks or deportment displeased him, or because the man coughed. He then walked through our ranks and glared into each man's eyes. He prodded stomachs and yelled for us to stand upright and act like soldiers. He mercifully stopped his act, and finally took up a position to the right of our little column.

The SS officers scurried to the left of the column, and the NCOs fell in at the rear, and out of the corner of my eye, I saw a SS officer approach. He held a massive German Shepherd on a leather leash. His silver shoulder and collar badges denoted him to be a Hauptsturmführer (Captain). His SS uniform was immaculate and his black, knee-length boots gleamed below elegant jodhpurs. Lieutenant Albert Heinrich, his aide-de-camp and assistant to the Lagerführer Karl Martin, marched one pace to the rear of the Captain's dog.

The Lagerkommandant (Camp Commander) took up a position in front of us, from which he introduced himself as Hinzert's Kommandant, Hauptsturmführer Paul Sporrenberg. With Wipf translating into French, he continued, "You have been brought here to be disciplined, because you have all committed crimes against the Reich. You are all terrorists, and I give you my word that you will pay for it, but before you do, you are going to learn discipline. You are enemies of the Reich, and if you want to leave here, you will do as you are told and will work very hard! If you



break regulations, you will be punished, but if you work hard and observe discipline, you might leave here. Be respectful to the camp staff! Learn the regulations and observe them! Have you understood?"

The final words, translated by Wipf were, "Est ce que vous avez compris?" Maurice must have understood the word "compris," because he put up his hand, then said "Nix compris!" Hearing this, Wipf hurled himself through the first rank, then began pounding Maurice with his heavy club. After a dozen or so blows to his head, Maurice fell unconscious, but not content with having knocked out Maurice, Wipf kicked his inert body, particularly the exposed parts. There was no reaction from the SS, who watched as if it was a Punch and Judy show.

Unable to stand Wipf's savagery any longer, I shouted in French, " Sir, he is English and does not understand French!" Wipf stopped kicking, and glared at me as if I was to be his next victim. I exhaled, when instead of hitting me, Wipf went over and spoke to the Camp Commander, who said something, which caused Wipf to run back to the office. Moments later he came out followed by a young prisoner wearing horn-rimmed glasses. Both marched over and stood at attention in front of Sporrenberg, who said something to them, as he nodded in our general direction. By this time Maurice was on his knees, and as he attempted to stand up, I pulled him to his feet, then put my arms around his waist to keep him from falling. Wipf came over to both of us, and told the prisoner to translate into English everything said by Kommandant Sporrenberg.

The prisoner, Gaston Mertens, a Luxembourger from Esch, in excellent English repeated Sporrenberg's diatribe. Gaston had no need to ask what had been said, as he worked in the office, directly in front of where we were formed up, and he, no doubt, knew Sporrenberg's speech verbatim. When Gaston finished, Sporrenberg told him to ask Maurice if he had understood what had been said, and Maurice, who by that time had recovered sufficiently, nodded and said, "Yes Sir, I understand!"

Wipf darted over and asked if I was also English, and when I said that I was, he asked why I spoke French and Maurice did not. I said that I had attended a French School, and when asked where, I said that I had gone to school on the Channel Islands. Wipf did not know where the islands were, and I had to explain their location to him. When he was through questioning me, he went over to Sporrenberg and told him what I had said. Sporrenberg, in German, then said, "When they have been processed, bring both the Engländer to my Büro!" Then, much to my relief, Sporrenberg, followed by his dog and the short Obersturmführer, marched out the camp.

The remaining SS, reinforced by three others, huddled with Kapo Wipf, who, seconds later, came over to us and said, "You are such stinking swine that it's obvious you need a little exercise to help clear up your stink." Wipf then ran over to me and yelled, "Tell your friend, Churchill, what I

said!" I promptly translated for Maurice, who nodded his understanding. I did not feel bad about exercising, as we had stood rigidly at attention for almost an hour, besides which, I not been allowed to go outside to exercise in nearly six weeks. I had always enjoyed exercising, but I had not counted on the next round of our induction into the SS camp.

Wipf told us to form one long line, and we all hurried to comply, because the SS were among us, flailing left and right with their clubs and kicking us with their heavy jackboots. They all screamed at the top of their lungs, "Los! Los! Los! Schnell! Schneller!" Everybody promptly complied, as we already knew what their short barks meant. When we were in one long line, Wipf ordered us to run around the roll call square, and as soon as we started, he screamed the cadence: "Ein, Zwei, Drei, Vier...Ein, Zwei, Drei, Vier." When we had completed four or five turns around the square, the maniac stepped up the tempo, and three or four turns later, many of the older and more abused prisoners had been overtaken by the younger ones. Those who, unfortunately, lagged behind were helped on their way by newly arrived SS and Kapos, who laid about them with clubs and pick-axe shafts. It was not long before several bodies lay crumpled on the roll call square, where they attracted the attention of the SS, who "revived" them with clubs and boots. Some managed to stagger to their feet, but most just lay on the ground as the SS continued to kick them. In some cases, the brutes could have kicked all day without response, as the men were unconscious.

I was almost at the head of the line, and saw everything unfold. I noticed that the most savage beast was Kapo Wipf, who flailed at everyone with his club. His maniacal grin also told me that he was having fun. He was in his element, as he screamed and postulated for his SS masters. He kept up the screaming, for the most part obscenities, deriding the French nation as a whole, and from time to time, not forgetting Maurice and me, he did his best to insult the English.

As I rounded each corner, I glanced over to see how Maurice was making out, and was relieved to see that he was near the centre of the line, and although he was panting and wheezing, he was still on his feet. He had taken a bad beating from Wipf, but was no quitter, It took more than the likes of Kapo Wipf to dampen his fine spirit.

Tired of seeing us run in circles, Wipf then ordered us back into two rows, where he told us to lie on our stomachs, and when we were in position, he ordered us to do press-ups. I had no idea how many press-ups he expected from us, but before he had counted to twenty, not one of us was able to lift our chest off the cinders. This made Wipf scream, and caused the SS to run amok among us, where they kicked and struck anyone unable to heave his chest off the ground. They swore and threatened to shoot those who did not comply, and kept reminding us that we were in Hinzert to be disciplined. This struck fear in many, but we were totally spent, and no more press-ups were forthcoming. We all lay there expecting SS bullets to crash into our skulls. Fortunately this was not to be, as Wipf frog-marched us around the roll call square, but before we started, he personally

demonstrated what we had to do. We had to squat on our haunches, then jump forward with arms outstretched, as we reassumed the squatting position. Each time we jumped, Wipf told us to croak like frogs, " For that is what you are - frogs!" It was quite pathetic to see Wipf look over towards his SS masters, as if waiting for accolades. The SS must have been pleased with the master of the two-legged circus, because they laughed and encouraged him to make us leap faster and further. Again, it was not long before we were totally exhausted, and unable to perform like trained seals. Some prisoners lay inert, while others, out of breath, had to reach down to the bottom of their lungs in order to get air. Others, like Maurice, were still on their feet, but unable to put one foot in front of the other, despite the beatings they took. The SS and Kapos had a field day as they hit and shouted, "Up! Up! Croak! Croak Frenchmen!" - they had played the game before!

When it was obvious that we had nothing more to give, and they would have been complete morons not to have recognized that fact, Wipf ordered us to fall back in our original places, however, several prisoners had to be carried, and were laid out in former position - totally unconscious. Unfortunately, it was not long before the poor men, as well as those detailed to help them, were clubbed back onto their feet. My lungs heaved, and I stank of perspiration; something I had never experienced in my life - I was too shocked to believe what had taken place.

Wipf roared, "That was just a short practice to get you in shape. Remember, in this camp you run everywhere! You don't walk, you run! When you see your guards, take your hat off and turn your eyes left or right to salute them! If you are called by any of the camp staff, you stop immediately. Then you stand to attention, and quickly take off your hat! You will then report your number in German! Yes, your number! I've already told you that you have lost your names! You Engländer, tell your friend what I said!" I translated Wipf's words for Maurice, who nodded to show Wipf that he had understood. The Kapo then cautioned us to change our "stinking un-German like attitudes" if we hoped to survive. His voice droned on, and he told us that we had only gone through a friendly interlude along our road to becoming discipline. That made me wonder, "If our entrance was a friendly prelude before Hell, then what was Hell really like?"

I could not believe what had taken place, given the Germans' behaviour on Jersey - in less than an hour I had almost lost my ability to think clearly, however, I had learned that I had to avoid the beatings, which had been so casually, yet brutally administered. Alarm bells had gone off in my head, as the sadists had behaved like Corporal Hans, whom I now recognized as having the power of life and death over me.

Wipf then ordered us to strip off our clothes and told the married men to remove their wedding bands. This prompted some angry rumblings from the men who had to part with them, but their protest was quickly hushed by Wipf, who ran through the ranks hitting those who had not complied, or were too slow taking their rings off; after which, stripped of the last link to their families, the

married men looked forlorn and chagrined. It was a heart moving sight to see the tears flow down their cheeks, while their chests heaved with sad emotion. I wondered what Sapper Hassall would have done, but I remembered that he did not wear a wedding ring, although, for appearance, my mother did. I also thought about the prisoner at Reinsfeld station, who had told us to hide everything of value. He had surely passed through this station of Calvary.

Once we were stark naked, Wipf went over to the first two prisoners, then told them to go to the "barber shop." The office, or Büro was one half of the hut in front of which we stood; the other half was the "Quarantäne" (Quarantine), which was surrounded by a six foot wire fence, and to the east of the Quarantine was a row of smaller huts and sheds, to which we were directed to get our hair cut. (See plan of camp)

Several minutes later, both prisoners ran back from the barber. I found it strange that they had both opted to have all their hair cut off, but when the next pair came back, also shorn like sheep, I knew that my hair would soon be styled in a similar manner, and indeed, such was the case. I arrived at the barber's shop with Maurice, and there we found two men wielding manual sheep-shears and another brandishing electric hair-clippers, similar to that with which Australians sheared their sheep. The ordeal lasted but a minute or so, after which most of my long, straight hair lay on the ground, alongside Maurice's fine, chestnut-coloured hair. When the sheep-shearers were through, the electric clippers were run over our heads, and separated us from our remaining tufts of hair. I felt rather foolish and was grinning as I rank back to the remainder.

It was a mistake to have grinned, because Kapo Wipf ran over and smashed me on the nose with a ham-like fist, similar to that of Corporal Hans. My nose was broken again, and through the haze of pain, I hear Wipf ask what I found so funny. I told him that I found nothing funny, and had merely grimaced from the pain of having my hair wrenched out. Wipf laughingly pointed out, "You don't know what pain is Engländer, but you will! I personally guarantee it!"

When all the heads were shorn, we were directed, in groups of five, to a nearby table, on which some safety razors and bowls of water had been placed. Alongside the tables was a sign reading: "Ein Laus dein Todt" (One louse means your death) At the table, a Rottenführer told us to shave all the hair from our bodies. There was no shaving soap provided, only a little sand-like, brown soap which did not lather, and when I was through shaving my pubic hairs, the blood ran in rivulets down my thighs. It had been impossible not to cut oneself given the dull razor blade, which resembled a hack-saws by the time I got to use it. The nearby, leering SS found it very amusing, and they laughed hilariously at our discomfort.

After we were hairless, we were inspected by an SS guard, who, when satisfied that we were plucked like Christmas turkeys, directed us to a large metal drum, from which a strong smell of disinfectant wafted. It smelled like the disinfectant my Grandmother had used to wash floors. At

the drum were handed pieces of sack-cloth, then told to disinfect our bodies with the grey/green stuff from the barrel. As soon as I applied it to my private parts, I almost reached the moon with the searing pain from an extremely powerful astringent, and the more we danced, grimaced and yelped with pain, the louder the SS and Kapos roared their amusement - it was surely their day, and they enjoyed the side-show.

After that ordeal, we were directed to the showers, which were controlled by a very young prisoner, wearing a white Kapo's (work supervisor) armband. The young pervert treated us to scalding hot water, or turned it ice cold, and as all the other Kapos, he postulated for approval from his SS master. Those who jumped out of the scalding water were beaten back in by the SS, and told to, "Scrub the French dirt from your stinking hides!" The SS madman did not let us out of the showers until he was satisfied that we had no more "French dirt" on us. We were then sent to the "Revier" (Medical Centre), a building on the south side of the camp, directly opposite the Büro.

The Centre was staffed by two French prisoner doctors, however, the central figure was SS Oberscharführer (Staff Sergeant) Josef Brendel, a squat, hulk of a brute, who sat on a wooden stool brandishing a long, thin cane. As we passed in front of the French doctors, we were asked if we had any complaints, contagious diseases, syphilis, heart problems, etc. Our replies were noted by a secretary, who wrote our names, numbers and responses on file cards. When this was over, we were paraded in front of Brendel, who delighted in hitting every one of us, while making filthy, sexually implicit remarks. He screamed at circumcised prisoners, inferring they were, "Stinking French Jews" and when these indignities were over, we were ordered back to our original place of assembly, where we stood in line, crestfallen, shorn of our dignity, razed, and thoroughly plucked - German style. The SS and Kapos laughed at a spectacle, which only sick, Nazi minds could have found amusing.

A Kapo handed each one of us a large piece of wrapping paper, a piece of string and a manilla envelope for our "valuables." We were told to wrap our clothes, with the exception of pocket handkerchiefs and toilet articles. When our clothes were packed, the Kapo told us to put our valuables in the envelopes and write our names numbers on them. All I had to put in the envelope was my signet ring and the Oxo tin. The SS left me with just what I had come into the world with, however, the fact that our clothes were being packed and identified, gave me hope that we might survive the Hell we were in.

We were then directed to the camp's Bekleidungskammer (Clothing store), again accompanied by blows, kicks and satanic screams. Inside, we were each handed: a uniform jacket, trousers, braces, long underwear, shirt, foot-rags, cap and wooden clogs, then kicked back outside by the hulking Oberscharführer Johannes Schattner, who appeared to be even more brutal than Kapo Wipf. Schattner, who was drunk, brandished a pick-axe shaft, with which he struck us as we stood waiting

for our uniforms, and whenever he connected he roared with laughter. It was fortunate that his vision was impaired by the alcohol, of which he drank.

A trustee handed me a black uniform, which appeared to have been the property of a former Polish or Yugoslav soldier. There were four-inch yellow stripes sewn up the back of the coat and down the pant legs. The jodhpur pants were far too large, but I was not given a choice of size. I had difficulty keeping the rags around my feet, because they would not stay in the wooden clogs, which had wooden soles and a single strip of leather to hold in our feet, and as they had no heels, they came off when we walked.

I looked over at Pierrot Marionneau, a diminutive resistant from Mer, in the Loire. His pants were, at least, a foot too long in the leg, and two times too large in the waist. They were made for a six-foot, three hundred pound man, and Pierrot weighed about one hundred and twenty pounds and was about five-foot five. Undaunted, Pierrot simply rolled up the legs and put on the rags. I noticed a slight grin about his lips, which was indicative of his fine spirit. When dressed, Pierrot had to walk with his legs splayed because of the bulk of trouser material bunched between his legs. If it had not been so frightening, I am certain that we would have laughed, but we prudently refrained.

When we were dressed "Hinzert fashion," we were sent, in fives, to the administrative office, where we were directed to desks, behind which sat Luxembourg prisoners, busily filling out index-cards with our personal information. We were asked for: date and place of birth, next-of-kin, home address, and given our camp numbers. Mine was 4374, or "Drei und vierzig vier und siebenzig," Maurice's was 4372, or "Drei und vierzig Zwei und siebenzig." The Luxembourg clerk advised us to learn our numbers, as they were our official names. Those who had handed in valuables were given receipts by an SS corporal. I did not get one, probably because my ring was not considered valuable.

After being indexed, we were marched into the quarantine hut by Kapo Wipf, who told us that we would be there for a week or so, in order that we "...do not infect the rest of the camp with your rottenness." The quarantine was Stube 5 (Room 5), in front of which we had stood, for what had seemed an eternity.

Our newest accommodation was furnished with rows of two-tier bunks, there was a washroom at one end and near the windows, which faced the roll call square, were three tables and a few wooden benches. It was not possible to see outside, as the wooden shutters had been closed from the outside. When Wipf told us to find ourselves a bunk, Maurice and I quickly grabbed two rear, lower bunks across from each other. Shortly afterwards some orderlies came and gave us each a coarse sheet, two blanket, eating utensils and a large, reddish-brown bowl for soup and coffee. We were also handed a lump of brown soap which stank like manure. A French joker suggested that it

was made from rendered human fat, and from its stink, he may have been right.

Kapo Wipf screamed for silence, then asked for a volunteer to be "Stubenälteste" (Room Senior). The words were hardly out of his mouth, when a burly man, dressed in a black uniform, pushed himself through the ranks, and volunteered for the job. He was André Callaux, a Frenchman, who in very fractured German said, "I speak German." Wipf laughed at Callaux' German and told him to keep his mouth shut, and not to boast about his German, which might provoke trouble with the SS guards, who did not like hearing their language fractured. The Kapo then told Callaux that he was responsible for our behaviour and room cleanliness. He also warned him that he would personally beat him up if the room was not clean. With his instructions complete, Wipf fished in his uniform pocket, then handed Callaux a white armband, denoting his authority as Room Senior - Callaux, a Frenchman, was now a Kapo.

Wipf told Callaux that there would be an inspection and a head count every morning at 4:30 am. and every evening at 6:00 and 10:00 pm. He also told our new Kapo that when any SS came into the quarantine, we were to be lined up opposite our bunks, after which he was to report the number of men in the room and account for those missing. A Kapo who had accompanied Wipf then gave us a demonstration on how to make up our bunks. The sheet had to be stretched over the lumpy, straw mattresses so that no folds nor creases showed. There were to be no round edges either, and the sheet was to be perfectly square. When Wipf appeared satisfied that Callaux had understood his responsibilities, he left the room. There was a sigh of relief - the past few hours had been traumatic. We were overcome, and most of us collapsed on our un-made bunks.

Maurice sat and stared at me. He shrugged his shoulders in a gesture of resignation, then said, "I can't believe this is happening, Peter. I don't know if I can take it."

I answered, "Of course you can Maurice, but we had better get ourselves ready because the Kommandant told the Kapo to bring us to his office when we were settled in."

"What does he want to see us about?" asked Maurice.

Before I could answer, Callaux ran down the aisle between the beds, and screamed at us, "Who gave you two rosbifs (roast beefs) permission to talk? I am in command here. You will not talk unless I say so, particularly in that foul English language. I don't understand it, so you, you big, filthy Englishman, had better learn French or German. I don't forget how the English abandoned France, and ran out on us like rats. I owe you for that."

When Callaux finished yelling, he kicked Maurice in the groin, then drew back his fist and punched Maurice's several times, before two French prisoners and myself intervened. One of the French told Callaux that he would be taken care of, "Sometime, somewhere, even if we have to wait until the war was over." The threat stopped the beating, and Callaux walked away muttering at Maurice, "I'll have other chances to get at you dirty Englishman."

When Callaux left, I took Maurice to the washroom, where I washed the blood from his face. Some young comrades joined us, and promised to report Callaux to the French judicial authorities after the war. They apologized for his actions, and hastened to assure us that the likes of Callaux were in a minority, and that most French people were waiting for the British and Americans to liberate France. They also asked us not to judge them like Callaux.

We had no sooner cleaned up Maurice's face and made up our bunks, when Wipf came back to inspect the room. He was not satisfied, and ran around the room, pulling sheets and blankets off nearly every bed. He screamed obscenities at the top of his voice and struck out with his club. Wipf then called Callaux over and gave him a tongue lashing, and we were gratified when he punched Callaux' face, drawing blood from his nose. He warned Callaux, "There will be more of that coming if you don't get things ship shape here" - Wipf's voice was music to our ears

Somehow, Maurice and I escaped Wipf's wrath. Our beds had passed his inspection, or he had avoided us because we were British. As he turned to leave, he told Maurice and me to put on our caps and follow him to the Kommandant's Büro. We were made to run ahead of Wipf, who let us out of the camp through a small gate to the left of the large entrance. When we arrived at the Kommandant's Büro, Wipf told us to wait outside, take off our hats and stand at attention. We needed no second bidding.

A few minutes later we were called into Kommandant Sporrenberg's office. The SS Captain sat behind a small desk, the huge German Shepherd curled at his feet. Happily, it took no notice of us as we stood at attention in front of its master, who was looking down at a small map of Europe. Through Kapo Wipf, who spoke French to me, he asked which island we were from. I told him that we were from Jersey. He then asked why we had been arrested, and I explained that we had tried to leave Jersey in a small fishing boat, but met with disaster on the way to England. Sporrenberg asked if it was against German orders to leave Jersey, and I confirmed that it was. He asked if Maurice had been with me, and I replied that he had, and that another young companion had drowned during the incident.

Sporrenberg stared at me for a few seconds, then said, "You are fifteen and Gould is eighteen. Is that not a little young to have engaged in terrorist acts?"

"Yes Sir," I replied, trying to look contrite, "but there was no offence intended. I only wanted to get on with my schooling." Then for good measure I threw in: "My school was closed and most teachers had been sent back to Belgium, and my friend here only wanted to get back to his home in England."

"You deserve what you are getting, and for your information, as I have never had any Englishmen in this camp, I called the Gestapo in Trier to find out if you had been sent here by mistake, however, they assured me that it was no mistake, and that you are to be treated the same as any other prisoner.



That being the case, I recommend that you go back to the camp, work hard, keep your noses clean, and that you, Churchill," looking at Maurice, "learn to speak German as soon as possible!"

When I had translated his words into English, Sporrenberg looked at Maurice, then with a slight smile on his lips said, " OK Churchill! Learn German and you will get along better!"

Maurice made no reply.

On the way back to the quarantine, Wipf said that we were fortunate, as most people who went to the Kommandant's office did not come away unscathed. He also added that our escape from Jersey was foolish, and might cost us our lives, and for a fraction of a second, I thought I detected a little sympathy in his voice.

Back in the hut, Callaux ran at us, and made a grab for me, but I pushed his arm away, grabbed his fingers and bent them backward. I glared at him as he tried to break free, but I seemed to have abnormal strength, and did not let go until he screamed with pain. When he stopped rubbing his fingers, he still wanted to know what had gone on in the Kommandant's office. I told him that we had been cautioned to keep our mouths closed, and could tell nothing. Callaux did not dispute the point, instead, he glared at Maurice and again reminded him that there would be, "... other times to look after you."

We flopped on our beds and stared at each other. We were speechless. A little while later, two young comrades dropped by to ask what had happened, and we told them, in hushed tones, what had gone on in Sporrenberg's office. Later, I listened to an older comrade, as he peeked through a gap in the wooden shutters. He commented that several hundred prisoners were assembling on the roll call square. Through the shutters we heard loud, guttural screams and cries of pain - nothing could keep those terrible sounds from penetrating our hut's thin, wooden walls.

The watcher commented, "It seems that we are really in for when we leave here." Maurice and I were too traumatised to go and look at the spectacle. It had been a trying and un-believably brutal day for everyone, and in the relative calm of the quarantine, someone wondered out loud whether we would get any food. It had been a long day, and my mind was numb, but Maurice was in worse shape, because he had no way of knowing what was going on unless I translated for him. We asked ourselves if all previous transports had been similarly treated, or had ours been exceptional? We spoke about the brutality we had experienced and wondered if the SS intended to murder us without a trial? So many questions - so much apprehension and fear.

An older prisoner, who had been captured by the Germans in May, 1940, said, "This is the German way! Teutonic fury! They are all that way! They don't know any better! They are raised that way!"

We speculated on the camp's population, now knowing that there were Luxembourgers and other

French in the camp. Some of us wondered if we would be allowed to write home. Would there be Red Cross parcels? Would we be tried? So many questions, but no answers. We were truly in the Night and Fog.

Small groups of comrades drifted together at the tables, where they re-hashed their arrests, but their conversations were frequently interrupted by Callaux, who tried to assert his authority. "Quiet!" he yelled from time to time, but no one paid any attention to him, other than to remind him that his "Goose was cooked once the war was over." These remarks made Callaux furious, but he knew enough to be quite.

I asked a young comrade about Callaux, and was told that Callaux had been in the French army, and had been a prisoner of war. He had been demobilized, then sent home to the Pas-de-Calais region. Some time later, he was caught by the Vichy police while trying to cross from occupied France to Vichy France. No one knew why he had crossed into Vichy France in the first place. The Vichy police handed him back to the Germans, who put him in prison and deported him because he had been in possession of a shot gun. Another comrade told us that at la Santé prison, Callaux had tried to pass himself off as a well-known Resistance leader, but the boast failed when he was confronted by Resistants with whom he claimed to have worked. Someone else said that at la Santé prison Callaux had licked the Nazi's boots, just as he was doing now. This news was not too comforting, given the bruises on Maurice's face and Callaux' promises of further retaliation.

After the screaming stopped on the parade square, Wipf arrived in our room, followed by two men carrying a large, aluminum cauldron of soup. We were given about three quarters of a litre of the foul smelling stuff, which was composed mostly of little pieces of turnips, with even smaller pieces of potatoes. If there was any meat, it was not visible. That was our evening meal, and it wasn't even hot!

Maurice and I sat at one of the tables, where we forced ourselves to eat the stuff. When I looked across at Maurice, It was impossible not to see that his face had altered dramatically from the day we had been arrested. His cheek-bones protruded, and he had lost a tremendous amount of weight; at least thirty pounds in just over six weeks. His huge body had already consumed any fat that he previously had, and was now consuming his protein - the final act of starvation before major organ failures. I did not need a doctor to tell me that Maurice was going down-hill rapidly, furthermore I was worried about the constant shaking of his head, as if he was having an inward battle with himself.

I passed my bowl to Maurice and asked, "Do you want some of this Maurice? I'm really not hungry."

I was shocked when he replied, "Eat it! You are going to need it! One of us has to survive, so eat your soup!" I ate in silence, but wondered why Maurice had brought up the subject of survival

again.

At 8:00 pm. Wipf returned. We were lined up and put through a series of "Mutzen ab! Mutzen an!" (Caps off! Caps on!) Those, too slow, were promptly punched in the face. The sadist obviously enjoyed injuring helpless prisoners, who were unable to hit back. Wipf also reminded us that we were not allowed on our beds until after the last inspection at 10:00 pm., which was not good news as there was very little space to sit down in the room.

At 9:00 pm. Callaux ordered us to strip down to our shirts and stand by our bunks. He then carried out an inspection of the bunks and our folded clothes. At 10:00 pm. the door flew open and Rottenführer Anton, "Tony" Pammer burst in. Calloux tried to report that we were present and accounted for, but failed miserably as he tried to express himself in German. His fractured German enraged Pammer, who barked, "Achtung! Abzählen! (Attention! Number!)" When only garbled responses came out, Pammer ran along the front row and pounded everyone within his reach. Fortunately, we were in the back row and avoided Pammer's blows.

From sheer exhaustion, Pammer finally stopped brutalising us. He then warned us that we had to know how to say our camp numbers in German by the following day, and for the next half hour, in the darkness of our room, I worked with Maurice until he knew his number by heart. Finally it was time to sleep. I reached over and felt around for Maurice's hand, and when I found it, he gripped mine tightly, and in the gloom of the quarantine in SS Sonderlager Hinzert, he quietly said, "Good night Peter! Get some sleep!" I quickly passed into a better world - one of sunshine, swimming and bacon and eggs.

Unfortunately our sleep did not last, as Kapo Wipf, for reasons better known to himself, came into our room three times during the night. For the want of something to do, he pulled some of us from our beds and punched others. On the way out, for good measure, he threw a bucket of water over the bunks closest to the washroom door, and as an added feature he kicked over a bucket full of sand. We wondered if the beast ever slept.

### **The camps and its staff**

It seemed that I had barely closed my eyes before the door was thrown open, and the piercing sounds of whistles and screams brought me back to my real world. Seconds later, Wipf hurled himself into the room and began to tear the covers off our bunks; kicking at those who did not move fast enough. He yelled at Callaux, as he had seen one or two prisoners in their underpants, which was forbidden. Callaux, now that his mentor was in the room, showed off his pugilistic ability by dragging prisoners from their beds, however, the coward only picked on the oldest and weakest. Wipf's language was offensive, and Callaux tried to ape it. It was quite obvious that Sunday, 14 June, would not be a day of rest.

When Wipf was satisfied that we were all present, he left, but returned a few minutes later with Pammer, and no sooner were they in the room when Pammer decided to call the roll: "Achtung! Abzählen!" (Count!) I don't know how my comrades did it, but somehow they managed to garble to "Sechs und Zwanzig" (Twenty six) in the alien tongue. A moron could have seen that fifty two of us were present, but it took Pammer three attempts to be satisfied that fifty two men were still present.

After the head-count, Pammer yelled, "Get washed you French swine! Get rid of your stink! I can't stand it in here!" He ordered Wipf to open the shutters to let in some fresh air, but warned Callaux that we were not allowed to look out of the windows. The craven traitor, standing rigidly at attention, then yelled at the top of his lungs, "Jawohl Herr Rottenführer." If the situation had not been so lethal, I am certain that we would have laughed at Callaux' craven attempt to lick jackboots. When Pammer dismissed us, there was a mad dash, as we all tried to cram in the small washroom at once. Those, not quick off the mark were pummelled by Wipf and Callaux, however, we all finally made our way in, where we washed and shaved with whatever toilet articles we had left, and those without toilet articles, borrowed from friends, as we had been warned about being unshaven. I used Maurice's safety-razor, and tried to lather my face with the foul smelling, brown soap - it did not lather, but my light whiskers didn't really need any lather. When I had shaved, I stripped down to my birthday suit and sponged the caked blood from my genitals and armpits. Maurice looked me over and helped sponge me down, and I reciprocated, and after we were satisfied that there was no infection, we got dressed. The wooden shutters were open, and outside, in the beams of the camp's searchlights, we saw about four hundred prisoners, all stripped to the waist, and jumping up and down to a drum's beat - it was exercise time, Hinzert fashion. The unusual cadence of the drum, at 4:30 -5:00 in the morning, was haunting enough, but it was the anguished screams of pain that

tightened our bowels.

The strange performance was run by four prisoners, dressed in black running pants and white under shirts. One was beating a small leather drum, and trying to sound as much like the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra's kettle drummer as possible, while the other three demonstrated the movements they expected from the assembly. It was not quite light, and the spectre of four hundred illuminated, emaciated men dancing to the beat of the Nazi drum was a sinister and macabre scene. Worse still was the noise of eight hundred, ill-fitting, wooden clogs, which sounded like a thousand Flamenco dancers - all out of step.

The dancing skeletons were surrounded by club wielding, night-duty SS and Kapos, who occasionally dashed into the ranks to beat up some "offender" whose clog had fallen off, after which, the camp, again echoed with screams of pain. The sight sent chills down my spine, because I knew that we would be joining the group shortly, and would be subjected to the same malignity. I also wondered how long it would take for us to be as emaciated as they were. We were already well along the way, but some of those outside were indescribable, and seemed to belong in a medical students' cupboard.

The majority on the roll call square were extremely emaciated, but intermittently, there was a robust body or two. We figured that the less emaciated were recent arrivals, who had not yet been rendered down to the required Hinzert size. The piteous, emaciated creatures did their best to keep up with the drum, while attempting to emulate the drill instructors' movements, however, after fifteen minutes of back breaking exercises, many were unable to function. They either collapsed or stood panting, staring straight ahead, mouths open, dripping saliva. The unfortunates were pounced on by Kapos, who drove them to the ground, and as the well-fed Kapos buffeted the crumbled bundles of rags, they looked at their SS mentors for signs of approval. Their cruel faces reflected their enjoyment, and, no doubt, their thoughts centred on the extra food their positions brought them.

Someone near the window suggested that the Kapos had to be Germans as, "No Frenchman would strike a comrade." This remark angered me, and I went over to the speaker, pointed to Callaux and softly asked, "Is he French?" The man did not answer, but had the decency to blush. Another one took offence, and reminded me that British soldiers had clubbed French soldiers' hands, and pushed them back in the sea when they had tried to board the ships at Dunkirk. I asked if any of them had been at Dunkirk, but no one had. I assured those listening that I had not been there either, and I asked them in the future to cease blaming us for the ills at Dunkirk. I took the opportunity to tell them the dangers of listening to Callaux' lies, as was an Anglophobe, or sensed that Maurice was too much of a gentlemen to strike back. There were some shameful faces, but I do not think that we won too many friends that Sunday.

The "gymnastics" lasted less than thirty minutes, after which the prisoners were called to attention, then dismissed to their huts at the double. An orderly dispersal was not possible, as Kapos and SS, including Wipf, waited for them as they ran back to their huts. The sadists were everywhere, and with renewed vigour, they threw themselves at the running prisoners, whose screams had to have been heard in the Village of Hinzert. The savagery continued until the last man reached his hut. It had not been difficult to follow Wipf, as his Képi and club were prominent wherever there was the most action.

We watched until the last prisoner ran into his hut, then we stood and gawked at each other and shrugged our shoulders in helpless submissiveness. Quietness prevailed in the hut, and was not broken until Wipf and three prisoners came in with some loaves of bread and evil smelling erzatz coffee. Wipf ordered Callaux to share the margarine and bread in fifty-two portions. The Luxembourger, serving the coffee, reminded us that we would get no more bread until the following morning.

We watched like hawks as Callaux cut each loaf of bread into eight portions, then handed each man a slice of bread, somewhat less than two inches thick. There remained almost an entire loaf, but rather than share it, the traitor kept it for himself. His crony, another Frenchman, who had cut the white margarine into small pieces, also made sure that there were larger portions left for Callaux and himself. The blatant thievery caused some muttering, and one of the braver prisoners suggested that the left-overs should be shared among the prisoners, as it was their rations. Callaux did not even look up from eating, as he told the man to keep his mouth shut, however, the man did not back down and said, "The war won't last forever Callaux! Don't you ever forget it!" The French Kapo snarled at the man, "Leave me in peace! Go away! I'm eating." When Callaux finished eating, he called the "complainer" over and told him that he didn't give a damn what he had to say, and that the fear of post-war retributions against him would never take place as the Allies were losing the war.

As I listened and translated for Maurice, we were shocked beyond belief that such men existed in the world. We knew that many people, including my parents, traded with the Germans on Jersey, but we could not put black market on the same shelf as collaboration. Callaux epitomised the true traitor and collaborator, and to our knowledge we had not known his like on the island.

I cut my bread in two, smeared on the margarine, then gulped down both pieces. Maurice shook his head at me as he carefully cut his bread in three thin slices, then divided the little piece of margarine into three, then smeared a little on each slice. When he was through, he ate only one piece, then carefully wrapped the remainder pieces in his handkerchief, which he put in his pocket. Again, I felt like a hog, and resolved to save some of my bread the following day. I was further embarrassed when Maurice offered me half his bread that evening, but I refused to take it, as his need was

obviously much greater than mine.

Later that morning there was another commotion on the roll call square - the Louse Inspection was in progress! Stools had been placed in front of the Medical Centre, where naked prisoners lined up to stand on them to be inspected. I saw Brendel sitting on a wooden stool inspecting prisoners' under arms and genitals with a two-foot long wooden cane, and when he was satisfied they had no vermin, the naked men were turned about and made to present their backsides to him and two other Kapo inspectors - it was a degrading, humiliating sight.

The French doctors were nowhere to be seen, but the Louse Inspection, like any other parade in Hinzert, was accentuated by SS and Kapos' screams, as they marched the naked prisoners from their huts to the Medical Centre, where the waiting men were made to do back-breaking exercises until it was their turn to stand on the stools - there was no peace in Hinzert, not even on Sundays.

At noon, Wipf arrived with two Luxembourg prisoners and the cauldron of soup. Again, it was ninety-nine percent water and smelled like sour gravy, but tasted like dish water, in which dirty plates had been washed. As there were not enough seats for everyone, Maurice and I sat on the floor and ate our first concentration camp Sunday dinner. The saving grace was that the camp was relatively quiet. It seemed that even the SS took some time off.

We sat around talking in low tones until about 6:00 pm., when Wipf arrived with the evening soup. Each man was poured about three quarters of a litre of yellow water, in which some scraps of turnips and potatoes had been thrown. No meat was visible, nor was there any fat floating on the soup. It was saltless, and my bowl contained only three teaspoons of crushed potatoes and turnips. The mess tasted exactly like unsalted, overcooked potatoes and turnips; many of the latter being stringy and as hard as wood. I would not have fed the concoction to Angus the pig!

Later that evening we went through the same ritual of taking off our clothes, except for our shirts, then waiting for Wipf and the duty SS to count us. Unfortunately, it was Pammer again, and he was in his usual truculent mood. The Lance Corporal screamed and struck everyone within his reach, and when he was satisfied that we were all there, he left muttering obscenities about the dirty French. We savoured the resulting silence, which we knew would be broken if Wipf decided to make one of his impromptu forays into the hut. It was time to turn to The Lord again, and I prayed that Wipf would not visit us. It had been an unusual Sunday, and as we stretched out on our bunks, Maurice asked me how many more Sundays I thought we would be able to survive in Hinzert. I had no answer, but reminded him that quarantine was the "easy" period, and that the worst was yet to come. I also questioned him on his morbid penchant for survival, and warned him that we had to keep together and keep up our spirits - nothing else mattered. His long, good-humoured face broke

into a grin, and he reached out and placed his arms around me. "I'm sorry Peter, I don't intend to worry you, but something tells me I'm not going to make it."

"Maurice, I don't want to hear that again. We'll make it if we stay together. Now, stop that nonsense! Let's talk about other things!"

We then reminisced about Jersey and our parents. I had not known Maurice very well, but in the past, he had told me that he was an orphan, and that his only relatives were his grandfather, Pop Trueblood, and a female cousin, Sheila. As we were talking, a Frenchman asked about Jersey's occupation. I told him as much as I could, and in turn, he told me about the German occupation and the miseries of France under the Occupier. As I translated for Maurice, we both agreed that our occupation had been much gentler than France's. When the chatter ceased, I said goodnight to Maurice, then drifted into a better world. My prayer was answered, because Wipf did not visit us that night.

The next morning all hell broke loose on the cinder roll call square. Partially dressed prisoners poured out of huts, again helped by club-wielding SS and Kapos. We watched prisoners run along the duckboards between the huts, but the duckboards were lined with SS and Kapos who slashed at everybody within reach. It was a formidable gauntlet of savagery. We had no idea what time it was, but it must have been between 4:30 and 5:00 am. Once the prisoners were assembled, they were subjected to a fifteen-minute "exercise" period, then beaten back to their huts, the same way as they had come out - between rows of club-wielding SS and Kapos.

About an hour later the screaming started all over again. It was Monday, 15 June - the beginning of a new work-week. We watched from the shadows, and saw that it took almost thirty minutes to assemble four hundred prisoners in columns of five. Like magnets, we were drawn to the windows to look at the full-dress rehearsal, probably so that we could get a handle on how to behave when we part of the same scene. Watching was important, as we had a lot to learn.

As soon as it was quiet on the roll call square, the SS took up positions in front of various sections of prisoners. We then witnessed another ritual: "Stube Ein, Abzählen!" (Room One count off!) This prompted the left-hand group of prisoners to yell out, in German, their position in line. The counting continued until rooms 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9 had responded. With every prisoner as stiff as a board, the SS NCOs in charge of rooms and blocks, then marched smartly out to the Rapportführer (NCO i/c numbers), where they reported the number of prisoners in each hut. After receiving their reports, the Rapportführer added up his list, while frequently licking the tip of his pencil, and when he was satisfied, he ordered the parade to stand at ease. He then followed with an order to come to attention, and screamed for caps to be taken off. This movement was accomplished with great military precision. Caps smacked against thighs, but it was not good enough for the Rapportführer,



who made the prisoners repeat the movement several times.

When satisfied, the Rapportführer stood at attention to the rear of SS Lieutenants Karl Martin and Alfred Heinrich. The latter's right hand was pushed between his tunic buttons and his left arm trailed behind his back. We had noticed his unusual stance, and the French, who loved to give everyone a nickname, had nicknamed Heinrich, Napoleon. When Heinrich was satisfied with the Rapportführer's "Meldung" (Report), he left the roll call square and disappeared into the SS camp. His absence left the field open for the SS and Kapos, who took advantage of the situation to hone up on their cruel abilities. Bodies crumpled and screams of anguish echoed across the square. The brutality only ceased when the sweating beasts came out of the ranks to make selections for the work details.

We saw several groups of prisoners being counted, then handed over to waiting SS and Kapos, who directed them to the east side of the camp. Their destination was outside our field of vision, but several minutes later, they came back carrying a variety of tools: axes, saws, crow bars, sledgehammers, ropes, shovels and large forks. Other prisoners were directed to a wood pile, in the south west corner of the camp, while other tool-carrying prisoners were herded out of the camp in small groups. When the activity ceased, an unnatural silence settled in over the camp.

We sat around, and in low tones discussed what we had seen. It had been frightening, unbelievable, traumatic and breathtaking. There was a lot of speculation as to what we had witnessed, however, Maurice and I decided to adopt a wait-and-see attitude, rather than get caught up with our French comrades and their rampant speculation. One rumour was already dispelled - we were not in a forestry camp!

When our morning bread and coffee arrived, I kept two thirds of my bread, as I had been too hungry the previous day. When I was teaching Maurice a little French, I was interrupted by Callaux, who told me that I did not have the right to teach Maurice French. I told him to shut his trap and mind his own business, as the Camp Kommandant had personally instructed Maurice to learn French or German. I also told the traitor that if he doubted my word, he could go see the Kommandant. This quietened the coward, who could not afford to take any risks. As I was teaching Maurice, I was pleasantly surprised when three of the younger prisoners asked if they could listen in.

One of them was diminutive Pierre Marionneau, nicknamed Pierrot. He was born on 6 November, 1924, at Mer, Loire-et-Chere, and was arrested on 24 April, 1942. He still wore his oversized pants, but his courage, disposition and cheerfulness had made me take a look at myself whenever my morale plunged. He was a born comedian, and his expressive face was always wreathed in a smile. I asked Pierrot why he had been arrested. He explained that he was arrested because he was an "enemy" of the German Reich. He also said that his father was a resistant in Mer, and that he had

worked for his father's resistance cell as a messenger, distributing anti-Nazi leaflets under cover of darkness. Pierrot was arrested during a civil demonstration, and was imprisoned at Blois and Cherche Midi before joining our armoured train at the Gare de l'Est, Paris. He had been the most vocal one during our journey to Trier, and his cheerful attitude had made our life a little easier. It was impossible to be glum with Pierrot around.

After I had translated Pierrot's story for Maurice, I ran over three basic French verbs. I suggested that Maurice use the polite form of "vous" at all times, as I did not want to confuse him with the second person singular. That would have been too much for him, even though he was bright, patient and understanding. My friends agreed with my suggestion, and they helped Maurice with his pronunciation, while Callaux fumed and insulted his favourite rosbif. It was a difficult time for Maurice, as he had to wait for me to translate everything, and I was always gratified whenever younger prisoners remembered some English from their school lessons. Maurice had initially asked me to teach him German, but I suggested that he only learn to count in German, as every SS and Kapo now knew that he was an English and would not expect any German from him. I also reminded him that I still needed to hide the fact that I spoke German.

The week in quarantine progressed slowly. There was nothing to do, but it was not a quiet time - Wipf and Callaux saw that we were kept on our toes. Wipf sometimes kept up his nocturnal visits, and was crueller each time he came. It seemed that he slept little, and when he was in our room, his lackey, Callaux, always gave a sterling performance, sounding more like his master each day. Each time Wipf left our room, Callaux was backed in a corner by a half dozen or so prisoners, where he was reminded that he would be brought to justice after the war. It was sad, but he had become Germanized very quickly, and it had taken only an extra piece of bread, stolen from his comrades, and a smile of approval from Wipf.

On Friday, 19 June, Wipf came in after the working parties had left. He told us to get all our effects together, as we were being transferred to the main camp. He also warned us to clean the room, "...until it sparkled. Or else!" - we left a gleaming quarantine behind us.

Maurice and I stuck together as we ran across the parade square to Stube 2 (Room 2). It was just past 7:00 am.. Our period of relative safety was over, and we were no sooner in Room 2, when Rottenführer Pammer stalked in. He grinned as he informed us that he was our Blockführer (Block Leader). When we heard it, we knew that we were in deep trouble, as next to Sergeant Schattner, Pammer was, probably, the most sadistic SS. I was also very alarmed at the interest Pammer had shown in Maurice, whom he had dubbed "Churchill."

Maurice and I had learned a lot about the occupation of France, the Gestapo and SS from our comrades, but I was puzzled by the camp staff, as the SS were supposed to be the cream of Hitler's

Germany. I asked myself why the camp was staffed by middle-age, fat officers and NCOs. The tallest, and probably the most representative of the Master Race was Pammer, but he had neither blond hair nor blue eyes. He was tall, with brown hair and dark eyes. When I first saw Pammer, I took him for an Austrian, but was surprised to learn that he came from Bad Ems. We concluded that Sporrenberg, or the previous Kommandant, Pister, had selected the cruellest SS, despite their lack of stature, blond hair and blue eyes.

### **Table manners and work**

Except for the Luxembourger, Room 2 was unoccupied. The distinguished-looking man appeared to be about forty years of age, and his "uniform," a former French army officer's, had been fashionably tailored. He wore an armband denoting that he was a Stubenältester (Room Senior) and had long hair, unlike his new charges. He stood silently by as Rottenführer Pammer, who had escorted part of our group to Room 2, again called the roll. When the SS Lance Corporal was satisfied that we were all present, he introduced the Room Senior, and told us that we were to obey his orders, as the man was responsible to him. Pammer then told us to pick out bunks, and to make them up in the prescribed manner.

I rushed to the rear of the hut, where I claimed two corner bunks by throwing my sheet on the top one and my blanket on the lower. When Maurice arrived, I offered him the choice of bunks. He took the upper one, as he was the taller and was able to reach it easier than I could. It was a good spot, as it was the furthest from the entrance and out of sight. When our bunks were made up, the Room Senior called Maurice and me to his little niche in the "Trockenraum" (Drying Room), where, in fluent English, he asked why we were in Hinzert.

After hearing us out, he said that he was going to give us some sound advice. He then told us: that with one exception, the SS hated all prisoners; they were specifically trained as concentration camp guards, and their hatred of everything non-Aryan was the single most important factor of their savage conditioning, furthermore, they all fancied themselves to be ultimate Aryans. The Luxembourger advised us to keep as far away as possible from the SS, Kapos and the entire camp staff. He also told us that we should always appear to be doing something or going somewhere, but most importantly, we should avoid eye-contact with the camp staff.

The man advised us to execute all drills, as well as possible, as failing to do so would bring immediate attention. He continued, "...even if it breaks your neck, whip your heads around smartly when you salute them! Practice taking off your hats as quickly as you can, and make as much noise as possible when you hit your thighs with them! The SS love that sound. It makes them feel that they have taught us something of their culture." The Room Chief also imparted that the SS hated and snitched on one each other; trying to score points with their superiors. He advised us that the two cruellest SS were: Lance Corporal Pammer and Sergeant Schattner, from the supply room. They were closely followed by Georg Schaaf, nicknamed: "Ivan the Terrible." He also cautioned us about Staff Sergeant Brendel, the NCO in charge of the Medical Centre, who, when drunk, became a raving lunatic, and unfortunately he was drunk most of the time.

The man continued, "Although it may seem to be distasteful, check one another's private parts, both back and front, every Sunday morning, and if you are inspected by Kapos, ensure they don't plant a

louse on you, as they become frustrated when they can't bring attention to themselves." He also suggested that we stare straight ahead during the Louse Review, as there would be an audience of German civilians, of both sexes, ogling from outside the camp perimeter. "Don't mind them, as they have nothing better to do, and don't let your nakedness bother you!"

The Luxembourger also advised us not to dwell on our homes, parents and pasts, because we needed to dehumanise ourselves if we wanted to survive. He explained that it did not mean we had to lose self-respect, but we needed to develop nerves of steel. The Room Senior suggested that we stick together as much as possible, as I had to think for us both, or at least until Maurice mastered sufficient French. He warned Maurice that he was bound to attract the staff's attention because of his lack of languages and height, but also opined that being British might work to our advantage, as Britain was still at war - unlike the rest of the Europe.

The man continued, "Do not collaborate, as you will lose respect for yourselves! Do your work when they are looking, but most of all, avoid the blows! As far as the SS are concerned, you are here to be disciplined their way, and they won't let you leave until they think that you have been. Now go back to your bunks, and remember that this talk did not take place!"

I had several questions to ask, but sensed that the man had said all that he was going to. We shook hands, thanked him for his advice, then left. Back at our bunks, Maurice looked at me with helpless resignation written all over his face. He was very disturbed, and in order to revive his sagging spirits, I suggested that we take a cautious walk around to familiar ourselves with our surroundings.

The other half of the hut, Room 1, housed many of our young companions from quarantine. Each room held sixty double-bunks and contained six long, narrow tables with seats on either side. Against the far walls were some lockers for our clothes and personal effects, but as they had no locks, it did not seem like a good idea to put anything in them. On the way into the rooms, were two small "Trockenraume" (Drying-rooms), with coal-burning stoves, however, the two Room Seniors slept in them, and used them as offices. It was also to these small rooms that our rations were delivered - twice daily. The third meal, if issued, was eaten in a large mess hall on the north side of the camp.

Our French companions informed us that we could visit them in their room after the first roll call. We saw André Calloux standing in the doorway of Room 1. He glared at us, but said nothing, as he had no authority in the room.

At noon we heard the usual yells, screams and whistles. The "voice" over the loud speaker, ordered us to get properly dressed and bring our bowls and eating utensils to the mess hall. We were quickly assembled by the Room Senior, then doubled out of the hut. At the west end of the

block, we attached ourselves to another group, already lined up to enter the mess hall. I noticed that Maurice was trying to make himself appear shorter - he had tucked his neck in his shoulders and leaned his upper torso forward, so that he was less noticeable above his shorter European companions.

When we arrived on the duckboards leading to the mess hall, there were several SS and Kapos waiting for us. Their aim was to strike everyone climbing the five steps into the mess hall, but as Maurice and I were in the centre row, we avoided most of their blows.

In the mess hall, about two hundred prisoners sat at long, wooden tables. Their soup was already served, but they had not touched it. They sat rigidly at attention, staring straight ahead, arms folded, as they waited for the last man to be served, as it was forbidden to eat until told to do so by the SS in charge of the mess hall, who, for that particular sitting, was Georg Schaaf.

Schaaf was a short individual with thinning red hair and a red, florid face. His ice-blue eyes were the only things Aryan about him. His favourite game was to trip prisoners, so that he could "deal with them" using his jackboots, or his ever present pick-axe shaft, or the small axe he carried in his belt. As we waited to be served, we watched the madman run between the rows of seated men, lashing at them indiscriminately with his club. He had worked himself into such a frenzy, that he foamed at the mouth, and his spittle flew over the seated prisoners, who were not allowed to move once seated.

From a huge cauldron, a well-fed prisoner ladled about three-quarters of a litre of thin gruel into our bowls. It was obvious that if the server liked your face, he reached down to the bottom of the cauldron and came up with a ladle-full of solid brown stuff, but this was not my case. When served, Kapos directed us to our seats, where we sat at attention and stared ahead while the swill grew cold.

When the last man was served, Schaaf screamed, "Begin eating! You have ten minutes!" He did not use the polite term of "essen" (to eat), but spat out the verb "fressen", which applied to animals.

The gruel tasted exactly like burned, boiled flour with a little colouring added, and as we ate, Schaaf kept reminding us how many minutes remained. With only one minute to go, he began the count down, second-by-second, and during the count-down, we would have been blind not to have seen the SS and Kapos ready their clubs, in anticipation of the exodus.

It would not have required ten minutes to eat the bilge in our bowls, as it was cold, however, SS "table manners" predicated that we take a spoonful of "soup," then bring it to our lips without bending our bodies towards the bowl. Those whose table manners displeased the SS had their soup tipped over their heads, after which they were beaten out of the mess hall by screaming thugs. When the ten minutes were up, Ivan called us to attention, then ordered us out of the mess hall.

Near the exit stood four SS and two Kapos, all armed with pick-axe shafts and coshes, and as the

prisoners rushed to get through the double doors, they struck at everybody. Not content to hit defenceless prisoners, the sadists screamed at the top of their lungs, calling us the foulest names imaginable, and punctuated their rhetoric with, "Terrorist swines." Sweat dripped from their faces, as they attempted to inflict as much physical damage in the shortest possible time. The mess hall exit being narrow, caused a log jam of shoving, jostling, sweating bodies. This allowed the beasts a longer time to hit the emaciated, exhausted prisoners, as they tried to exit unscathed.

Maurice grabbed me and barged his way into the middle of the pack, and we managed to get out of the mess hall without being hit. On the outside, two SS stood at the top of the stairs and two at the bottom, all armed with pick-axe shafts. They, too, yelled, screamed and hit everyone as they ran down the five steps. Pammer was very much in evidence, and stood out from the rest of the savages, as he was the loudest and most active. I steered Maurice to the centre of the struggling pack, where we were fortunate not to be hit by the SS, however, it was not over, as along the duckboards stood several more Kapos, led by their chief, Wipf.

It was a formidable gauntlet, and reminded me of stories from my boyhood magazines: "Adventure, Skipper, Wizard, Rover and Hotspur," in which I read of "red savages" making their captives run similar gauntlets, but allowing them to live as slaves if they reached the other end. The odds had been slim, as the gauntlet was usually made up of the younger braves and women; all armed with knives, hatchets and war-clubs, and as I plunged after the man ahead of me, with Maurice holding onto my hips, I was glad that there were no SS women in the camp, because my magazines had indicated that Indian women were crueller than the braves.

It was impossible to evade all the blows, but we avoided many by ducking and weaving like prize fighters, and when we reached the end of the duckboards, where Wipf stood, I could have sworn that he aimed over both our heads, as he seldom missed those who ran by. When we cleared the inferno, I heard my heart beating, and felt sure that my pulse rate was, at least, two hundred, furthermore, I stank of perspiration - something I had begun to experience when I was afraid.

Back in Room 2, we washed our bowls and spoons, then sat down at a table, where we waited for the next round of savagery. Maurice and I just stared at each other, and our chests hurt with every breath of air. Our French friends also sat and stared at each other, and their faces also expressed disbelief.

The experience must have given us back some of our pride and arrogance for having survived the savagery, orchestrated by handful of Nazis on the lunatic fringe. When our chests stopped heaving and our lungs hurt less, a few brave grins appeared on some faces, and the Gallic spirit resurfaced. Diminutive Pierrot Marionneau quietly said, "Te casse pas la tête les gars! On les aura!" (Don't worry boys! We'll get them!) His youthful, encouraging words broke the suspense, and hands

reached across narrow tables to grasp those opposite. In Maurice's eyes I saw a fierce pride, which told me that he, like myself, was proud of having endured the SS inferno, and as I clasped his hands, the Room Senior's words came back to me, I felt, for the first time, that we were one with the French, despite the rotten apple, André Callaux.

That afternoon Maurice and I took a cautious walk outside. We saw that the camp was about two hundred yards by about one hundred and fifty yards square. It was surrounded by a two metre, wire-mesh fence, topped by four strands of barbed wire. The fence was not electrified, but there were at least three watch-towers outside the perimeter, which were permanently manned by machine-gun toting SS. We also saw a perimeter foot-patrol of two SS, accompanied by a straining, panting, salivating German Shepherd.

A pool, about fifty by fifty feet square and four or five feet deep, had been dug in the south-west corner of the roll call square. When we first arrived, we had assumed it to be a swimming pool, however, it was the camp's emergency drinking water and water with which to extinguish fires. Opposite the camp's main gate was the SS camp, which comprised eleven low huts, including a cook-house, recreation centre and canteen, and higher up, on a hill, was Kommandant Sporrenberg's attractive house. We skirted the so-called "prison," but were unable to avoid the anguished screams coming through its black walls.

On the west side of the camp was a hut which held about sixty Frenchmen awaiting "special handling." The words meant nothing to us, but we had seen the men, as they peered out at roll calls, which they did not attend, nor did they do any work. They still had their hair, and because of this, we had assumed them to be privileged prisoners.

The Room Senior had told us that Hinzert was located in the Schwarzwälder (Black Forest) Hochwald, which was part of the Hunsruck Mountains. The nearest known town, of any consequence, was Trier, a border town familiar to most western Frenchmen, particularly those from Alsace-Lorraine, which had been annexed by the Germans in 1940. One of our friends had informed us that the Germans had "re-located" over one hundred thousand French citizens from Alsace-Lorraine, then claimed it as German territory, as it had been former German territory.

We had been apprised of the camp's routine, which was:

Reveille..... 4:30 am  
Coffee..... 5:00 am  
Roll call/exercises..... 5:30 am  
Work..... 6:00 am  
Midday soup..... 12:00 - 12:45 pm  
Return to work..... 1:00 pm



Finish work..... 6:00 - 7:00 pm

Evening meal..... 6:00 pm

Assembly and exercises..... 6:30 pm

Roll call in room..... 9:00 pm

Roll call and bed..... 10:00 - 11:00 pm.

Among the French to arrive in Hinzert on 5 June, was a group of six young resistants from Rennes, the capital of Brittany, who had been arrested in March, 1942. The youngest was Pascal Lafaye, born on 21 June, 1927 (The youngest known NN prisoner in our group). The others were: Michael Goltais, born 14 March, 1927; Yves Le Moigne, born 6 March, 1926, Jacques Tarrier, born 9 July, 1926, Gilbert Anquetil, born 23 November, 1926 and the stalwart of the group, Guy Faisant, born 23 October 1925.

The Bretons, mostly schoolboys, had not waited to reach the age of majority before becoming involved with French Resistance activities. The six had formed their own little group, then joined a Socialist underground cell, for which they had distributed news leaflets, carried messages, arms and ammunition between Resistance groups, and had made nuisances of themselves whenever and wherever possible. The young Bretons were not card-carrying Socialists, although one or two may have had socialist ideals. They had joined the cell because the French Socialists and Communists were the most active and aggressive Resistants in Brittany, and had recruited anyone with enough intestinal fortitude to help carry out their clandestine activities against the German Occupier.

Two Netherlanders had also been deported from France to Hinzert with the first convoy, on 5 June. Both were fluent in their own language, German, French and English. Geert (Gerald) van Ryckervorsel van Kessel was born in 1923. Before his arrest, he lived in St. Oedenrode, Holland. His partner, Henk Klerkx, was also born in 1923, but lived in nearby s'Hertogenbosch. Both Gerald and Henk had become disenchanted with the German occupiers, and had attempted to leave Holland, with the intention of reaching unoccupied France. Once there, and depending on the situation, they had hoped to cross into Switzerland, or reach Gibraltar, via Spain. Had they been successful, they intended to join the Free Netherlands Forces in England or the Far East.

Gerald and Henk had, without incident, crossed the Netherland/Belgium border. This was followed by an un-observed crossing of the Belgian-French frontier. They made excellent time and progress until they came to the City of Besançon, in eastern France - Somewhere along the route, they had met up with a sympathetic Frenchman who steered them to Besançon, and had given them the address of a French doctor; alleged to have connections with the French Resistance. The man had suggested that the doctor might help them get into unoccupied France.

It was a dark and rainy night when Gerald and Henk arrived in Besançon, where their luck ran out, because, in the darkness, they knocked on an accountant's door instead of the doctor's. It had been one chance in a million, but the accountant had the same name as the doctor, and their brass shingles were almost identical. As they left the accountant's house to find the doctor's, they were spotted by a German street patrol, who arrested them for curfew-violation.

They were held briefly in the Besançon jail, but when the Gestapo learned they were Netherlanders, without valid travelling papers, they were quickly transported to Paris, then to Hinzert with the first NN convoy from France. Meeting the two Netherlanders was fortuitous, because it meant that Maurice had someone, other than myself, to talk with.

That evening Pammer rushed in our room and screamed at us to assemble on the roll call square for the evening appell. As usual the SS and Kapo predators waited outside, and we were beaten out of the hut; beaten along the duckboards leading to the roll call square; then beaten by howling packs of Kapos on the roll call square itself. They had, as usual, worked themselves into a frenzy, and frothed at the mouth with the effort they put into hitting us. It was difficult to avoid every blow, but Maurice and I kept low profiles, tucked our heads into our shoulders, covered our faces with our arms, then looking through the gaps between our arms, ran as quickly as we could, as we followed the figures ahead of us. I was lucky and received only a dozen or so blows; mostly on my forearms and back. It was very vital to protect faces, because, when the SS saw someone with a bruised face, he was classed as a "trouble-maker," and received additional blows.

Our first, "on-site" roll call was a rude awakening. The Kapos brutalized everyone, as if their lives depended on the scrap of bread they received for their reprehensible actions, and as I stood at attention, I longed for the relative peace of my cells in Jersey and Fresnes, despite the occasional days of brutality and a broken nose.

We were assembled numerically by blocks and rooms, in rows of five, opposite the quarantine, which was again occupied. There were approximately four hundred prisoners on the square, and this number was confirmed when the last prisoner screamed out, "Fünf und achtzig (Eighty-five). The Rapportführer then called the prisoners to attention, after which the SS Block Leaders, notebooks in hands, marched over, and reported to him. When the Rapportführer was satisfied that we were all present, he then subjected us to a five minute drill of "Caps off! Caps on!" When the sound of caps smacking thighs met his criterion, he put us through a series of physical exercises, which, he said were necessary as we stank worse than swine.

The exercises were punctuated by screams, blows and the usual inferno of Kapo savagery, and when the SS joined in, it motivated the cowardly Kapos to even greater efforts, as they did not want to be outdone by their masters. The scene was mind-boggling, as prisoners tried to exercise and, at the same time, avoid being hit. Finally, we were called to order and re-formed in our groups. The

Rapportführer adjusted his uniform, straightened his belt, then marched off to the camp office, as if nothing had happened. Moments later he re-appeared with Lieutenant Heinrich, whose appearance demanded another round of "Hats on! Hats off!" When the sound was attuned to Heinrich's ear, he tucked one hand in his tunic and the other behind his back, then inspected the front row of prisoners. His nickname, Napoleon, was quite á propos, as he kept up his Napoleon-like stance during the entire roll call.

When Heinrich left the parade square, the Rapportführer turned us over to the SS Block Leaders, who decided that we needed more exercise before going back to our rooms. Happily, after few laps around the square we were dismissed, and told to return to our rooms. This was easier said than done, as the junior SS and Kapos waited along the duckboards, all brandishing clubs, and taunting us to, "Run for your lives terrorist pigs!"

I grabbed Maurice and squeezed into the centre of the running mass. That way, we again avoided being hit, until half-way along the duckboards, where it was impossible for the Kapos to miss. It was not surprising that most of us arrived in Room 2 bruised, traumatized and out of breath. We again threw ourselves on the benches and stared at each other. No words came out again. But what was there to say?

By the time we calmed down, it was time for the evening meal, which had been delivered to the Room Senior's cubicle. We lined up with our bowls, and shuffled towards the cauldron of evil-smelling liquid. We were each given about three-quarters of a litre of turnip soup, in which there was no meat nor any trace of fat - Just a few lumps of rotted, yellow turnip and minute pieces of black potatoes. I estimated that there was less than one half-cup of solids in my bowl, but it was wet and warm.

The soup flushed straight through our systems, and it was not long before most ran to the toilets, where one was obliged to ask the "Toilet Kapo" for paper; consisting of three or four small squares of newsprint. It was also the Kapo's job to ensure that we did not linger in the stalls more than two to three minutes. The toilets were holes in the ground, over which wooden seats had been built, but they were clean, and were emptied weekly by a group of young prisoners, known as the "Scheisskommando" (S...t Brigade).

We did not enjoy the quietness of our room too long, as Schaaf decided to pay our room a visit. We were quickly assembled by the Room Senior, after which he reported to Schaaf that we were all present, except for one man using the toilet. Hearing this, Wipf, who had accompanied Schaaf, ran to the toilets, and it was not long before we heard thuds and screams. Seconds later the unfortunate man joined our ranks, still pulling up his pants and dancing to avoid Wipf's blows. Schaaf, not to be outdone walked over to the man and screamed something at him, which Wipf, for some reason,

did not bother to translate. Getting no reply from the man ignited another level of Schaaf's evil temper. He pummelled the poor man, first with his fists, then, when the man collapsed, with his heavy boots, until the man, mercifully, lapsed into unconsciousness. My fifteen-year old mind was unable to understand how such conduct was tolerated, but I still had a lot to learn.

Schaaf then turned his anger on the assembled prisoners. He ran along the front row, and punched everyone's face or kicked them in the genitals. When a victim attempted to protect his face, Schaaf ordered him to keep his arms to his side and "stand at attention!" The man instinctively tried to protect his face, and his defensive actions drove Ivan the Terrible to greater violence. He then began beating the entire room, and his savagery lasted for almost fifteen minutes. The sweat rolled off his face, he salivated and panted, but did not stop until he was unable to raise his arms and longer. Then, with a curse, he staggered out the room.

Kapo Wipf, who had stood quietly by, walked over to the Room Senior, and told him that he should have had his room better prepared. The Swiss Kapo then turned on his heel, as if to leave, but instead of leaving, he pivoted his entire body on his heels, then violently punched the Room Senior in the centre of his face. Blood spurted all over, but the man stood his ground, staring straight ahead. Wipf, with a glance at his knuckles and a respectful look at the man, left.

None of us moved until the Room Senior told us to fall out. He then went to his little cubicle, where his assistant fetched some water and cleaned the blood from his chief's face. In the meantime, most of us collapsed at the tables, where we held our breaths in case Ivan came back. When the Luxembourger returned, his face already showed signs of bruising. He ordered us to talk quietly, but to stay at the tables, however, he detailed one of us to stand near the entrance to warn him of incoming SS or Kapo Wipf.

We sat around talking until 9.00 pm., at which time we went through another roll-call by Pammer, who must have been into his cups, as he was subdued, and did bother to brutalize us. When Pammer left, the Block Senior told us to get out of our clothes and wait for the final roll-call at 10:00 pm. This done, we sat around in our silly, long shirts until the final roll call was taken by Pammer, who, again did not hit anyone, as he was obviously in a hurry to get back to the canteen. When Pammer had locked the front door and checked the bolted shutters, we climbed into our bunks. I said good night to Maurice and those around me, then blacked out, however, it seemed that I had closed my eyes for no more than a few seconds, when I heard whistles, screams and SS voices yelling "Aufstehen!" (Get up!) It was 4.30 am., and time to get up on Saturday, 20 June - a normal working day.

Following a fifteen minute exercise period on the square, we were sent back to our rooms for coffee at 5:00 am. Three men had gone to fetch our breakfast, and they returned with a steaming cauldron

of acorn coffee, several loaves of black bread and a lump of white, synthetic margarine. After the Room Senior had sliced the loaves, in the shelter of his cubicle, we were issued our bread ration, a teaspoon of margarine and a ladle of acorn coffee. At the table, Maurice and I carefully sliced bread into three thin wafers, then smeared them with the scrap of margarine. We ate only one piece, and put the other two thin slices in our pockets.

After breakfast we went through another savage routine on the roll call square. The Kapos, refreshed by their night's rest, again excelled in their craft, until the SS called a halt to their sport. When everything was quiet, we were separated into work-parties (Kommandos). About fifty of us were marched to one of the sheds near the east side of the camp, where we were issued tools. Some were handed axes, others hammers and chisels, and a dozen prisoners were told to fetch six box-like contraptions, which were stacked at the rear of the coal shed. The boxes were made of thick, wooden planks; being about forty-five inches long, thirty inches wide and twenty-four inches deep. The top two planks protruded about three feet on either side and their ends were shaped so that they could be carried by hand. The French, with their penchant for naming everything, called the boxes "cammattes." They were, in fact, wheel barrows without wheels.

Our first working party was the "Steinkommando" (Stone-Commando), for which only younger prisoners had been selected. Most of us detailed to it had been arrested between February and May, 1942, and although this was not a great length of time to have been incarcerated, we had all lost weight and strength. We were at the time of life when we needed extra food for continued growth, and being deprived of it was more devastating on the young than on the adults, whose bodies were developed.

Having been issued with our tools, we were marched out of the camp's south gate into a field which contained enormous boulders and dozens of tree stumps. The "Stein Kapo" (Stone Kapo) told us that our job was to break up the boulders, then carry the large fragments to a place near the gate, where they would be further broken down into small chips, then carried to the SS camp to be used on paths and roads.

Our Kommando was guarded by a SS Rottenführer and three Kapos, one of whom was a fifteen-year old Belgian, Leon - a cruel, little sadist. The others two were German criminals, whose aim in life was to please their SS master in order to earn some remission from their sentences. The SS guard spent most of the time talking to a guard in the watchtower, and left the Kapos to do their thing. They took advantage of the situation, and clubbed everyone whom they suspected of slacking.

Maurice and I spent the first two hours cracking pieces off large boulders. I held a long chisel,

while Maurice hit it with a sledgehammer, and broke off large pieces. The pieces were collected by those carrying the cammattes, which, when filled, weighed at least two hundred and fifty pounds. Our companions, in their weakened state, were barely able to lift them, and when they set them down to rest their strained arms, the Kapos savagely lashed them. After three or four cammatte loads, over a hundred metre course, two young prisoners collapsed, and although the SS man tried to revive them with kicks, they did not get up. We were finally allowed to place them in two of the cammattes, then carry them to the Medical Centre.

When the empty cammattes returned, the Kapos decided that it was time for a job change, and Maurice and I were detailed to a cammatte. By carefully stacking the stones, we were able to put less weight in our cammatte, but even though our loads were probably lighter than others, after five trips to the stone pile we, too, were ready to collapse. Our arms were sore, our shoulders felt dislocated, and because of Maurice's height, the cammatte sloped towards me - which did not help. Fortunately, the noon-hour whistles blew and the loud speaker told us that it was "Mittagessen" (Lunch time). One Kapo was left to look after the tools, while the rest of us ran to our rooms, where we washed, grabbed our bowls and spoons, then ran through the SS and Kapo gauntlet. When we arrived in the mess-hall, we were served the same brown, liquid swill, under the same outrageous conditions. On the way out, things had not changed - The predators still waited.

After lunch, we had a ten minutes rest period, which had to be spent at the tables in our rooms. Most of our friends fell asleep in upright positions - arms folded in the prescribed manner. Minutes later the whistles and screaming started again - It was time to go back to the farmers's field, where we cracked stones, carried cammattes, then crushed the stones into little chips - All this with only three-quarters of a litre of thin gruel in our stomachs.

That afternoon Maurice and I worked in a large hole, in which there was a huge stump of a sixty year-old elm tree. We were made to dig around the roots to free them of soil, and when the Kapos felt that we had exposed enough of the roots, the farmer was sent for. He arrived with two large, Belgian horses, which he hitched to the roots with long chains. The farmer then tried to get the horses to pull the stump out of the ground, but the horses were unable to. The SS man and Kapos went wild, and blamed us for the horses' failure. They hit and kicked everyone within reach, then pushed us back into the hole, then told us to dig deeper. When they felt that we had dug deeply enough, we were ordered to pull the stump out of the ground using the chains. We tried, but failed to move it, and this drove the sadists wilder. Again we jumped in the hole and hacked at the stump, but this time the tap root was exposed and cut, after which the horses easily pulled the huge stump from the ground - Unfortunately, there were many tree stumps in the field.

There was no let up that afternoon. Maurice and I went through another rotation of hammer and chisel, followed by another turn on the cammattes. Finally the whistles blew, and the voice on the

loud speaker ordered us to cease work. We had survived the first working day, but it was obvious, under those conditions and starvation rations, that we would not be able to survive too many more. After our first day of work, we washed ourselves, shook the dirt from our rags, then sat down to wait for the turnip soup. Its ingredients were no different from those of the night before, but Maurice and I had saved some bread, which helped fill a corner in our hollow stomachs. When we had eaten, we then attended the full roll call on the square, which took longer than usual, as the Camp Kommandant and his dog were present. His presence made the SS postulate even more as they screamed, "Attention! Eyes left! Caps off! Caps on!" and when Sporrenberg was satisfied with the satanic demonstration, he casually strolled off with his huge dog. We were then made to run around the camp several times, during which, Napoleon was in his element, and did not let up until we were a complete rabble. It became an inferno, which was extinguished as quickly as it began, because Napoleon, no doubt bored, abruptly left the square.

Back at the tables I looked at Maurice, and apologized for having been instrumental for his arrest. He assured me that I had not twisted his arm, and that he had been a willing participant in our attempted escape. His words did not make me feel any better, because something was telling me that Maurice would be unable to cope with the violence and beatings for too long a period. He had already lost a lot of weight, and tired easily. In addition, it seemed as if he could not grasp what was happening to us, as he constantly shook his head from side to side, and asked himself questions, such as: "Why am I here? What did I do to deserve this? Will I ever get out of this?" When I heard him speak that way, I reminded him of what the Luxembourger Room Chief had told him, but he usually said, "It's no use Peter. I can't forget. I worry so much how Pop is taking this." I could usually cheer him up by saying that Pop was thinking that he was a "bloody hero," and this usually brought about a faint grin.

### **Hard labour and exit**

Sunday, 21 June, arrived in a blaze of sunny weather, however there were still chores to do around the camp, for which about fifty prisoners were chosen during the morning roll call. The major chore was to sweep the cinder packed roll call square, which was done by a dozen men equipped with willow brooms. Maurice and I were not picked for any work that Sunday, and after running through the usual Kapos' cordon, we sat down at a table in our room, where we chatted with friends. It was a pleasant interlude in Dante's Inferno, and as we waited for the morning bread and coffee, there was no screaming nor yelling, which was a pleasant departure. However, we knew that would change when the louse inspection began.

After breakfast, Gaston Mertens, the Luxembourger who had translated for Maurice on our first day in the camp, came and took us to his room, where many curious Luxembourgers wanted to know the circumstances of our arrest, and how we had arrived in Hinzert. When we had finished telling our story, they told us that Germany had annexed Luxembourg as part of the Third Reich, and all Luxembourgers were deemed to be citizens of the Third Reich, and subject to all German laws, including induction into the German Armed Forces. The Germans had expected all Luxembourgers to be thankful, but most of them detested the Germans, and resisted the Germanization of their beautiful little country.

Luxembourg resistance surfaced immediately after German annexation, and it was not long before the Gestapo got in the act, and arrested hundreds of young Luxembourgers. We were told that the Germans had forbidden the speaking of French, as well as wearing of berets, which was considered to be a slap in the face to the Germans, who wanted no French culture. Gaston had been arrested for demonstrating and refusing to accept Germany's dominance of his country. He was transported directly to Hinzert by truck and, as he said, he was likely to stay there for the duration of the war, unless he submitted to Germans demands and became a good German.

We were introduced to Captain J., a former officer in the small Luxembourg Army. It was said that he had been the Adjutant to the Luxembourg Army Chief-of-Staff, and was in Hinzert because he, too, had refused to collaborate with the Germans. Captain J., a tall, quiet man, was interested in our story, and when we had repeated it for his benefit, he said that we could call on the Luxembourgers for help. The Captain worked in the camp Medical Centre, and was in a position to know what was going on, because his chief, Brendel, was an alcoholic, and was unable to keep secrets after swilling his morning and noon-hour quota of schnapps and beer. Captain J. said that Brendel sometimes insisted on doing minor surgery on prisoners, even though he was not qualified, and advised us to keep out of the Medical Centre, unless we were seriously ill. He said that if an injury or illness was



really severe, prisoners were driven to a German hospital in Hermeskeil, which was run by German nuns, under the direction of Dr. Theopil Hackenthal, who, theoretically, was the doctor in charge of Hinzert. Reports from the hospital in Hermeskeil indicated that the nuns were efficient, very sympathetic, and sometimes extended the recuperative period in order to put a little flesh on prisoners bones, however, Dr. Hackenthal, when in attendance at Hinzert, was not sympathetic, and usually gave short shrift to sick prisoners. The Captain also said that most SS preferred to be seen by competent French doctors, rather than the quack, Dr. Hackenthal.

Some Luxembourgers had spent several weeks in the camp's "prison," where the regimen was very harsh. The prison cells were darkened, and the inmates lived on bread and water for four days then the normal camp fare on the fifth. They could not communicate with others, and saw only the brutal SS and the prison Kapos. Gaston also said that there was a permanent Gestapo office in the camp; located to the west of the cook house, however, it was only used when the Gestapo came from Trier. We were finally reminded that it was time to go back to our room and prepared for the louse inspection.

When it was our turn to be humiliated, we ran, naked, past the usual gauntlet of club wielding Kapos, to the front of the Medical Centre, where Napoleon, Joseph Brendel and three ex-Foreign Legion Kapos waited. We were made to stand on stools, spread our legs and hold our arms above our heads, as Brendel and his helpers, seated on stools, inspected our under-arms, private parts and posteriors. All four used slender, long canes with which they lifted our private parts, and if satisfied that we had no lice, we received a "playful" cut across the backside, before being allowed to jump off the stools. The louse review appeared to make the perverts day, as they laughed most of the time they went about their degrading task.

Brendel's language was foul and his observations were extremely crude, and Napoleon just stood around in his usual stance, but he was amused at the procedure. Fortunately, no lice were found, but our Block Chief, Pammer, lined us up in single file, and told us to wait on the roll call square until our entire block was had finished.

As we stood in the pleasant sunshine, I took a good look at Maurice's naked body. His ribs and shoulder blades were almost skeletal - in fact, he was more emaciated than most around him. I could not understand why he had lost so much weight, but as I looked at those who had come from Paris with us, I saw that they, too, had lost considerable weight, but nowhere as much as Maurice - malnutrition and strenuous work had ravished our bodies in a few short weeks.

I enjoyed the sun's rays as it warmed my body, and I hoped to linger a few more minutes in the sun, but Pammer had other ideas - it was time for Sunday exercises, which we had already witnessed from quarantine the previous Sunday, however, we were totally unprepared for what followed.

Pammer began by making us run around the roll call square, which was hard on our bare feet, but as we ran, we saw about twenty men and women lined up along the narrow road outside the camp. They had obviously witnessed the de-lousing procedure, and now watched the "Naked Olympics." Judging from the mens' suits and the women's floral dresses, they may have been on their way to church. They stood no more than fifty feet from us, eyes were glued on the naked figures, whom I presume they took to be sub-specimens, as we were skeletal and still shorn of all hair. There was a burst of laughter from the good burgers when Pammer put us through the frog march. "Down on your haunches! Jump forward! Down on your haunches! Croak like frogs! Forward jump! Jump higher! Frogs are supposed to be good jumpers." He really enjoyed himself, throwing occasional glances over his shoulder to see if his audience, among whom were several teen-age girls, had enjoyed the degrading sight. Finally Pammer became bored, then doubled us back to our rooms, and for the first time there were no Kapos to beat us along the duckboards.

Back in our room, the Room Senior told us to grab our towels and take our weekly shower, which was no luxury, as the little Belgian shower Kapo again delighted in making the water ice cold or boiling hot, and occasionally, the little sadist, cut off the water when we were soaping ourselves, although that hardly mattered as the soap did not lather, but it did leave brown slime and grit over our bodies.

For the remainder of the day we sat in our hut, or visited friends in Room 1, where we learned about their towns and provinces, of which they were so proud. Sunday was a welcome break for Maurice, as he was able to visit his Netherland and Luxembourg English speaking friends. It was also a day of healing, when cuts and bruises had a few hours to heal.

Monday, 22 June, started in the usual manner: whistles, screams, barking dogs and screams of those being beaten. The noise intensified as the daily roll-call took place. (The Appell was the SS method of establishing the "Appellstärke" (Number on parade)), unfortunately during each roll call, the brutal Kapos waited along the duckboards. They were generally made up of German criminals and former Foreign Legionnaires, all of whom could earn their way into the Waffen SS or German work force with their brutality. Their conduct was graded by their masters, and if they assessed that the Kapos had carried out their tasks efficiently, the thugs stood a good chance of getting out of Hinzert, however, there was no set time limit on their stay in Hinzert.

Hinzert owned three heavy, wooden farm carts: one with pneumatic tires and the others on steel rims. The one used to collect coal from the Reinsfeld railway station had a long shaft up front, to which one would normally have attached two horses. It had a small, iron wheel on the driver's seat, which, when turned, applied brakes to the cart's front wheels. The French had already named it "la Charette" (the chariot), and that Monday, we were introduced to it, when Maurice, sixteen other youths and I were chosen for the infamous Kohlenkommando (Coal working party).

The coal in Reinsfeld was in fact "Briketten" (Briquets) - rectangular shaped pieces of compressed coal, each weighing over a pound, and made by the "Union Company," as the stamp on each one advertised. The station at Reinsfeld was two and one half miles from camp, and we were expected to make four trips daily; for a total of twenty miles, over which we had to run in our awkward clogs. We were also expected to fill and off-load the cart as well. We had heard, from earlier French arrivals, that the Charette was extremely tiring and demanding work, as there were several steep hills along the route, and having walked from Reinsfeld on our way into camp, we were aware of them.

As we were lined up near the cart, Maurice's old nemesis, André Callaux, was appointed Kapo of the kommando, however, a middle-age, wounded SS man, was in overall charge. Callaux glared at Maurice, shook his heavy club at him, shoved his face in Maurice's, then hissed, "I see you are here my friend Churchill. Welcome to my coal kommando!"

On the way out of camp, two prisoners were given control of the cart's long shaft. Two others pushed from the rear, and there was a prisoner on each wheel. The remaining prisoners were ordered into the cart, in which there were a number of large coal forks. The SS man sat on the front seat, from which he was supposed to control the brake, while Callaux walked behind to see that no one slacked. The French traitor kept screaming, "Les mains dessus! La main d'sus!" (Get your backs into it! Heave!) - this to impress his SS master.

Our route was a narrow, gravel country road, and from the start, our clogs began to fall off. Those who stopped to pick them up were beaten back to their positions by Callaux, who was in his element. When one of Maurice's clogs fell off, and he left the back of the cart to pick it up, Callaux saw his chance and leapt on him. He lashed Maurice over the head and shoulders with his wooden club, at the same time screamed, "I'm going to kill, you filthy English pig." Maurice did his best to protect his face and private parts, but Callaux quickly and methodically inflicted a great deal of damage on Maurice, who collapsed in a ball in the middle of the road. Fortunately, the SS man stopped the cart to see what had taken place. Maurice held up his clog, to show that it had fallen off, but Callaux, in fractured German, told the SS man, that Maurice had tried to escape. Half understanding what Callaux had said, the SS man put his hand on his pistol holster. I was unable to hold back any longer, and in German I asked the SS for permission to speak. When granted permission, I quietly told him that I had seen Maurice's clog come off, and that Maurice had run back to pick it up. I also asked the SS to question other prisoners, but he believed me, as he had, no doubt, seen many clogs fall off. He told Maurice to rejoin the Charette, then snarled at Callaux to do his job properly, or else he would replace him as Kapo. It had been just possible that the SS man might have shot Maurice on the spot, had he believed Callaux, whom I hoped would forget that I

had spoken German.

With Maurice back in his position, the Charette continued on its way to Reinsfeld. Along the way Callaux spat at me, "I'll get you too, Englishman!" I hissed back, "And I'll see that someone fixes you! Don't think that I haven't made arrangements already! Look over your shoulder when you go for a pee tonight!" This quietened the cowardly Callaux, who left to continue screaming, "Les mains dessus!" Which became his nickname.

I looked over at Maurice, and saw that his face was terribly bruised and his lower lip badly torn, and as he wiped the blood from his lip, Callaux sauntered over to him and said, "I'm going to make you wish you hadn't been born Churchill!" I spat back, "And I'm going to see that you are guillotined after the war. And if your countrymen don't get you, I promise that I will." My words seemed to get Callaux off Maurice's back for a while, although he continued to take his vile temper out on other prisoners.

When we reached the crest of the first down-hill section of the road, the SS man purposely failed to apply the brake, instead he let the cart free-wheel. It gathered momentum very quickly, which made it difficult for the two men on the shaft to control, however, with the help of other prisoners, who tugged at the wheels and the sides of the cart, we were able to slow it down. Not surprisingly, the SS man roared with laughter, while pretending that he had a horse whip, with which he lashed the lead horses. His German humour found the situation very amusing. On the downhill part of the next hill, several more prisoners lost their clogs, and Callaux was in his element again. The SS man knew what was going on, but chose to ignore it, as he could not be bothered stopping the cart when every clog fell off.

Finally, we arrived at Reinsfeld, where two full coal wagons, with French national markings, SNCF (French National Railway Company) stood at a platform. We were handed the long forks, then directed to fill the Charette. As we could not all work at loading the cart, some of us were detailed to pick up garbage on the station platform and between the tracks. When the cart was full, with about two tons of "Briketten," we started back for camp, knowing that we had three more trips to make. The work in the field had been demanding, but the Charette sapped our energies at twice the rate.

On the return trip Callaux designated Maurice and me to act as horses on the long shaft, while the remaining prisoners were ordered to push when we came to up-hill sections and hold back the Charette on the down-hill slopes. The SS man, who was supposed to help by applying the hand brake on the down-hill slopes, unfortunately played his games again. He barely applied the brake, which made it almost impossible for us to steer the cart. Maurice had taken off his clogs, and ran in bare feet, as he did not want another run-in with Callaux, By the time we reached camp, his feet were torn and bleeding, and the bruises on his face had blackened - Callaux, certainly, had a lot to

answer for!

When we arrived at the camp's coal-storage shed, our team of horses was helped by several other prisoners, who quickly discharged the Briketten, then neatly stacked them, one by one, in the coal shed. Before we left on the second trip, one of the French gave Maurice some rope, with which he was able to strap on his clogs. We made one more trip that morning, and after the Charette was off-loaded, we were sent to our hut, where we washed up in readiness for the noon hour swill. Nothing had changed: we were beaten into the mess hall, where we were served the same liquid swill under the same outrageous conditions, and on the way out the SS and Kapos took their toll again.

That afternoon we made two more trips to Reinsfeld, and on both trips, Callaux focussed his savage attention on Maurice, whom he kept at the rear of the cart. I was put on the shaft, going and coming, so that I was unable to see or help Maurice. On the final trip back, Maurice was so battered that he could no longer walk, but before we left Reinsfeld, I asked the SS man for permission to place him on top of the coal. The SS man shrugged, but agreed, and an semi-unconscious Maurice was lifted on top of the coal, while Callaux yelled, "You see Churchill! I always keep my promises!" I boiled with rage, but could do nothing about it, as I was too occupied keeping the cart on the road, but my looks must have told Callaux something.

When the Charette finally arrived at the coal shed, Maurice was gently lifted down and propped up against one of the cart wheels. As I was cleaning his face, I did not hear Wipf creep up behind me, but I certainly felt the savage blow on my neck, which caused me to see thousands of stars and flashing lights.

"What's going on here Englishman?" asked Wipf.

"Sir, I'm looking after my friend who has been terribly beaten by Callaux," I replied.

Wipf called Callaux over, and asked him what had taken place. The traitor told him that Maurice had tried to escape, but this was denied by the SS man, who told Wipf that Maurice had lost his clog, and had been set upon by Callaux. He also told Wipf that he personally had nothing to do with Maurice's beating, as he was up front controlling the cart, and had not witnessed anything. Wipf said nothing, but detailed two of us to take Maurice to the Medical Centre. When we arrived, an orderly told us to strip Maurice, as every prisoner attending the Medical Centre was seen naked, even if he had a simple toothache - such was the edict of Joseph Brendel, former plasterer and current chief medico at Hinzert.

Maurice, with his clothes off, was a terrible sight. His hands, face and neck were black with coal dust, and the rest of his body was black and blue from Callaux' beatings. A French doctor came to look at Maurice, but had to send him to the showers in order to examine the extent of his damage.

Hearing the commotion in the hall, Brendel shoved his head out of his office; looked over the

situation, then accused Maurice of being a "Malingerer, saboteur and a filthy English pig." Following the last words, Brendel punched Maurice's face, then ground his naked toes with his regulation jackboots. He then turned to the French doctor and said, "Clean the pig up, then get him out of here!" We were ordered back to our hut by Brendel, who literally kicked us out of his "clean hospital."

Back in the room, our Breton friends had collected, and jealously guarded, our bowls of soup. I took mine and drank it from the edge of the bowl - my SS manners momentarily forgotten. I then went to the wash-room, stripped down and got rid of the coal dust from my body.

Maurice limped back into the hut about an hour later, then sat down to eat his cold soup. He had been given a piece of paper excusing him from work for two days. The paper did not exempt him from roll calls, but allowed him to stay in the room and help clean it. We exchanged bunks at bed time, because Maurice could barely lift his legs high enough to reach the upper bunk. When he was undressed, he showed me his welts. There were dozens of them, most of which looked angry and red.

I was unable to sleep that night, as my mind was full of vengeance. I thought up all kinds of tortures to inflict on Callaux, and was still thinking about them when the whistles, screams, loud speaker and barking dogs told me that it was time to get up and face yet another day.

I was again detailed to the coal cart, and as I took up a position on one of the wheels, Callaux stormed over and screamed, "Where's that pig Churchill?"

"Excused duties, from the beating you gave him Callaux, but let me remind you that you're going to pay for it," I spat out.

" You shut your mouth! Just wait 'til he gets back. I'll make sure he'll never walk again," he snarled.

"Then you'd better kill us all now Callaux, as sometime we'll catch up to you," I hissed.

"Huh!" he grunted.

"Not Huh! It's true. You can't kill us all, and rest assured, when I get out of this, I'll look for you until the end of my days."

"Huh!" snorted the traitor again.

"And so will I and my friends," said Guy, my erstwhile Breton friend. "Peter's right. You can't kill us all. We'll remember you after the war Callaux. Your day will come! I promise you!"

"Fermes tes guelles! (Shut your traps) Les mains dessus! (Forward! Push you pigs!)" Then we were on our way to Reinsfeld for another load of coal.

That noon hour, after finishing my soup, I heard the loud speaker yell, "Number 4374 to the Büro!" I grabbed my hat and rushed off. I thought I was in for it, as Callaux might have reported me for threatening him. However, when I got there, Kapo Wipf was waiting for me. He crooked his

finger, indicating that I was to follow him to the clothing store, where he asked what size boots Maurice wore. I said size twelve, but had to work out the continental size for him. He then asked the store clerk to hand over a good pair of leather boots, and after looking them over, he gave the man a packet of German cigarettes.

Outside the store, Wipf gave me a whack across my back, and sent me on my way. He told me to take Maurice's old clogs back to the store, and that I was to say nothing about the boots to anyone. I ran off towards the hut, jerking my head left and right, as I saluted passing SS. I was so happy that I did not see Oberscharführer Georg Klein, who had stepped from behind a hut. He gave me a resounding blow on my head for not saluting promptly enough, but I was too elated to feel it. When I gave the boots to Maurice, he smiled, but grimaced in pain when he asked, "Where did you get them? Did you come by them honestly?"

"Sorry I can't tell you, but believe me, I came by them honestly." I was aware that Maurice would not have accepted them had they been stolen. Some of our friends came over and admired Maurice's boots. We were happy for him, as the boots meant that there would be less opportunity for Callaux to hit him when he worked on the Charette.

The following evening, after I had washed, eaten and attended the roll-call, Wipf sent for me again. In his office he gave me a chair and offered me a cigarette, which I declined. He began by saying, "I want you to know that I am not a bad person. I have to behave the way I do to earn my freedom. I was in the Foreign Legion when Rommel's troops invaded Africa, and was brought back here to be re-educated, like all other Legionnaires in the camp. I have to earn my way out of here. Do you understand what I am saying?"

"I understand, Kapo Wipf, and I know that many of us have to do things we don't like doing." I hated myself for saying it, and could have cut out my tongue, however, the humiliation was worth it, as Maurice had good boots. Besides which, I was not in a position to argue with Kapo Wipf, who appeared to run the camp single handed. He had given Maurice a pair of boots, and I suspected that he had purposely swung his club over our heads when we came out the cook-house and our huts. I had a sneaking suspicion that he had done this because of what he heard in Sporrenberg's office and because we were British.

My answer seemed to please Wipf, because he smiled and continued very quietly: "I hate Nazis! I am Swiss, not German, but I intend to get out of here, because I value my life. In the Legion, we learned not to value the lives of others, and here, I am looking after myself, because if I don't, it would be the French Kapo, or someone like him beating me. Now go back to your hut, and keep your mouth shut! I'll keep an eye on your friend when I can. Now remember, not one word of this, or else it will be too bad for you and your friend!"

I went back to my hut, where, in very quiet tones, I told Maurice what had transpired.

Unfortunately, Callaux' brutality was the beginning of the end for Maurice, as the next day he could not get out of bed. I sent word to the French doctor, who came to the room, looked Maurice over, then had him carried to the Medical Centre, where he was given a soothing bath and gently massaged with salve for his bruises and cuts. By the second day, fortified by the rest and his new boots, Maurice was up and about. He had lost more weight; his shoulders were stooped, his face black and blue and his eyes were set deeper in their sockets. In one day, Callaux had precipitated my companion towards his death. I could have understood had Callaux been German, but it was hard to accept that a Frenchman was responsible.

On 13 June, when we first sighted the camp from the top of the hill, it was suggested that it would be healthier than the French prisons, as we might work in forests. It had been a fleeting, delightful thought. I was to learn that there was, indeed, forestry work in Hinzert, and my introduction to the "forest kommando" occurred on 4 July.

We were aware of the road being built above the SS camp, as we had seen the activity taking place. The road was being carved into the hillside, and was to run between Trier and Hermeskeil, a village, several miles from the camp. It was also said that the road was being built so that the civilians, who used the narrow road on the outside of the camp, would be spared the sights of the camp; but that did not seem credible, as there were always Germans outside of the wire; all staring and seemingly pleased with the "show" going on inside.

Maurice had been sent to the wood yard, when I was detailed for the road kommando, to which Callaux and four German criminal Kapos were nominated as our supervisors. They were accompanied by three SS, including Pammer. About eighty of us were assembled for the kommando, which the French had named the "Kommando des souches" (the stump kommando). The work of digging up roots was familiar to us, as some of us had served our apprenticeship in the farmer's field to the south of the camp. When we reached the site, to our delight, we found that the pine tree roots were neither as large nor as deep as those in the farmer's field. Most of the trees had already been felled by German civilians, who were municipal government workers. They were carting off the long tree trunks when we arrived.

As the SS wanted to preserve as much of the remaining wood as possible, the roots, stumps and branches were carted back to camp, where they were sawn and used for heating and cooking in both camps - in Hinzert, except for lives, nothing was wasted.

Because of our rapidly weakening conditions, we found the work very difficult. Again, the work was accentuated by Kapos' blows, particularly from Callaux, who used any pretext to lash us. He never struck me again, although he often shook his club at me, while ranting at my nationality - probably hoping to attract a guard's attention. The entire day resounded with the noise of axes,



hammers, supplemented by the screams of pain from those who angered the SS and Kapos. The civilian contractors witnessed the violence, but did nothing. The head contractor, wearing a Nazi party badge, was the loudest of the civilians, and he, too, enjoyed kicking us.

The saving grace of the forest kommando, was that when the SS and Kapos disappeared into the tree-line to smoke or eat, it was quiet. The SS rarely bothered. They were content to stand near the access road, where they chatted, smoked, relaxed and enjoyed the sun's rays, leaving all the dirty work to the brutal Kapos.

At times we received news of the war from Luxembourgers, but what they told us was not too hopeful. Some news came from newly arrived French prisoners, who continued to arrive each weekend, in groups of forty or fifty, and when they joined us in the huts, or on outside kommandos, they passed on whatever news they had. Most of them said that French Resistance was very active and the Allies were growing stronger each day. It was not much to go on, but it helped a little.

During the first week of July, the weather was glorious, and we were allowed to strip off our upper clothing as we worked among the stumps. Again, one could not avoid the effects of malnutrition and overwork on our bodies, and we continued to lose weight and weaken as each day went by. We found it increasingly more difficult to keep up with the Kapos' savage demands, and prayed for 10:00 pm. to arrive, so that we could collapse on our bunks.

Every noon-hour we were doubled back to the camp, where we quickly washed; picked up our bowls; lined up; were beaten into the mess-hall; ate the swill and were beaten back to our huts. Ten minutes later we were re-formed into our kommando, lashed by waiting Kapos, then doubled back to the forest, where the civilian contractors still sat eating their tasty, mouth-watering, sandwiches and sausages.

By that time, we felt as if we had been living in the Hell of Hinzert for ever. There seemed to have been no beginning nor was there an end in sight. It was not possible to think of freedom any more, as we were totally focussed on work, beatings and the little food we received, furthermore, we had no idea what was going to happen to us, which was very traumatizing. Of an evening, as we sat and talked in our room, sanity momentarily returned, and we were able to shut out the SS and Kapos - if only for a little while, however, it was not possible to think of life after Hinzert. The problem seemed to stem from the fact that the camp was very small, holding about five hundred prisoners. There were no places to hide and loaf, and the numerous camp staff had us in sight every second of the day, or at least until we were locked in at night. Our Hell was total except for sleep, which was not really sleep, but a state of semi-consciousness brought about by savagery, overwork and malnutrition - we were in an SS gold-fish bowl.

The pine roots were collected by another Charette kommando made up of eighteen prisoners. Their Charette was the largest in the camp, and designed for a four-horse team. Their job was to lift the stumps on the cart, then take them to the camp's wood yard. They were expected to make two trips in the morning and three in the afternoon, if there were enough stumps pulled from the ground by the forest kommando. Their work was difficult and dangerous, as it took, at least, four men to lift the stumps on the cart, where they had to be manhandled into position so that more stumps could be piled on top - their uneven and slippery surfaces made working conditions quite dangerous.

When the cart was loaded, it was dragged over the uneven ground to the road leading down to the camp. The SS man, in charge of the brake, also played little games by not locking the brakes, and letting the prisoners control the down-hill progress of the cart. The lives of the four men up front were always in jeopardy, because had they lost control, they could have been crushed by the heavy wheels. When the cart arrived in the camp, their Calvary was not over, as they had to off-load the cart, then carry the roots and stumps to the wood yard.

Apart from the tiring work, the stump kommando was made to do the usual gymnastics during the roll calls. Those exercises never varied: running around the square, press-ups, the frog march and running on the spot. It was sometimes impossible to keep up, but fear put wings on our feet, and we learned to show lots of movement and use as little strength as possible. When the gymnastics were over, there was no sleep until the roll-calls were over, but we had also learned to sleep at tables, leaving one man on guard to warn us of danger.

I spent several relatively peaceful days in the wood yard, behind Rooms 10 and 11, where there were no SS on guard, as it was overlooked by a watch tower, in which a machine-gun toting SS was on duty twenty-four hours a day. There were two Kapos in the wood yard, both ex-Foreign Legionnaires.

On my second day in the wood yard, several newly arrived prisoners were sent to work there, and as there were too many men for the number of saws and tools, the Kapos made us move one of the wood piles about three feet to the left - Each wood pile being about fifteen feet high and twelve feet in diameter at the base. Maurice had worked in the wood yard, and had warned me to keep moving, even I had nothing to do. I remembered his advice and escaped with a minimum number of blows. On my third day in the wood yard, the middle finger on my left hand was ripped open by a piece of wood, which split off a root. The gash was about two inches long, and the bone protruded through the flesh, which had peeled back like a banana skin. One of the Kapos screamed at me for being clumsy, but took me to the Medical Centre, where I was made to strip in the hallway, then stand at attention, while attempting to apply pressure to my finger to halt the flow of blood.

Several SS were being treated for boils in the Medical Centre, but as political prisoners, we had to wait until they were treated. I was eventually taken into a small room, where a French doctor asked

how the injury happened. He apologized for the lack of anesthetics, and told me that he had to stitch my finger without any. I did not mind, as long as the blood stopped flowing. While the doctor was preparing the needle and thread, Brendel came in and made me show him my finger. He grunted, "That will teach you to keep your fingers out of trouble Engländer!" He roared with laughter, as if he had cracked a joke, and for a moment, I thought he was going to stitch my finger himself, because he asked to see the needle and thread. Fortunately it was the French doctor who put eight stitches in it. The procedure was painful, but not as painful as some of the blows I had taken.

The French doctor suggested to Brendel that I be given two days light duties, but Brendel told him that it would not hurt me to go back to the wood yard and use a saw, as I still had one uninjured hand. The doctor shrugged his shoulders, then showed me out of the office to where my clothes were folded. By way of an apology, he whispered that the Brendel rarely excused any one from working.

When I returned to the wood yard, I was made to carry chunks of wood to the log piles, and by the end of the day my finger throbbed so much that I thought it was infected, however, when I took off the paper bandage that evening, the wound looked quite clean. One of my friends suggested that I urinate on it. I took his advice, and did so as often as I could, and two weeks later, I personally removed the stitches from the wound, which was perfectly healed. I was not about to return to the Brendel's Medical Centre.

Sometimes I was fortunate to work on kommandos with Maurice, and whenever Callaux was there, Maurice always came back to the hut with more bruises. Callaux' beatings were certainly responsible for his quickly deteriorating health. He could hardly stand upright any more and looked like a hunchback. Most of his flesh was gone from his once large frame, but fortunately, his morale was still relatively high; which was a premier requirement. We had grown very close, and I became lonely when Maurice worked elsewhere. He had become my loving, big brother, and I hated not to be with him. Each evening, I looked for him as he returned from work, and as soon as I saw him, I questioned him about Callaux. Luckily, there were days that he did not have Callaux as a supervisor, and those were happy days for us both.

We became close friends with many of the younger Frenchmen, among whom was Lucien Vautrot, a young Resistant from Chalons-sur-Saône. Lucien was born on 10 April, 1926. At the time of his arrest, he was an apprentice plasterer. When he was fourteen, he had joined a Communist Resistance group; although he may not have been a Communist at the time. In 1940 and 1941, Lucien and several other young men from Chalon, often crossed into Vichy France to pick up arms and ammunition for their Resistance group. They did not need special passes to enter Vichy

France, as they were under sixteen, and were able to cross freely into Vichy.

They occasionally slipped through the back door of a chateau, which was directly on the demarcation line. Somehow they had obtained a duplicate key for the back door, which they used to get into Vichy France. They usually returned with arms and ammunition; either through the back door or the regular control post. Lucien and his friends were never bothered by the frontier guards, who thought that they were just schoolboys looking for extra food in Vichy France, but had they looked a little closer, they would have found the arms and ammunition hidden in Lucien's bicycle trailer, in which a false bottom had been cunningly built.

On one occasion Lucien came back with four hand grenades in the false bottom of his trailer. The grenades were used by Lucien, two men and another youth, to carry out an attack on a French school, being used as a German supply depot. Lucien threw two of the grenades, which caused several casualties, but during the retreat he was wounded, and forced to hide in a garden shed, not six hundred yards from his widowed mother's home.

He remained hidden for several days, but in the meantime, the Gestapo took dozens of hostages in reprisal for the attack. Lucien, through his friends, was finally able to contact a friendly doctor who removed the bullet from his arm. He also had a 7.62 mm bullet in his ankle, which made it impossible for him to escape to Vichy France, as he could barely walk. The bullet needed surgically removing in a proper operating room, but all of them were under German scrutiny, as the Gestapo had been informed that Lucien was wounded.

In the meantime, the Chalon Gestapo were very active. They arrested thirty-two people, among whom were two of Lucien's resistance chiefs, who were both shot within a short time of being arrested. Among the thirty-two people arrested were Lucien's friends who had carried out the raid with him - It was obvious that someone had denounced them.

Lucien remained in hiding in the garden shed, being supplied with food by close friends, and during this time his entire resistance cell was rounded up and interrogated. Their round-up was facilitated because the Mayor of Chalon-sur-Saône, had placed posters all over the City, calling on the population to denounce those responsible for the "cowardly" attack on the German depot. The announcement was addressed to all "Challonnaise" and it deplored the "violent crime" against the Germans, and called for the population to denounce those responsible, as "his dear City of Chalons-sur-Saône was not going to tolerate such actions against the occupying troops."

Lucien had been seen by nearby residents, while he sheltered in the garden shed, and he felt that the time was ripe to give himself up, rather than cause his family any more grief. He had also been apprised that if he did not give himself up, fifty, already detained, hostages would be shot. Consequently, he turned himself into the French police, who, within minutes, handed him over to the Gestapo. During his brutal interrogations, Lucien told the Gestapo nothing, and when asked

about his wounds, he said that he had happened to be passing the scene of the attack on the German depot, and as an innocent bystander, he had been wounded. He also told his brutal interrogators that he had hidden, only because he believed that his wounds would be taken as proof of guilt - the Gestapo did not buy it! Lucien was subsequently jailed in Chalon-sur-Saône, Dijon, Fresnes, Trier and finally arrived at Hinzert in July, 1942, where he was designated as number 4736.

Lucien hated all Germans with a passion, and one day, while performing the horse-like duties, between the shafts of one of the charettes, he purposely steered the cart towards the ditch, and just before it crashed into the ditch, he threw himself to one side. The coal crew, seated on the wagon, all landed in the ditch. Fortunately, no one was seriously hurt, but Lucien was made to pay heavily for his action, and as he was recovering from his beating; from between his cracked lips came a chuckle and, "Mon vieux, it was worth it!" He was quite a formidable man that tough, young sixteen year old.

Having all experienced beatings from the Kapos and SS, we concluded that none was crueller than Georg Schaaf, who also delighted in holding prisoners' heads under water until they almost drowned. We heard that Schaaf had inserted a hose down a prisoners' throat, then stood on him, not releasing him until the man nearly drowned, however, Ivan thought it was fun, as did the SS and the Kapos who stood around watching the barbarous spectacle. It took very little to make SS or Kapos postulate, particularly in front of an appreciative audience of their peers.

One had always to be careful, as the SS and Kapos had snitches everywhere. One of the worst snitches was a young Belgian named Leon. He had been in Hinzert for six months, and was only fifteen years of age. His favourite trick was to hide in the toilet stalls, where he listened to conversations, then reported them to the SS.

Every week, as more French prisoners arrived, those from the Quarantine were billeted throughout the huts. From the Luxemburgers we learned that Hinzert had been constructed to hold six hundred prisoners, and that it was a satellite of a nearby, notorious concentration camp, Natzweiler, which was the only concentration camp on French soil, although the Germans did not consider it to be French soil, as they had annexed Alsace-Lorraine in 1940, then displaced its citizens. We speculated that if the flow of French prisoners continued, new huts would have to be built, or we would be sent elsewhere.

Meanwhile, savagery continued to be our way of life. No matter where we went or how we went, there was always an SS or Kapo, club in hand, to beat us for no apparent reason, or as part of the "disciplining process." If and when a Kapo scored, and was able to tell his masters that someone had committed a misdemeanour, the unfortunate prisoner was taken to the parade ground, where he was lashed to some object, where he received up to twenty five lashes on his back and buttocks. The SS constantly reminded us that we were in the camp to be educated and that our education was

to be completed before we could leave.

The French doctors were very concerned about the health of the younger prisoners, but could do little to help. They told us the types of edible weeds available in the forest, but they suggested that we stay away from all forms of mushrooms, as most were poisonous. They could do little to help, and it must have been very frustrating for such dedicated patriots to see us fade away.

There were several French priests among us who comforted and heard confessions in secret. Initially they had been permitted to keep their robes and hair, but that changed, and they were issued with the same clothing as the rest of us, but it did not diminish their care nor concern for us. Our only peaceful time was bed time, when we spoke in hushed tones, generally about food. Maurice and I seldom talked, as he was so weak that he fell asleep as soon as he stretched out. Of all the young prisoners in Hinzert, Maurice had been the most brutally abused, mainly by the French traitor, Callaux. I feared for his life, as it was obvious that he was growing weaker each day. I often called on him to "hang in there" and lied to him that I had heard rumours of us leaving Hinzert, as the little white lies seemed to give him hope.

My white lies became a reality, when on Thursday, 23 July, some sixty of us, mostly youths, were told that we were leaving Hinzert the next day. Nothing more was said, other than we were to be "transported elsewhere." We wondered where we were going, and would we be leaping from the frying pan into the fire? If that was possible!

On Friday, 24 July, we were paraded in front of the clothing store, where we handed in our camp clothes. We then ran naked to the showers, where a different bath Kapo allowed us to luxuriate in warm water for a minute or two beyond the prescribed time. As the young Kapo was not there, we took advantage to wash Hinzert's grime from our emaciated bodies.

After the showers, we went back to the clothing store, where the Kapos asked for our numbers, then went to a back room, from which they returned with our packages of civilian clothes, and although the clothes were badly creased, it was comforting to wear them again. When dressed, we looked at each other and smiled, not at our clothes, but at the hair cuts, as the SS had seen to it that we left Hinzert hairless. It did not matter, as we were leaving, happy in the belief that there was no worse place than SS Sonderlager Hinzert.

At about 10.00 am., two green, police trucks drove up to the large wooden gate. We were thrilled to see that our escorts were Schupos, and not SS. Before we left the camp, Kommandant Sporrenberg arrived to supervise our departure. He made a short speech, during which he said that he hoped that we would be, "less unfriendly to the Germans." He also said, "I hope that you have been re-educated here, as it will serve you well elsewhere." Sporrenberg went on to say that our new attitudes would help us when it came time to go to trial, and on that note he left, followed by

his big dog and his shadow, Napoleon.

That was not the first time we had heard the word "trial" used, but nobody knew what the Germans really intended to do with us. We were apprehensive and hoped that the return of our clothes was not another cruel German trick to deceive us. Fortunately, this time it was not, and there was a big sigh of relief after we were in the trucks and saw the sign, "SS Sonderlager Hinzert" getting smaller as we drove up the hill.

The Schupos stared at the emaciated young men who had been handed over to them by the SS. One of the two Schupos, seated by the tailgate, asked when we had arrived at Hinzert. We told him that we had arrived on 13 June. He then said that he had been with those Shupos who had escorted us to Hinzert from the prison of Trier. I listened as the Schupo commented on our emaciated condition. They were shocked, but made no move to hand us their box lunches.

We looked back when we reached the top of the first hill leading from the camp. SS Sonderlager Hinzert still looked clean and tranquil, just as it had when we crested the same hill on Saturday, 13 June. But this time we heard screams above the trucks' engines - there would be no shutting them out of our lives. We thought about our first view of Hinzert, when the Schupo suggested that we might work in the forests, but we were reminded of the realities of the camp, when our truck had to pull over to the right of the narrow road in order to let the Charette, filled with Union Briketten, pass on its way to camp.

I sat next to an exhausted Maurice whose smile was still as infectious as ever. He grinned at me and asked, "What next?" What was there to say? We had sustained each other in Hinzert from 13 June, until 24 July. Six short weeks, less a day. Six weeks which had been forever, and during which we had been beaten and worked to a stand still every day, as well as being systematically starved to death.

If we were supposed to have become Germanized through such actions at Hinzert, the plan had failed, because I saw nothing but grinning French faces around me. There was nothing German about them. The SS and Kapos had broken bodies and bones, but not spirits, and as long as our spirits prevailed, I knew that we would survive.

We had all matured in a hurry over the past six weeks, and there was a new hardness in my friends' eyes, which were no longer the eyes of schoolboys, but rather the eyes of preying eagles, looking for food, danger or even a chance of flight. I also knew that it would take more than the Sporrenbergs, the Wipfs, the Schafs, the Pammers and the Callaux' to break their Gallic spirits. But I also knew that good spirits could not compensate for the lack of food, which had ravaged our bodies and broken down our immune systems. As I looked around the truck, I knew that we would all be dead by Christmas, if taken to another concentration camp similar to Hinzert.





### **The Prison of Wittlich**

As the police trucks drove along the German country roads, I grieved for those we had left behind in that brutal little camp. Many would not be following - they had succumbed along the way; either through starvation, illness or being beaten to death during seven long weeks.

As we drove along the seemingly peaceful roads I wondered why we had been held incognito - no letters, no Red Cross parcels, nothing! What had it meant? Why all the secrecy, and what had Sporrenberg meant by "trials?" He had referred to us as "Schutzhaftlingen" (prisoners in protective custody); then, there was the sign on my door at Fresnes, which had read "Untersuchen" (being investigated). We had assumed that after the interrogations in Paris, we were no longer being investigated, and as prisoners in protective custody, we were being held for another reason; probably for trial, as mentioned by Sporrenberg. It was impossible to account for our harsh treatment at Hinzert, but it must have had something to do with the SS being a law to themselves. None of us had been prepared for the continuous brutality, but it had been a small camp, and like fish in a small glass bowl, we had never been out of the sadists' sight.

Maurice and I could still not bring ourselves to believe that Frenchmen, like Callaux, had volunteered and brutalized their fellow countrymen. I was very concerned for Maurice, because one needed a cast iron will to live, and it seemed that Calloux had beaten him to the point of giving up. I was aware, and I am sure Maurice was, that he would not live unless his will to fight back was restored. I prayed that the next place of imprisonment would be better for Maurice.

I wondered if we had been guinea pigs for a Nazi "time and motion study," which sought to establish how long human beings could survive under incessant beatings, over-work and starvation? Was Hinzert such a medical research centre? How could the citizens, living just outside the camp, come and gloat, instead of complaining to the authorities? I had heard my father and his friends talk, but they had never spoken of such inhumane conditions. What a sheltered life we had led on the Island, and what excellent German censorship. Surely someone in the States of Jersey, close to the Germans, might have warned us what to expect for rocking their boat, but, as I sat in the truck, I wondered how many States' official knew or even cared about us - after all, we had rocked their boat.

I was aware that if our new place of incarceration was worse than Hinzert, then Maurice would last, at best, only a few months, particularly if there was another Anglophobe among the guards and Kapos. I again wondered what kind of character it took to be a Kapo? Was the extra piece of bread worth it? I spoke German, perhaps I should become a Kapo and protect Maurice; after all, they were all well-dressed and well-fed. I had compelling thoughts that God had abandoned us, and I wondered if it was worth praying any more? And what about my fallen hero?

Was he doing something to get his younger son back? And, surely the States of Jersey were moving heaven and earth to get us back. So many thoughts and questions, but no answers, but at least, I was able to think again, which meant that I had survived Hinzert.

How could perfectly healthy young men come out of Hinzert, in such terrible physical condition? I had no medical knowledge, but the French doctors had explained how starvation worked on organs. I also remembered reading in *The Evening Post*, that millions of Soviet prisoners had been captured, and were not protected by the Geneva Convention, which the Soviet Union had not signed. God help them I thought, because if the French were right, and we were protected by the Geneva Convention, what was the fate of the Soviet prisoners of war, and where was the Red Cross which was supposed to care for us?

Even the magnificent scenery of vineyards, golden fields and small hamlets failed to bring me out of my mood. I was afraid for Maurice, and prayed that Hinzert had been one of a kind. Maurice, before his arrest, had been very strong physically. He had lived an active life on Jersey, but knowing his family, I assumed that he had lived a gentle life with his grandfather. I do not think that a cross word had ever been spoken in his home and neither had he witnessed any violence, and from such a warm and loving home he had been thrown in the Nazi arena to be re-educated by Hitler's sadists. It must have been traumatic for him. He had not learned to hate as I had.

I looked at the civilians walking along the road and working in the fields. Some waved at the trucks, and we waved back. My black mood eased a little when the truck stopped to let a herd of sheep cross the road. They did not cross in an orderly fashion, instead, the curious, woolly, creatures milled around the truck, bleating, and for a minute, my world changed as the gentle creatures surrounded us. It was quite a contrast to the last six weeks in Hell. My mind went back to my scriptures, when Jesus had rescued the lamb which had fallen over the cliff, even though it had strayed, he carried it back to his flock. But what did The Lord intend to do with His flock of sheep in the two trucks? Take them back to His flock, or lead them to slaughter?

From afar, I heard Maurice's voice ask me, "Where have you been Peter? You haven't said a word. That's not like you."

"I was just thinking about Hinzert and our future Maurice. It seems to me that our lives are very much at stake, and we will live only as long as we have enough guts to survive. I don't think we'll survive unless we are strong of mind. Just don't give in Maurice! "

"Let's look on the bright side Peter. Callaux is not here, and neither are the SS. So let's enjoy these few moments of quietness." He grinned, and seemed to be his old self again. When I saw his wonderful smile, it brought me out of my depression, and I kindled new hopes that he would pull through.

We had been on the road for about an hour, when the Schupos pulled down the truck's back-flaps. We were in darkness again. However, we had seen that we were on the outskirts of a town. Minutes later the truck stopped, then its door was heard to open. This was followed by an exchange of words between two men, after which we heard a squeaky gate being opened. The truck then drove forward a few yards, then switched off its engine. Had we arrived?

Indeed we had! We had arrived in the Strafgefängnis Wittlich (a maximum security prison located in the Town of Wittlich, between Trier and Koblenz in the Mosel Valley). After jumping down from the truck, we were assembled in the usual files of five, by what appeared to be unarmed, prison warders, wearing green coats with gold rank-insignia and grey pants. It was comforting to notice the absence of clubs, pick-axe shafts and jackboots, and better still, there was no screaming. Everything was conducted in an orderly manner.

When the "Wachtmeistern" (wardens) were satisfied that we were accounted for, the Senior Warder, "Hausvater" (Chief Administrator - Uniformed Deputy Warder) Weber, who looked every bit the Prussian, signed for us. Weber was about forty-five years of age, five feet eight inches tall, his face was bronzed, and he sported a little Hitler-type moustache. He must have been in the army at one time, as his deportment was very military, and went along with his long dress-sword - the symbol of his authority. His epaulettes were gold with silver stars, and he wore several campaign medals, including a silver wound-badge. He looked solid, impressive, efficient, but still every bit the disciplinarian.

Another warder entered the courtyard. He was the prisons's "Hauptwachtmeister" (Head Warder), Herr Schneider, but he was a total contrast from Herr Weber. Schneider was dressed similarly to Weber, sword included, but he remained distant, and looked at us as if we were the dregs of Europe. His looks reminded me of the SS faces in Hinzert. He, too, had seen combat, and wore several medals and a ribbon on his tunic.

I saw that we had been driven through a short archway and were assembled in a cobble-stone courtyard, behind a high wall. There was a church to our left, which I took to be Catholic, as its cross was visible on the roof. The church also had several circular, stained-glass windows with religious themes. The exterior colour of all the buildings was off-white, accentuated by corner-stones, which seemed to be made of a reddish-brown granite, or limestone.

An Oberwachtmeister (Senior warder) called the names of all the minors (those not having passed their twentieth birthday), and from the warders' conversation, I learned that the French adults were to be segregated from the minors. When everyone's name was called, we were marched into the prison and taken to the "Bekleidungskammer" (clothing store) on the main floor. As we went in, I was surprised at the cleanliness of the prison, which was "T" shaped, with three wings leading out

from a central rotunda. Each wing had four floors, with cells on either side of steep, iron staircases. I saw no signs of other prisoners, as they had probably been locked in their cells due to our arrival. We were ordered to strip off our civilian clothes, and were given large sheets of brown paper and string with which to pack them. We had been in civilian clothes for less than three hours - it was time to give up the precious, comforting items again. Naked and divested of our rumpled civilian clothes, we must have looked like a savage group of criminals. Our heads were shaved and many of the older men had several days growth of beard. What was worse, we looked like a bunch of skeletons. The warders were aghast when they looked us over, however, however, they said nothing and asked no questions. Many of us, like Maurice, still bore bruises from recent beatings, some of which had been administered just a few short hours ago, as we were dragged from our beds by Pammer, who made sure that he gave us a memorable send off. The sight of our bruised and skeletal bodies must have been too much for the warders, and one of them finally blurted out, "How have you come by all these injuries?" He was quickly restrained by a senior warder, who cautioned him that we were "under remand and in total reclusion" - those puzzling words again! We saw a man in priest's vestments come down the stairs to our left. When he stopped, in spoke in a loud voice and said, "My God! What have they sent us? A bunch of skeletons (Skeletten). This is dreadful!" The cherubic priest then disappeared through a small side door, shaking his head in disbelief at what he had seen.

We were issued blue prison uniforms, somewhat like dungarees and were handed: a jacket, shirt, underpants, socks, a small blue and white scarf, bread bag, cap, towel, metal hand mirror and wooden clogs, similar to those of Hinzert. This time, the clothing store trustees (criminal prisoners with red chevrons on their sleeves) judged our sizes, and did their best to match the prison uniforms to our bodies. We were also given a bar of soap, but before we were allowed to don our new vestments, we were taken to a spacious shower room, and there allowed to luxuriate in warm water. The shower room trustee, quite unlike the shower Kapo at Hinzert, asked if we had time enough to clean ourselves properly, and on hearing this, some stepped back under the warm water for a few more minutes, however, we were still apprehensive and waiting for the bubble to burst.

When we were dressed, we were taken back to the clothing store and each given: three army blankets, a sheet, pillow slip, a terracotta food bowl and a "besteck" (knife, fork and spoon): which was a tombstone shaped piece of wood, into which the three utensils were inserted.

We were surprised not to be allotted prison numbers, and amazed that all the instructions were given by a French speaking Luxembourger, Emile Gerin, who had been press-ganged into the German penitentiary services, which, as he later told us, was better than going into the German Army or prison. After we were issued our kits, we were again separated from the adults, then marched out of the rotunda area. We finally arrived at a small door, on which a sign read:

"Jugendanstalt" (Youth Institution). Inside we were put in cells on the third and fourth floors, some in solitary, while others were placed three to a cell.

The cells were very clean and spacious, measuring about twelve feet by seven feet, with ceilings at least nine feet high. In my cell I found a metal prison bed, a two piece mattress and a very hard pillow, probably stuffed with fibre. The bed was on the left hand side, and on the right was a small table with a light and nearby was a heavy, wooden stool. In the left hand corner was a small cupboard, on top of which was a wash basin, and on the side, nearest to the door, was a box like contraption, in which there was a portable "Kübel" (a large, earthenware chamber pot with a steel lid). The floor was tiled and spotless, and as I looked around for a source of water I saw a two-litre, terracotta jug.

The Luxembourg warder, Emile Gerin, had instructed us to put out our pots and water jugs every morning before breakfast, at which time a "Kübler" (pot carrier) would empty the thing and a water carrier would fill the jugs. The water was intended for washing and drinking, but if it ran out, more was provided. The warder also said that we were to place our knives, forks and spoons outside the cells during the final bed check. He also said that it was forbidden to use the beds during working hours, but after 6:00 pm., we could sleep. We were also told to hang our clothes on the three pegs under the small cupboard, in clear sight of the duty warder, who checked through a little spy-hole in the cell door.

Maurice's cell was on the third floor and mine on the fourth, but we remained in solitary confinement. The cells occupied by three prisoners, were not really overcrowded, given their sizes.

I thought that they were better off than in solitary, as they had companions, but other than being British, I had no idea why we were put in solitary.

I made for the window as soon as my door was bolted. I had to stand on the stool to see outside, but as I looked through the clear panes of glass, I saw a wonderful panorama of golden fields and off-white coloured houses; which must have been the homes of the wardens, given the colour scheme, which was similar to that of the institution. It was a magnificent view, and I was able to control my air flow through the fanlight.

Inside the cell, to the right hand side of the door, was a six inch metal arm, which had to be pushed if one wanted to attract the warder's attention. The arm tripped a metal signal plate, or "klapper," which then protruded, at right angles, outside the cell, and when the warder saw that it was down, he came to the cell to see what was wanted. The light switches were on the outside, but the peep-hole had small hole in the centre, which allowed me to look across the range at the opposite cells. The cell was a veritable treasure chest.

Our cell doors had not been locked, and a little while later the bolts were drawn back, and

ten of us were taken to one of our comrade's cells, where a juvenile, criminal trustee, Tomascik, wearing two red chevrons, showed us how to make up the beds. The hefty trustee had brush cut hair, and it was clear that he disliked us, as he used the second person singular, "Du" (you) when talking to and about us. He, of course was on a higher social plain, having two red stripes and being a criminal prisoner. I took an instant dislike to Tomascik, as he used several derogatory remarks about us when talking to a guard, whom he addressed as, "Herr Wachtmeister Skillett." Unfortunately, Skillett agreed with Tomascik's remarks. - we had quickly found our Francophobes.

When the trustee finished his bed making demonstration, we were returned to our cells, where we made up our beds in the prescribed manner. We were used to bed-making, SS style, it having been part of our Germanization in Hinzert. In fact we were better at it than the young criminal.

A little while later there were sounds of door-bolts being pulled back again, and when my door opened, a guard told me to fetch my "Schüssel" (eating bowl). Moments later, a German criminal trustee, carrying a large serving board, attached around his neck by a leather strap, gave me a piece of black bread and a square of white margarine. He was followed by two more trustees carrying a fifty-litre cauldron, from which they tipped about a litre of very thick soup in my blue terracotta bowl.

When the door closed, I sat down, then slowly savoured the best tasting soup I had eaten in the past two months. There were even pieces of smoked pork floating on top of the tasty, thick, dry-pea soup, which also contained onions and large pieces of potatoes. The bread was as bad as any other German bread, but it was not mouldy and there was a little more margarine to spread on it. I had no need to rush my food, after all, I was in solitary, my door was locked, and I did not have to run to the mess hall and get beaten all the way there and back to the hut.

When I was through eating, I washed my bowl and utensils then put them in the cupboard. I then went back to the window, through which I could still see the fields of golden oats and wheat, farm houses, guards' houses, washing on clothes lines and women walking small children. Even cooking smells came from the houses; not quite bacon and eggs, but actual cooking smells.

From time to time I heard a cell door open, then quiet voices were heard. A little while later my door was opened, and a middle-age, German trustee, carrying a handful of index cards, came in with the Luxembourg warder, Emile Gerin. I stood at attention near the rear of my cell, but Emile, in French, told me to stand at ease, as the "Schreiber" (clerk) only wanted to get some personal data for the prison records. The clerk then asked for my full name, date and place of birth, and when asked for my nationality, I said that I was British. The clerk stopped writing, pencil poised an inch or so above the card, and looked questioningly at Emile Gerin, who in fluent English asked if I had spoken the truth. I assured him that I had. The clerk then wrote on the card that I was an "Engländer." When asked for my religion and profession, I replied that I was Catholic, and an

apprentice cook by trade - hoping that I might be chosen for cook-house duties.

When they left, I used the Kübel, which the French had already christened, "Tinette." I could hear them already on the go, yelling across the ranges, as they sought their special comrades. My cell also contained a liberal supply of 4 x 6 inch toilet paper, cut from local newspapers. They made great reading, as they were filled with military obituaries; each headed by a black Iron Cross and reading: "Fallen for the Fatherland and Führer: Captain, Private or Corporal Fritz so and so." It was not possible to match all the pieces, but after sorting them out on the table, like a jig-saw puzzle, I managed to get three matching pieces, on which there was an article concerning accelerated aircraft production and German victories in North Africa, but for the most part the little pieces of newsprint contained obituaries.

We were fed again at 5:30 p.m. This time we were given a thick slice of bread, a piece of liver sausage, weighing perhaps an ounce, and a ladle of sweet, pleasant tasting peppermint tea, which was a departure from the sour ersatz coffee of Hinzert. After eating, I felt almost full and reasonably content, given the Hell we had been through, but I missed my tall friend and wondered where he was. I was reluctant to call him, as I would be immediately targeted through using English.

My French friends, particularly the Breton group of Guy, Gilbert, Michael, Pascal, Jacques and Yves, were on the go again, much to the distraction of trustee Tomascik, who hammered on their doors, and told them to keep quiet, but as long as there was no warder, they kept talking and drove Tomascik mad - the criminal trustee had a lot to learn. My companions said that we all had white cards on our doors with our names and the word, "Untersuchung" (being investigated) printed on them. I asked them if Maurice was nearby, and this set up the bush telegraph, which pinpointed Maurice in the end cell on the third floor. I did not like the thought of Maurice being in solitary, however, he could make use of the time to heal from the poundings he had taken.

As I stood at my window looking at the sun going down, I listened to the prison clock, which clanged, not rang, every fifteen minutes: one metallic ding for quarter past, two at half past, three at quarter to and four dings on each hour followed by the time. I chuckled when I thought of midnight and noon, when the thing would clang sixteen times. Not a pleasant thought, as I had become a very light sleeper. At 10:00 pm. the lights were switched off and the prison sounds, except for the clock, were stilled. I stayed at the window, as there were still things to see, and during this vigil, I sensed, rather than heard someone at the peep-hole. I had not heard the warder approach, and assumed that he wore slippers, or had felt covers over his boots. I wondered if he wore them to catch prisoners performing illegal acts, or out respect for the sleeping prisoners.

I stayed at the window until all outside activity ceased, then I took off my clothes, after which I hanged them on the pegs, as prescribed, then climbed into a clean bed. I had given up on my

prayers in Hinzert, as I was angry with The Lord, and had no more need of him until Maurice or I was in trouble again, however, it was not long before I fell asleep in the clean, warm bed. It was strange not to hear anguished cries and constant weeping, as we heard every night in Hinzert's Room 2, and even the Bretons were quiet for a change. I felt almost comfortable for the first time since my arrest. I should have been good and mad, but I was not. Was it because I was becoming Germanized? I doubted that.

Prison routine started at 6:00 am., one and one half hours more sleep than Hinzert, besides which we had an additional four hours to after 6:00 pm. I heard metal doors being unlocked and opened, and I hurried to set out my chamber pot and water jug, after which I scooped up my knife, fork and spoon. The pot emptiers rushed to pick up the pots, which they emptied in an corner cell, in which there was a large waste disposal sink. The water jugs were filled by other trustees, who then bolted the cell doors. Minutes later the bolts were pulled back, and I smelled ersatz coffee. Breakfast was about to be served, in fact brought right to my door. What more could one ask? I was handed a thick slice of black bread and a small enamel pot, in which there was a spoon of delicious, dark molasses. Moments later, a half litre of hot coffee was tipped in my bowl. I noticed that the breadboard contained varying thicknesses of the bread portions, and I hoped for one of the larger pieces, but I could have sworn that Tomascik, the bread-server, deliberately picked out the smallest piece for me - I had my Anglophobe.

We rested all that day, although not on our bed, but the July sun came through the cell window, and I was able to bask in its rays while lying on the floor, where I fell asleep, however, no one bothered me nor kicked me to my feet.

On the third day, a trustee came in my cell and deposited an armful of used German Army uniforms on the floor. He was followed by a warder, who handed me some large scissors and a sharp knife, then instructed me to salvage as much of the uniforms as possible, making sure to retrieve entire panels by cutting along the seams. I was also ordered to put the scissors and knife outside my cell every evening. The warder also said that the uniform pieces would be collected every afternoon, and that the scrap and salvaged pieces should be separated. No quotas were mentioned, but I presumed I was expected to completed the bundle on the floor.

From my comrades yells, it was evident that we had all been given the same work. The first thing we did was to go through all the pockets, and in some we found valuable treasures: pieces of paper, letters, shreds of tobacco, a rosary, a bronze wound medal, pieces of string and many other small treasures. The uniforms had been washed, but it was obvious that their former occupants had been killed or wounded, given the sizes and locations of the bullet and shrapnel holes. It was unhealthy work, because the uniforms were dusty, and in the suns' rays, I saw millions of dust particles. However, the summer of 1942, was warm; there were no SS; no screams of pain; no Cammattes; no



Charettes and even the prison clock became a blessing, as it re-assured me that I was no longer in the void of Hinzert. Unfortunately, even though the food ration was greater and more nourishing than at Fresnes and Hinzert, it was not sufficient to allow us to re-gain our lost weight, however, we all felt that the slow prison pace might help us not lose weight as quickly as in the past.

A week after our arrival, more young French comrades arrived on our range from Hinzert. Their arrival activated the bush telegraph, which re-united many of them. One evening I asked them if they would be silent so that I could contact Maurice. They obliged, but I could not raise him. I knew that he was very lonely, and I grieved for him - he was really in solitary. I asked those near Maurice to attempt to pass on a message that I was well and thinking of him, and somehow, in fractured English, Maurice got my message.

On our second Wednesday at Wittlich, we received a nice surprised for the evening meal, when we were given a string bag, in which there were four or five medium-size potatoes, cooked in their peel and a bowl of soup. A true gourmet's delight. Another unusual food was a small piece of yellow cheese, which smelled worse than any cheese I could remember, but it delicious, even though there was only about an ounce of it, generally served on Sundays.

During the first week, we were taken to the prison hospital, where the prison doctor, Dr. Hans de Saint Paul, a descendant of a French family which had escaped from France after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, had his office. He was fluent in his own language, French and English. Dr. Hans de Saint Paul was warm and friendly as he looked me over. When I was weighed, he asked how much I had weighed when I was arrested. I said that I had weighed about one hundred and forty English pounds, and after I had stepped off the scales, Dr. Hans took a pencil, wrote a few numbers down, then told me that I had lost about thirty-three pounds, as I now weighed one hundred and seven pounds.

Dr. de Saint Paul did not ask about Hinzert nor the treatment we had suffered, but I knew he was intelligent and experienced enough to know what had taken place. He told me that he had seen Maurice, who had lost some fifty pounds. When I asked if there were extra rations available to fatten us up, he shook his head and sadly said that there were not. Dr. de Saint Paul said that the Prison Director, Doktor Paul Bithorn, had already asked for additional rations for us when he learned that we were so emaciated, but his request was turned down by the Trier Gestapo.

The doctor asked if I wanted something to read. as he had several English books at home. I said that I would be delighted, but asked if Maurice could have first priority, as he was uni-lingual. The good man promised to bring us both some English books, and as he puffed on his enormous cigar, Dr. Hans asked routine questions concerning my health. He was softly spoken and sympathetic, but he did not utter one word of criticism against our tormentors, the SS.

Before I left the consulting room, Dr. de Saint Paul asked me if I read French. I told him that I read both French and German, as I felt that there was no longer any need to hide my German, as it might be advantageous in Wittlich, he promised to have the "Oberlehrer" (senior teacher), Herr Klein, visit me. He also said that Dr. Bithorn had received permission to obtain some French books for the prison library.

The doctor visited every cell weekly. He was preceded by a warder, who opened the doors ahead of him. The old doctor slowly ambled behind the warder, puffing on his large cigar, and asked each prisoner: "Alles in ordnung?" (Is everything in order?) On the first visit to my cell, he asked if I was "OK," and on learning that I was, he handed me a copy of Charles Dickens "Christmas Carol" and a German book titled, "Abenteuer in Borneo" (Adventure in Borneo). He told me to take my time reading them, and said that Oberlehrer Klein had found a good set of precis with which to study German. I suggested that he loan them to Maurice, but when he said the lessons were in French and German, I said that I would be delighted to have them.

The prison boasted a small, fully equipped hospital, which had: two consultation rooms, two operating rooms, a laboratory and two offices for the doctors, however, Dr. de Saint Paul was the only doctor on staff. There was no X-Ray machine, but when a prisoner needed to be X-Rayed, he was taken to the civilian hospital in the Town of Wittlich.

About an hour after Dr. de Saint Paul had passed by, my cell door was pushed open by a tall, good looking man wearing the dress uniform of a Junior Leader in the SA (Sturm Abteilung). I stood respectfully at attention, having placed my scissors and uniform parts on the table.

The man introduced himself as Karl Chambach and told me that his function in the establishment was the political education of young prisoners. I presumed that he meant the German criminal elements in prison, but I was not sure that we were not his targets as well. He told me, presumably by way of an apology for not currently being in Russia, that he had been severely wounded on the Russian front, and indeed, his wound badges indicated that he told the truth.

Karl Chambach told me that Dr. de Saint Paul had informed him that I spoke German, therefore, he had brought me a prison newspaper, the "Leuchtturm" (Lighthouse). He said that when I had read it, he would return to ask for my prognosis on the war. I found this unusual and amusing, but it sounded like an order. Karl Chambach also asked me what I had done to be in prison. I answered that I had done nothing, other than to have been a passenger on a small boat leaving Jersey for England. After a few more questions about our escape, he opined that we were mad to have undertaken such a hazardous trip. I noted that he addressed me as "sie" as opposed to the familiar "du," which was encouraging.

"Who do you think will win the war?" asked Karl, with a slight smile on his face.

I tactfully answered, "I do not know, Sir. I have had no news of the war since I was arrested on 3

May. I don't even know if there is one still going on."

He laughed that one off, and said, "Tell me the truth! I will not strike you. I am aware what you have been through, but let me assure you that you will not be ill-treated here. No one on the prison staff is permitted to strike a prisoner. That is the order of the director, Dr. Bithorn. You can talk freely to me."

"Again, Sir, I have had no news of the war since 3 May. I have not had any letters nor read any newspapers, other than my pieces of toilet paper, which tell me nothing," I replied.

Karl Chambach burst out laughing, then said, "I want you to read the Lighthouse carefully, after which I will return and ask you the same question. You will read that the German Army is advancing on all fronts. The war won't last more than six months. Read the paper carefully, as it is part of your education! And, by the way, how is it that your friend only speaks English?"

"I presume that there was no need for him to learn any languages, as he left school to become a mechanic," I replied.

"I guess you are right! By the way, why did you learn other languages," he asked.

"I went to a Catholic school where we took French, and my Grandmother also spoke French to me, and when Jersey was occupied, my parents insisted that I attend German classes," I replied.

"That was good judgement on their part! Has your father any German in him? The name Hassall is very close to the German name Hassell, which is a respected one."

"I do not think my father has any German in him. He came from central England, from a coal-mining family. And I do believe that his English roots go back several centuries," I replied.

"Well, read the newspaper carefully. I'll be back with the same question, and I will make sure that you get the Lighthouse each time it is published." On that note, he touched his fingers to his forehead in a mock salute, then walked towards the door. He suddenly stopped then went over to my little pile of toilet paper, which he leafed through and put back, then with a mocking smile and another flick to his forehead, he was gone.

I found the encounter unusual, and that evening I asked my French comrades if such a person had visited them. Their replies were negative. Again, I wondered why Maurice and I had been singled out, and presumed that our nationality had something to do with it.

The Lighthouse was full of German propaganda, but I took my time reading it, and nowhere did I see anything hopeful for the Allied cause. The Americans were losing ground all over the Pacific; the Japanese were advancing on India; hundreds of ships were being sunk by U-Boats, which were cutting off the war supplies to Britain; the Africa Corps was doing well; German armament production was soaring and the Führer promised this and the Führer forecast that. Things looked black, but what to expect from a prison newspaper called the "Lighthouse?" After reading it, I renamed it the "Nebelhorn" (foghorn) - it seemed that the French had influenced me, and that was a

good sign.

The day after Karl Chambach's visit, my door was silently opened by the priest whom we had seen in the reception area. He placed his finger to his lips, and in French, quietly asked, "How are you my son? Look, I have brought you a Bible! Would you like me to hear your confession?"

I was so shocked that I answered, "Yes father." I sank to my knees and said an Act of Confession in Latin, as I knew no other way of saying it, and as he listened, I tried to find some sins to confess, but I could not think of any, other than my deep hatred for Germans, which I confessed when I said, "Father I confess my deep hate for Germans, I believe that is my only sin."

"Why do you hate Germans my son?" asked the priest.

"Because of what we have been through Father!"

"I am a German," he said rather sadly. "I suppose what you are really saying is that you hate those who have hurt you my Son, but try to remember that we Germans are not all alike, and I remind you that Our Lord said to forgive your enemies. Now, stand up my son, your sins are forgiven, but promise me that you will think about your hatred. Remember that there are forces in Germany which make decent people behave abnormally. I am also trying to get permission for the French prisoners to attend Mass, that is, if the director agrees. Would you like to attend mass on Sundays?"

"Yes Father, I would like that very much," I answered. I was totally humiliated and felt like a spoiled brat who deserved a whack or two from Kapo Wipf.

"Now, I have a lot to do. Have courage! Believe in God!" He then left, but before he did, he put his index finger to his lips and shook his head. I nodded back at him, as I assumed that his visit was not officially sanctioned.

When he had gone, I sensed that the priest had helped me find my way back to The Lord, whom I had abandoned in frustration in Hinzert. Who was the man? I then remembered the German soldier-priest at the prison of Fresnes, and how kind he had been to me, and as I thought of both men, I managed to rationalize that not all Germans were Nazis, but it was very difficult to make distinctions.

## 17 -

### **Prison work and "good" Germans**

The priest who had visited me was Pfarrer (Father) Anton Barz, chaplain to the Prison of Wittlich. He was born on Christmas day, 1906, in the Town of Trier. He spent his childhood and boyhood days in the nearby village of Merzig. After graduating from high school he entered the seminary in Trier, and on 8 August, 1926, was ordained by Bishop Franz Rudolf Bornewasser in the Trier Cathedral. Father Barz served his initial ministry in Trier, but in July, 1936, the Bishop sent him to Wittlich, where he became the prison chaplain.

We remained in our cells, sometimes cutting up uniforms, but othertimes we were given used German Army jackboots to cut up and salvage the larger pieces of leather. The grapevine said that someone had found a human foot in one, but it was probably originated by the Breton group, who continued to keep us entertained with their incessant chatter and morale boosting jokes. They were all born jokers, and kept up their bush telegraph, until exasperated guards knocked on their cell doors and begged for some peace and quietness.

Every day, we were allowed a thirty-minute exercise period in one of the large prison yards, where I always managed to get next to Maurice. His bruises looked a lot better, but he was still terribly emaciated, however, it was reassuring to see him able to smile. One day, Maurice whispered that he had been visited by the priest and Dr. de Saint Paul, the latter having brought him some English books which he was enjoying. His morale appeared to be somewhat better, and although he was unable to preform all the required exercises, no one said anything, as the guards were aware of his extremely weak condition.

We had been cutting up uniforms and boots for almost a month, when forty-two of us were taken from our cells in the youth section. Maurice was among us, and, as usual, I went over and stood next to him. We were taken through several doors, into a courtyard, then to a two-story building, around which were stacked hundreds of bundles of reeds and thousands of damaged 122 mm. shell-baskets.

We entered a door marked "Korbmacherei" (basket shop), then up a flight of wooden stairs, into a long basket factory, which was supervised by an older warder, "Oberwachtmeister" (Senior warder) Schuler, a grizzled veteran of the First World War, who sported an Adolf Hitler type moustache - that in itself alerted us. Schuler was a short man, and his ill temper was immediately apparent. One quick glance had been enough to tell us that he was a very cantankerous old man; furthermore, he had inspected us as if we were a herd of cattle, and was the first Wittlich warder to demonstrate open hostility, when he slashed at us with a bamboo.

Schuler's assistant was Kurt S., a German criminal: sentenced to life imprisonment for having killed his employers in their bakery. After killing them, he had cut them in pieces and tried to cremate them in the bakers' ovens, however, the smell of burning flesh alerted a neighbour, who called the police. After a speedy trial, Kurt was sentenced to death, then reprieved and given a long jail term, because the court psychiatrists deemed that he had not been responsible for his actions - such was the curriculum vitae of one of our supervisors.

We learned that the basket operation was financially controlled by an outside entrepreneur, who reaped the profits, but paid some form of remuneration to the prison in exchange for our services, and on our first day in the basket factory, the "big chief," Herr Vollman, came to look over his new

batch of cheap labour. Vollman was a fat, prosperous looking man, and none of us were surprised to see that he wore an NSDAP badge on his lapel. Standing near Old Schuler's desk he beamed as he welcomed us to the basket factory. He suggested that he was certain that we would work hard, as it would be to our advantage, however, his words were more like threats, and he concluded that if we didn't work hard, it would definitely be to our disadvantage. Having no more to say, he turned on his heel, grunted "Guten Tag" to Old Schuler, then left. He did not seem like a nice person, besides which, we mistrusted civilians who sported Nazi party badges.

Our apprenticeship as basket-makers began when Kurt S. showed us how to make the bases for the baskets. He said that the finished basket would hold about a bushel, and would be used in fields to gather potatoes, as well as in factories for waste. Kurt said that after we knew how to make the bases, we would be taught how to make the rest of the basket, which would have two handles. The demonstration took about two hours, after which half of us were sent to weaver's benches to make basket bases under the watchful eyes of Old Schuler, while the remainder were taken to an adjoining room by Kurt, who taught them how to repair shell baskets.

The baskets were made with sub-standard willows, which had been soaked in water to make them more pliable. It was obvious, from the quality of the willows, that the baskets would not have a great life expectancy, but having seen Herr Vollmann, we knew that he would chisel as much out of his clients as possible.

When lunch arrived and we were all together, those detailed to repair the shell baskets, told us that many of the damaged shell baskets were beyond repair, and the remainder needed to have their broken weaves replaced and strengthen, without which the bottoms, and presumably the shells, would fall out.

Our work place was lined with four rows of weavers' benches, and because two rows of us sat with our backs against the wet walls and held the wet baskets between our knees, our clothes were quickly soaked and covered with slimy willow residue, however, we did not complain, as we knew what to expect from Old Schuler. The work was not difficult and we suffered no apparent fatigue, apart from wet clothes and sore, sticky fingers. Apart from a thirty minute noon-hour soup break, we worked from 7:00 am. until 5:00 pm., at which time we were taken back to our cells. Once there, we stripped off our wet clothes and put them on the pegs to dry. It was not a healthy work place, on top of which, we had to cope with the old Prussian, Schuler, who slashed at some of us with a long willow, when we turned in badly formed baskets. He told us that the baskets looked more like "Grecian urns" than baskets, and that were guilty of sabotage. He also wailed because his former good workers, juvenile criminals, had been drafted into the Army, and replaced by a bunch of French saboteurs and terrorists. Kurt S., from time to time, exhibited streaks of savagery with well placed punches and kicks to our groins. The coward only did this when no one was looking,

however, on other occasion he was thoughtful, almost carefree and caring. After watching Kurt's characteristics for several months, we concluded that Kurt only misbehaved during full moon periods, when, not only did he turn savage, but howled like a dog. We enjoyed the spectacle, as we had no other entertainment; besides which, it drove Old Schuler into his little office.

The prison Director, Dr. Bithorn, had given Father Barz permission for the French prisoners to celebrate Sunday mass, after the criminals' mass. At our first mass, Father Barz was assisted by one of our prisoner priests, Father Joseph de la Martinière, with whom he had cultivated a close friendship.

We were all excited to receive the Eucharist after so many months, but we were happier to see our adult comrades again. Father Barz had waited to commence mass until fathers and sons located each other, then sat side by side, holding hands and praying together. It was even more touching when, as a family unit, they walked up the aisle, hand in hand, to receive the Holy Sacrament.

From the sons, who sat with their fathers in church, we learned that the adults were mostly three to a cell, where, just as we had, they cut up dusty uniforms and jackboots. They, too, were allowed a thirty minute exercise period every day, and had been issued with newly arrived French books from the library. But apart from the Church service and daily walks, they were confined to their cells, where they dreamed up fabulous menus, or played cards, made from toilet paper and small pieces of cardboard. Some adults also made chess sets, and passed hours at the game, and if they were unclear what move to make, the bush telegraph went into action, and one of France's most respected chess-players helped out.

Late one Sunday afternoon, Dr. Bithorn, came into my cell. When he saw me standing at attention, he told me to stand at ease, then smilingly asked me, "What bad things have you done to bring you to my prison?" I gave him my standard reply, after which he suggested that we had committed a serious offense. Dr. Bithorn told me to let him know if any of us were badly treated, or hit by the warders, at which time we should ask the duty warder to be put on the "Director's Report," after which he would handle the situation. Dr. Bithorn counselled me to tell my companions that warders had no right to question prisoners wanting an interview with him.

The Director said that he had been a prisoner of war during the 1914-18 war, during which time he had been fairly treated, and that was one of the reasons he wanted us to be treated correctly in his institution. He also apologized for our meagre rations, but said that there was nothing he could do, as he had orders from "higher up" regarding the rations for political prisoners. Dr. Bithorn suggested that we were fortunate to be in Wittlich, as the institution farmed large tracts of land, from which our food was supplemented with additional vegetables and fruit. He complimented me on my German, and asked if I had any books from the library. I affirmed that I had already

borrowed several German books from the library. Before leaving he said, "When you leave this prison, things might not be so good, so take advantage of my institution!" I was very surprised when he shook my hand before leaving and gave me a polite little nod of his head.

It was obvious that Dr. Bithorn was a decent German, caught up in the Nazi web. I had sensed that he had wanted to say other things, but I was aware that he was under Gestapo orders to keep his mouth shut, because when I had asked why we were kept isolated, his reply had been that he could not comment on the conditions of our detention, as he did not wish to be an inmate of his own prison.

The grapevine soon began to inform us that some of our adult friends had been transported elsewhere to face trial, and when I heard this, I thought about Sporrenberg's words in Hinzert, as he had mentioned that we would be tried. Things were finally falling in place! It was now clear that we were being held, pending trial, but by whom and where, we did not know, however, the fog lifted a little more every day.

During the evening of Thursday, 20 August, Karl Chambach, my SA acquaintance, almost flew into my cell. This time, he wore a dark-blue officer's uniform, almost like an SS dress uniform, but which was probably a Hitler Youth Leader's dress uniform. He kept me at attention for several seconds, grinning all over his handsome face, as he attempted to conceal a newspaper behind his back.

"You've had enough time! Have you an answer to my question Hassall?" he asked.

"Yes Sir, I have, but I would rather not answer it, as I am at a disadvantage," I replied.

"Again, as I said, I will respect your answer. There are no SS here. So what is your answer? Who will win the war?" he teased.

"Since you have given me your word as a German officer and promised not to hurt me, my answer is that the Allies will eventually win," I replied as I braced myself for the inevitable beating.

Instead of hitting me, Chambach smiled, then snatched the newspaper from behind his back. He shook it open to show me the large front-page headlines of a local newspaper, which read: "Zweiter Front Geschlagen" (Second Front Destroyed). The smaller print indicated that Canadians, British and Americans had attempted to land at Dieppe, in northern France, however, they had been defeated and totally destroyed on the beaches.

"Now Hassall! Who will win the war?" asked the smiling Karl Chambach.

"The Allies, Sir," I answered.

"You're mad! They have lost already! Our troops will soon be in England; just as soon as we have looked after the Russians, which won't take much longer." Then holding up his precious newspaper, he said, "Take another look Hassall! Look at this again!" Then as quickly as he had



burst in, he was gone, and I could hear him laughing as he went downstairs.

The next issue of Lighthouse had all the gory details of the failed Dieppe raid, complete with photographs of Canadian and British dead, with many destroyed tanks; some with their tracks shot off and others draped with their crews' bodies. There were also photographs of grinning, triumphant German troops holding up spoils of victory for the camera men. In fact, almost the entire Lighthouse was devoted to the destruction of the "Second Front." The exception was a section which still called for short-term prisoners to volunteer for the Waffen SS, so that they could become part of Hitler's grand campaign in the East, however, I never learned if any inmates volunteered, but I did learn, from Kurt S., that some adult criminals had been sent to punishment battalions - whether they had volunteered or not.

I was quite depressed when I finished reading the Lighthouse, but it was my duty to pass the bad news along the prison grapevine and to my friends at work. The paper had printed that the invasion was of major proportions, and was the prelude to a full scale invasion, had the Canadians gained a bridgehead. The paper said that three thousand Allied troops were in captivity, and almost the same number been killed or wounded on the beaches.

After Dieppe, life went on as usual in the basket factory, although our conversations were more subdued. Old Schuler, elated with the Dieppe victory, took greater liberties with his cane, but he made sure not to hit any exposed parts of our bodies. He was a sly old fox, who certainly knew that it was forbidden to hit prisoners, but the old sadist took as many liberties as possible.

When we first started making baskets, we were told to make one a day, but within a week or two, Old Schuler ordered us to make two. We passed word around the shop, and resisted his demand; turning in only one basket at the end of the day. Schuler was livid, but there was not much he could do about it, as he could not hit all of us. The next day, he assembled us, then said that if anyone made two baskets in one day, he would be given an extra slice of bread or an extra ladle of soup. He then sent us to our benches, grinning all over his roguish face, while pulling on his little, Hitler-style moustache.

His bribe went unanswered for several days, until someone, driven by acute hunger, handed in two baskets. The outcome of this was another Schuler edict: "If X. is able to make two baskets a day, this means that you all can! Consequently, those who do not hand in two baskets daily, will be deprived of half his soup ration, and charged with sabotage. Have you all understood?"

His psychology was sound. We were hungry, and had no option but to produce two baskets, which was not difficult. Unfortunately, the old rascal continued his tactics until we were making five baskets daily; which was still not too difficult, but did not please Schuler, who wanted more.

Sadly, it was always the same prisoner who made the extra basket, and although we shunned him, we understood his hunger. The sad part was that he only received one extra ladle of soup, when he

handed in the extra basket, therefore, for less than four litres of soup, he had pushed up our basket production and assisted the enemy - a sad epitaph for a once brave Resistant.

One day, Schuler tried to push the daily basket quota to eight - we were at the time making five. He said that his previous group of German basket-makers had all completed eight quite easily. His blackmail was accompanied by the usual threat of depriving us of our noon hour soup. However, it was time for us to act. Accordingly, a few close friends got together during the noon break, then passed word to X. and the rest of the basket makers that no more than five baskets a day would be produced. The choice was five baskets or a cut throat. The threat ended Schuler's dream of a handout from Vollman, because we learned from Kurt, that Schuler had promised that number to the basket merchant, Vollmann, who was livid when told that we were unable to make more than five baskets daily. Vollman came to the factory, where he roared that German prisoners had made seven and eight baskets daily, but we were not impressed. It felt good to fight back without being beaten. Schuler also tried to make those repairing the shell baskets hand in sixty every day, but that, too, did not work.

As the winter months approached, the dampness and the cold began to tell on us, and Maurice was the first to show symptoms of tuberculosis (TB). It began with coughing, spitting up phlegm and fevers, after which his appetite waned, and he was unable to eat all his meagre rations. We all knew that it was the beginning of the end for him, as we were aware that many of our comrades had already died from the very contagious disease, after which they had been buried in Wittlich's cemetery.

Maurice sat next to me at work, and it was not long after his initial bouts of coughing that I saw him spit blood into his handkerchief, and after two weeks of listening to him cough, I begged him to see Dr. de Saint Paul. The following day he was taken to the prison hospital, where he was put in an isolation cell - Maurice never returned to the basket factory!

At the end of November, as Dr. de Saint Paul passed by my cell, he told me that Maurice's TB was quite advanced, and that his chance of survival was minimal. I was stunned at the bluntly given news, but asked what could be done for him. Dr. de Saint Paul shrugged his shoulders in resignation, as if nothing could be done, however, he said that he would do his best to help. I asked if Maurice could be sent to a sanatorium in Switzerland or Germany, and Dr. de St. Paul answered, "Young man, none of you are allowed to go anywhere, or make contact with the outside." Then, as if he had already said too much, the good doctor shuffled off to the next cell.

As Maurice's condition worsened, he was put in the so called "French ward," which was located in the adult wing, on the upper floor of a small, three-story annex. The ward contained about thirty sick-beds, and was the brain child of Dr. Jacques Normand, a French Resistance hero. He had asked Dr. de Saint Paul for permission to take care of the French sick, many of whom suffered from

TB, large phlegmon abscesses, severe arthritis, edema, dehydration, eye problems, unset fractures and other illnesses associated with malnutrition, beatings and the aftermath of SS Sonderlager Hinzert.

Dr. Normand gave many sound reasons for opening the medical centre, and Dr. de Saint Paul, who agreed with Dr. Norman, made his point with Dr. Bithorn, who eventually sanctioned the opening of the French ward. He had received Gestapo approval, after telling them that the entire prison would be contaminated unless the ward was created. After the ward was open, the kindly German doctor seldom interfered with its operation, which was run by the French doctor, who treated the political deportees only.

The prison authorities, wanting to isolate as many of the contagious prisoners as possible, were grateful that Dr. Jacques Normand had volunteered for the thankless job, and over a few months, Dr. Saint Paul and Dr. Bithorn managed to equip the ward with surgical instruments; medical supplies; pain killers, such as morphine, but there was a very little ether available for emergency operations. Dr. de Saint Paul was also able to obtain some Salvarsan 609, which retarded a poor man's syphilis, although it did not cure him.

Dr. Normand performed miracles in his little ward, which took a lot of the pressure off Dr. de Saint Paul's shoulders. The French doctor also conducted a daily sick parade for the adult prisoners, who reported to his ward. This took more work off Dr. de Saint Paul's shoulders, who was then able to concentrate on the criminal prisoners and the juvenile French deportees being held in the youth section. Many of Dr. Normand's out-patients suffered mainly from severe malnutrition, and were in need of morale support and a little extra food. Aches and pains were treated with a German medicine called Analgit, which did no good other than burn the skin, but it made the patients feel as if they were being assisted.

There must have been a critical shortage of competent doctors in the Town of Wittlich, as Dr. de Saint Paul sometimes took Dr. Normand along to the civilian hospital, where he performed or assisted the German doctors carry out operations on German patients - that, in itself was a testimony of Dr. Normand's surgical skills. For some reason, Dr. de Saint Paul never invited him to visit the women in Flüssbach, but it might have been a blessing as Dr. Normand had plenty to do.

Most of the patients on the ward had TB, and were unable to eat all their food. This was saved, and when the out-patients came in, Dr. Normand was able to give some of the worst cases a piece of bread, a cup of soup and a rub down with Analgit, and for an hour or so, some of our comrades luxuriated in a friendly atmosphere, outside their crowded, dusty cells.

The French ward was also our communication centre, from which contacts were made and war news disseminated. With the exception of Dr. Bithorn, Dr. de Saint Paul, Father Barz and Oberlehrer Klein, all warders kept out of the ward, because of their fear of infection from TB and

other contagious illnesses. One only needed to cough in order to send warders scurrying away as fast as their legs could carry them. They delivered the food only as far as the ward's door, after which it was carried inside by the patients.

Dr. Normand's colleague, Dr Maillard, left the prison once a week, when Dr. de Saint Paul took him along to visit the French womens' camp at Flüßbach, a few miles from Wittlich. When the doctor returned, he brought back news and letters from mothers, wives, daughters and sweethearts, all of which reached those concerned. The doctor said that the women's conditions were as bad, if not worse than ours, as they were not protected from the weather elements, but as there were no brutal SS women guards at Flüßbach, life was somewhat more tolerable than Hinzert, despite the fact that not all female guards were sympathetic.

The French women in Flüßbach were always happy to see both doctors, and Dr. de Saint Paul did not interfere when Dr. Maillard passed along news about their loved ones in Wittlich. The German doctor turned a deaf ear, and even fished for compliments for having brought along a French doctor in whom the ladies could confide. The woman deportees were certainly very relieved to have one of their own treating them, although their praises were loud for Dr. Hans de St. Paul, who had cared for them to the best of his ability.

From the French women, Dr Maillard learned that some of them had already been transported to a prison called Klingelpütz, in Köln (Cologne), where they waited to be tried by the Special Tribunal.

It was the first very definitive word about our futures, and although many French prisoners had left Wittlich, their destination had always been kept secret. We knew nothing about our upcoming trials, although vague hints had been dropped by the Director, Dr. de Saint Paul and Oberlehrer Klein, but now we knew about Special Tribunals, which were waiting to try us.

Karl Chambach still came to my cell, and was quite buoyed by the fact that the Germans were on the outskirts of Stalingrad, and the German Sixth Army had crossed the River Volga in several places, where they had extended their bridgeheads. He still persisted in asking me, "Who is going to win the war Hassall?" And he always received the same answer, but left quite happily, after giving me my copy of the Lighthouse, which printed all the German victories. The paper had been reduced to four pages from six in December, and in the last issue, there had been a small article about American landings in North Africa. However, as the weeks passed, Germany's hero, Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, was mention less and less in the Lighthouse, and one did not have to be a military strategist to understand that the Germans were losing the battle in Africa. I passed the news along the grapevine and at work, and thanks to a few sympathetic Luxembourg warders, most of it was confirmed.

By January 1943, Stalingrad, the German Sixth Army and its Commander, Field Marshal Paulus, were encircled by the Red Army, and when Karl Chambach came to my cell, he was not as assured

as he had been in previous months. The Stalingrad news was not kept from the German public, but had been printed in the Lighthouse, however, Chambach passed it off as a military manoeuvre, designed to explode in the face of the Bolsheviks. I was thankful that he stopped asking me who was going to win the war. We were very much aware that the tide had turned and Germany was losing the war.

Every Monday we were given our supply of toilet paper, and it was pleasing to see that the little square pieces of newspaper contained almost 100% obituaries. Occasionally, I laughed a little when I imagined that our rear ends would be imprinted with thousands of Iron Crosses from the obituaries. I hoped that they would wear off after the war, as I did not want to be taken for a Nazi fanatic, who had opted for a tattoo on his bottom, instead of under the armpit.

The German nation went into mourning in February, 1943, after the fall of Stalingrad, and thereafter, I only saw Karl Chambach when he could gloat about infrequent German or Japanese victories, although he still sent me the Lighthouse. I missed his visits, as they had always been a challenge to my integrity and strength of character.

Towards the end of March, 1943, I asked Dr. de Saint Paul if I could visit Maurice on the French ward. He agreed, and promised to send a warder to fetch me for an hour's visit. He explained that he did not want me on the ward any longer, for fear of infection. The following Sunday, I was fetched by a warder, who took me to the French ward. Once inside, I spoke to Dr. Normand, who frankly told me that Maurice stood no chance of survival, unless he was immediately sent to a sanatorium; which, as he said, was not likely to happen. His prognosis was that Maurice would live for five or six months at most. He also said that many French had already died of TB on the ward, and more, on the ranges, were coming down with it, but were kept in isolation cells near the German doctor's office, as the French ward was overcrowded, and only able to care for the worst cases.

Dr. Normand told me that he had spoken to Dr. Bithorn, who assured him that all the French dead would be given decent burials, despite the Trier Gestapo, who had instructed him that no French prisoner be buried in coffins. Dr. Bithorn ignored the Gestapo's orders, and had ordered more coffins to be made in the prison's carpentry shop. That way, our dead were accorded decent burial services, with Father Anton Barz officiating - regardless of the deceased man's religion. I am certain that none of our dead objected to the outstanding Catholic priest officiating.

When I spoke to Maurice, his first words were, "Well Peter, no doubt the doctor told you I'm not going to make it!"

"That's not quite what he said," I lied, as I tried to contain my emotions. "We'll soon be out of here Maurice. Germany is losing on all fronts. Haven't you heard the latest war news?"

"Peter, I'm no fool! I've been here for several months now, and nearly every day, they carry out

someone feet first; most of them with TB. My lungs are shot, and I can't eat any more. Let's be honest, I won't make it."

"Have you asked Dr. de Saint Paul about repatriation because of your illness?" I asked, tongue in cheek. "If you haven't, I will!" However, I already knew the answer to that one.

"Yes I have Peter, but he did not say too much, other than we were in a special category of prisoners, and he could do nothing for us, as the Trier Gestapo had forbidden any outside contact with us. The doctor also told me that he and Dr. Bithorn were doing all they could to help. By the way, Dr. Normand told us that some of the women at Flüssbach were taken to Cologne to be tried, and some men have already gone to Cologne. Did you hear that?"

"I've heard that Maurice, but I don't know what it means. We just make our baskets, read and sleep, but we have enough facts to know that we are to be tried somehow." I did not want to discuss that frightening aspect, as he was too ill, and was a mere shadow of his former self. He did not have an ounce of fat on his body; his chest bones protruded through his shirt, and his leg, in which there was a huge phlegmon the size of a tennis ball, looked like a matchstick. I doubted that he weighed ninety pounds - He was totally skeletal, and I could only look at him through tear-filled eyes, as I knew that I would soon be losing my dearest friend.

Maurice told me about a Frenchman who had been on the ward with him. His name was Pierre Tourneux, a native of Besançon, France, and a school teacher, who spoke English fluently. Maurice said that he had many talks with Pierre Tourneux, who told him that he had graduated as a teacher from the University of Besançon, and when the Germans occupied the town, Pierre left with two of his friends, and tried to get into the un-occupied French zone - Pierre and his friends intended to get to England to fight with General de Gaulle's Free French Army.

Pierre Tourneux and his two friends were forced to stay in Vichy France until the end of 1940, as they could find no help for their mission. They were forced to return home because of their fruitless efforts in getting any help. They then went to Brittany, where they tried to buy, beg, borrow or steal a boat in order to reach England, but again they failed. Pierre then made two or three more attempts to find a boat in Brittany, but unfortunately failed; either through denunciations, or Gestapo retaliations on local civilians who had helped escapees.

Pierre then gave up the idea of getting to England by boat, and returned home to Besançon. Later, he again went to the unoccupied Zone and reached Marseilles, where he spent several months trying to make contacts to get out of France, and having nothing better to do in Marseilles, Pierre distributed leaflets for a local Resistance cell. In May, 1942, he went back to Besançon, carrying certain forbidden books, a pistol and thirty rounds of ammunition. When he reached the demarkation line, between Vichy and Occupied France, he went to ground and waited for the area to clear of German and French police. When a passing girl told him that there were no guards

about, he moved out of his hiding place, but was immediately surrounded by German soldiers and arrested. Pierre was unable to get rid of the pistol, which the Germans soon found. Consequently he was sent to the Besançon jail and interrogated, after which he was sent to Dijon, where he was subjected to more interrogations. He was returned to Besançon, then transported to the infamous Cherche Midi prison in Paris. He arrived in Hinzert on 26 July, 1942, and two months later was sent to Wittlich. Maurice had been very much taken up with Pierre Tourneux, no doubt as he was the only patient able to talk to him in English.

Maurice had learned a lot about the French, their ways and their occupation from Pierre, who had spent countless hours with him, supporting him and trying to re-enforce Maurice's sagging morale. There was no doubt in my mind that Pierre did Maurice a great personal service, and I silently thanked him for the support he had given my friend.

During a lull in our conversation, Maurice suddenly blurted out, "Look, Peter, I'm finished! That means you have to stay alive! You must get back and tell our families what happened! Do what you have to do to stay alive! Remember the Luxembourg Room Senior in Hinzert? Remember what he said? Don't care about anyone else! You have to make it back, because I won't! And one last thing Peter, after the war, come back and get me. Please, don't leave me here!"

I was shocked at his outburst, and barely managed to whisper, "I promise you that I will do my best to get you back." It was no longer any use trying to fool him.

"Talk to Dr. de Saint Paul. Ask him what he can do to help! But promise me before you leave that you will fight like hell to live! I want my family to know what happened to me, so please get back home! What will happen if we both die? No one will ever know what happened to us. I don't want to stay in Germany, so get me out, and put me next to Dennis, that way, we will all be together again someday - Promise me!"

I was in tears by then, but as gentle Maurice held my hands, I felt some of my inner strength return. It seemed as if he was trying to pass on what little strength he had remaining. I looked at his thin, ravaged face, then took him in my arms and whispered, " Don't worry Maurice! I'll get back and tell them, and I'll look after Callaux for you."

Maurice managed a brave smile, then said, "Don't bother with Callaux! Let the law look after him! I know that you'll make it. Now, stop blaming yourself! We went in this together. I knew the risks, but I had no idea it would end like this."

I was thankful when my hour was up and the warden opened the door and beckoned me out. Before I left his bedside, Maurice tugged at my pants and said, "Here, take this! I don't need it." He reached in his locker and gave me four slices of bread. "Take them, because they'll be given to others who get treated here. Now go, but ask the doctor to let you come back as often as possible. I

miss you so much Peter."

I took the bread, stuffed it under my jacket, then with my eyes full of tears, I followed the warder back to my cell, where I ate some of the bread, and drank some water to help get it down - it had not been a pleasant interlude, and I sat and cried for the longest time, until I realised the futility, then, when my tears stopped, I began to entertain serious thoughts about saving my own life.

By April, 1943, nothing much had changed in the prison of Wittlich, other than our soup ration was reduced and the pieces of bread were thinner. Work still went on under Old Schuler, who grew more cantankerous as Germany suffered more military reversals. We still worked under the same damp conditions, which caused more of our young comrades to be sent to the prison hospital with the inescapable TB.

TB was our main topic of conversation, and the overriding fear in our lives. Those with suspected TB were quickly removed from the workplace, then isolated near the main prison hospital. Once there, tests were carried out on the patient's blood and spittle, and if Dr. Koch's dreaded bug was found, the sick were isolated with others suffering from the same disease. There was no escaping TB at Wittlich, particularly if one was in a cell with someone infected with it - it was all a matter of time, as the disease was extremely contagious, and struck swiftly, even though the prison administration did all it could to contain it - There were 500 cells in Wittlich, many of which were occupied by three French prisoners, and it was said that over one thousand men and juveniles were incarcerated in Wittlich, a prison constructed for half that number - it was small wonder that TB spread in such confined, dusty quarters.

As far as the Gestapo was concerned, we could have all rotted with TB. They did not care, but Dr. Bithorn did. He was responsible for the prison population and did not want to turn his prison into a morgue, but given the crowded cells and the lack of nutritious food, he could only slow our inevitable deaths. The German prisoners, who received more food than we did and were able to work on in the fresh air outside, rarely had any cases of TB. but they had not been in Hinzert.

We had hardly any fresh air, other than the thirty minute exercise in a courtyard, where two French priests led us through a series of light exercises. One of the priests, Joseph de la Martinière beat the cadence on a little drum, while the other showed us what to do. When Father de la Martinière was not there, we walked around in circles, looking upwards at the grinning faces of the criminal prisoners, who enjoyed watching the "Parade of the Skeletons," and whenever one of us stumbled through weakness, the criminals' laughter was loud and long.

Overcrowding became quite chronic as more prisoners arrived from Hinzert and other camps and prisons, and as there were too many juvenile French to exercise at one time, some of us had to exercise with the criminal prisoners, who marched in rigid formations and sang warlike songs for our benefit. The criminals' steps were brisk, as they were all well fed, being allowed to receive food



parcels from home. They enjoyed tripping us, and often kicked the fallen.

My world was disrupted one Friday evening, when after work I was told to pack my gear. I did not know why I had to pack, and all kinds of thoughts went through my mind as I waited to be fetched.

It was no cause for alarm, as I was only taken to a cell opposite mine, in which there were already two of my comrades, Michael Goltais, one of the Breton group, and another Breton, Gaston, who was about my age. At first I resented being with them, as my solitary peace had been disturbed, however, we soon became a tightly knit trio: sharing everything and rotating the bed every each, even though there were mattresses for all of us.

In May, I came up with, what I reasoned to be, my only chance for survival. It involved great risk, and others might suffer from my actions. However, my mind was made up, and I set about laying the groundwork for my survival. I had often thought about all the uneaten food in the French ward, and had concluded that my only chance for survival was to be admitted there - I already knew that I would not be allowed to work in the cook house nor join outside working parties, therefore my only chance was to go where there was food - on the French ward. I was down to ninety-five pounds and still losing weight.

Having made the decision, I began my charades. At work and in our cell, I began to cough intermittently. This soon brought sympathetic glances from my friends. From time to time I spat in my handkerchief, and when I was in our cell I opened the chamber pot then spat in it. Sometimes, I scratched my gums with my fork and drew blood, and when my comrades used the Kübel they saw it. A week or so into my act, one of my comrades suggested that I see the doctor.

I made an appointment to see Dr. de Saint Paul, and the next day I was fetched and taken to the prison hospital, where I was locked in a holding cell with another French prisoner, who was in an advanced stage of TB. There was a "Spucknapf" (spittoon) in the cell, and the sick man constantly spat in it, and while he was looking out the window at the shrubs, I went over to the spittoon and scooped up some of its contents.

The sick man went in first to see Dr. de Saint Paul, and when he came back, I asked what had transpired. He told me that an orderly had made him spit in a small phial, after which the doctor had listened to his lungs with his stethoscope. He also said that Dr. de Saint Paul told him that he would have to wait for the results of his test to come back from the laboratory in Wittlich. When it was my turn to go in, I put the man's spittle in the side of my mouth. A German orderly made me strip to the waist, gave me a small phial, then told me to spit in it. I quickly obliged. The mucus was mixed with a liberal amount of blood, as I had torn my gums with a piece of willow to make the specimen look impressive. I was then taken to Dr. de Saint Paul's office, where he asked me what my complaint was. I told him that I had been coughing and spitting phlegm for some time.

The doctor listened to my chest with his stethoscope, then wrote a few words on a card which bore my name and date of birth. He then put a thermometer under my tongue, and when the good doctor was occupied with other things, I took the thermometer out of my mouth and rubbed it on my pants - hoping to increase my temperature. Minutes later it was taken from my mouth by the doctor, who made no comment on my health, other than to tell me that I was to wait for the test results of my spittle. I then went back to my cell block, along with my "accomplice" who had unwittingly supplied me with Dr. Koch's bacillus - my fate was now in the hands of German medical science! A week or so later I was told to pack my things, then I was taken to the prison hospital, where I was put in an isolation cell with four adult Frenchmen, all suffering from varying stages of TB. They were outstanding, brave men, but all very worried about their health, particularly the youngest, Luc, a Parisian. The large cell echoed with their coughing and spitting all day long, but I had prepared myself for that eventuality, and kept my handkerchief over my nose and mouth.

The sickest in our cell, S., was obviously living out his last days. He resembled a walking skeleton, and required help to do the smallest of tasks. I wondered why he was not on the French ward, but Germans being Germans, and doing things by regulations and orders, were not ready to send him there, as they were still waiting to take him to the civilian hospital to be X-rayed, and even the kindly Dr. de Saint Paul could not buck German bureaucracy, nor could he get us to the civilian hospital until they were prepared to see us, besides which, we had to have been at the bottom of the hospital's priority list.

I became very close to the four men, who could not understand why I was with them, as I did not seem sick, but when Dr. de Saint Paul visited us, he told the men that he did not want his "only Englishman" to die, which seemed to placate them; although I still kept up, and even increased, the frequency of spitting and coughing.

S., the dying man, told me that he did not think that my TB was advanced. He was genuinely worried about me, and suggested that I ask to be put somewhere less contagious. He knew that he was going to die soon, and it was this brave man who gave me my sole opportunity to survive, when he called me over to his bed, and suggested that when we went to the German hospital to be X-rayed, we should change identities. I argued that might not be possible, but S., who said that he had children of my age, insisted that we wait and see, and with that he refused to speak any more about the matter, as he had made up his mind to save my life.

On the day we were driven to the civilian hospital, only one warder escorted us. At the hospital we were taken to a darkened outer room, next to the X-ray machine, where a radiologist asked if any of us spoke German. I said that I did, and was asked me to fill out the hospital cards with the patients' names. This I did, after which he handed the five patients their cards, and told them to bring them to the X-ray room when their names were called.

In the darkened room, S. put his card in my hand, patted my arm and told me not to worry. I tried to return his card, but he patted my arm again as he silently took my card from me. S. could barely walk any more, but clinging to some inner strength, he walked upright into the X-ray room with my card, where the technician X-rayed him as Peter Hassall, and wrote the number of the X-ray negative on my card. I was the last to be X-rayed, after which we were returned to the prison, where S. grinned at me from his bed.

The day that S. died, Dr. de Saint Paul received the X-ray results back from the hospital. He was amazed that S. had died, as he told us that his X-ray had shown that he did not have TB, and that there had to be a mistake. The doctor then took me outside the cell where he told me that my X-ray had shown my lungs to be in "bad shape," although he was at a loss to know why, as apart from the spittle test, which had been positive, he had found nothing amiss when he examined me.

Feigning shock and disappointed, I told him that if Maurice died, I would be the only British survivor. I then forcefully suggested that, as the lone Englishman, I had to live so that our families could know the truth, and I candidly asked for his help. He re-iterated that I could have no extra food, as that was forbidden. The kindly man did not openly state that the Gestapo did not care whether we lived or died, but he came close to it that day.

When I asked how much longer Maurice had to live, he sadly shook his head and said, "At the maximum two or three months." I then asked about my chances of living, and he replied that the X-ray also showed that my lungs were in an advanced state of TB. Taking the bit between my teeth, I asked him if I could get on the same ward as Maurice. He was taken aback at my request, however, he did not refuse, and before he went off on his rounds, he promised to discuss it with Dr. Bithorn. Before he left, I took a last desperate plunge, and assured him that if I lived, I would be kindly disposed towards him and Dr. Bithorn after the war. He peered at me over the rim of his gold-coloured glasses, and was about to say something, when he abruptly turned away and continued on his rounds - I felt that I had made my point.

A few days later I was recalled to the doctor's office, where Dr. Bithorn and Dr. de Saint Paul were seated. Dr. Bithorn said that he had discussed my case with Dr. de Saint Paul, and they had decided to do their best to keep me alive. He told me that I would be going to the French ward to be near my friend, and where I would have an opportunity to eat better, since most of the sick did not eat all their food. Dr. Bithorn also suggested that if I was careful, I might contain my battle with TB and live longer than if I stayed in the isolation cell.

Dr. Bithorn said, "This is not for publication, but we will also try to keep you in Wittlich as long as we can, and when your turn comes up to go to trial, we will oppose it on the grounds of your health and that of your friend, Gould." He continued, " We don't want our Englishmen to die! Believe me, I am sincere when I say that I don't want anyone to die in my prison, but there is not much I can

do. I am not my own master Hassall, however, we will do all we can to protect you, young man." I thanked both men, and said no more - everything had been said.

A few days later, I was taken to the clothing store, where my head was shaved. I was then given a bath and clean clothing, then taken to the French ward, where Dr. Jacques Normand was still in charge, and my friend Maurice Gould lay near death. I had done it, but I wondered at what risk, and how long I could fool everybody.

I went over to Maurice, whose face reflected a great deal of consternation when I told him that I was a patient, and would be staying on the ward. To allay his fears, I whispered what had taken place. When he heard me out, he told me to level with Dr. Normand, but I suggested that Dr. Normand was French, and would sooner see a dying Frenchman in a spare bed, than a skinny, but relatively healthy Englishman. Maurice must have seen the validity of my argument, because he said, "I suppose you are right, but keep away from the TB cases, even me! Don't come too close, other than to get the food I don't eat!"

Dr. Normand gave me a bed in the far corner of the room. He said that he would like to examine me to see how sick I really was, as I did not look too sick. He also suggested that he needed someone to help in the ward, and that I looked healthy enough to work. I readily agreed to help all I could.

As Dr. Normand's assistant, my job was to sweep and dust the ward; polish the floor with a weighted floor polisher; clean out the bowls of puss after the doctor lacerated phlegmons and boils and a multitude of other hygienic chores. I did not mind, as I began to eat my fill the first day I was on the ward. Maurice gave me what he did not eat, and what others did not eat, I collected and gave most of it to the doctor, who hid it, and later distributed it to the out-patients.

Dr. Normand was an unselfish man, who was very concerned for the sick and his comrades on the ranges, and when he heard of men reaching their upper limits of starvation, he had them report to his little ward, where I applied Analgit, as they munched on a piece of bread or drank a cup of soup.

His unselfish actions went a long way in keeping many comrades alive. He had no favourites, but helped the weakest of all first. I worked very diligently for him, but after a month, despite the fact that I continued my charade of coughing and spitting, it was noticeable that I was putting on weight.

My face had filled out a little, and when Maurice told me this, he again said that I should tell Dr. Normand the truth.

The next day, after sick parade, I sat down with Dr. Normand and told him the truth. He surprised me when he said that Dr. de Saint Paul had already told him that both he and Dr. Bithorn, were concerned that I stay alive, and that was why I was on the ward. Dr. Normand had been sworn to secrecy, but warned me to keep up my act and have "positive supplies of spittle" ready, in case

someone wanted to give me another TB test. He also suggested that I get fresh air from the windows, and put on a mask when I worked with TB patients.

I felt ashamed, but overcame it when the Dr. Normand said, "I know you're going to make it, and I'll do all I can to help you." I was too gratified to say another word, and went back to my bed, where I said a very meaningful Act of Contrition. I then went back to Maurice, who was happy that I had told Dr. Normand the truth. He smiled at me, then said, "Now I know you are going to make it, and I'm glad that you told Dr. Norman the truth." - Even as sick as he was, he was still the same honest Maurice, who could not tolerate deceit, and I respected him for it.

That day Maurice gave me a rosary that he had made in the basket shop. It was an exquisite piece of work, with each section of ten beads being made from pieces of different coloured willows. It was held together with bits of thin wire, which had bound the willows. The centre of the rosary had a leather heart, and the cross came from the jackboots Maurice had cut up in his cell. I thanked him, and that night I used it, as I said a prayer for S., the man who had given me a chance to survive. I did not feel good about everything, but when I remembered the Luxembourger from Hinzert, I was able to push the deceit to the back of my mind - I had a mission to accomplish, and I wasn't going to botch it this time.

### **The TB ward and Maurice's death**

Work on the ward increased as more of our comrades from the ranges fell ill; mainly the result of Hinzert's savagery, malnutrition and the close confinement, unsanitary working conditions and lack of food. Dr Normand was putting in eighteen-hour days, despite my best efforts to ease his work load, albeit, my contribution was confined to nursing the bed-ridden patients, out-patients and cleaning duties. I, too, often had very little sleep, particularly in the early hours of the morning, when the patients seemed to suffer most. The sickest and weakest were those with TB, who needed a lot of help, thereby bringing me in direct contact with the most contagious.

Dr. Normand's out-patient list grew, and among them was a group of resisters, whose Headquarters had been in the Parisian restaurant, "à la Reine Blanche," located near the world famous Brasserie Lipp; directly opposite the renowned Café des Deux Magots. The proprietor of the Reine Blanche, August Raulach, and his companions: Noël Riou, Chief of Police of the 6th Parisian District; Marc Walbel, a tall, well-known French actor, who had portrayed Tarzan of the Apes, and Commandant (Major) Lhôpital, former Aide-de-Camp to Marshal Foch, never discussed their arrests with me, but they painted a wonderful panorama of their beloved Paris, as I rubbed Analgit on their tired, emaciated, aching bodies, but even in his emaciated state, it was easy to see why Marc Walbel had portrayed Tarzan. Their panoramas of Paris were not like those I had experienced while driving from the prison of Fresnes to Gestapo Headquarters; on the contrary, they managed to paint Paris as a City of Lights and as a treasure chest of historical buildings, museums, parks and magnificent churches.

August Raulach had two sons, one of whom was about my age, and while I applied Analgit to his back, he suggested that I visit him after the war. I accepted his kind offer, and told him that I would take him up on it after the war.

On one occasion, Dr. Normand had to perform an emergency operation on one of our French-Polish comrades, Chelong, who had TB of the larynx. The unfortunate man was having a hard time breathing and was choking on phlegm. The doctor decided to perform a tracheotomy immediately, despite the fact that his only anesthetic was an external freezing concoction, with which Chelong's larynx area was sprayed. It had very little pain killing effect, but after the doctor made a small incision in the throat, there was a rush of air and an outgoing flow of mucus. Dr. Normand then inserted a rubber tube in the incision, after which the patient's breathing became almost normal. Moments later, Chelong looked up at Dr. Normand and rasped, "Thank you doctor. I can breathe now." The poor man reached for the doctor's hand, but never made contact, as he expired before

their hands met. The stress had been too much for his heart, but his smile was a testimony to Dr. Normand's skill, patience and dedication.

Chelong had emigrated from Poland to France before the war, and had been a farm worker. He was arrested because he had not handed in his beloved "Fusil de chasse" (shotgun) when the Germans ordered the French to hand in all their weapons. Someone, not on Chelong's rabbit and game list, eventually denounced him. The punishment for possessing any kind of weapon in occupied France was death, however, Chelong's sentence was carried out without the benefit of a trial.

When the prison authorities were summoned, Chelong's body was taken to the morgue and placed in a coffin. A day later, Chelong's friends were issued clean uniforms, their clogs were temporarily replaced with shoes, and with Father Barz in attendance, our Polish comrade was buried in the Foreigners' Corner of the Wittlich cemetery.

It was known that Father Barz' sister attended many deportees' burials, and occasionally his parents were also present. They were very much in danger of being denounced by local party members, however, the area was predominantly Catholic, and Father Barz was a respected figure in the community and surrounding areas, and no denouncement was ever made.

Apart from crossing a prisoner's name off their books, the prison authorities kept few records of those who died at Wittlich, however, Father Barz had informed Dr. Normand that that all deaths in the prison were registered with the Registrar of Births and Deaths in Wittlich, after they had been signed by Dr. Hans de St. Paul.

From time to time, Oberlehrer Klein brought some of the patients' fathers and sons into the ward, where they spent moving moments together. Father Barz did the same, and I often wondered how both men got away with it, given the fact that there were a couple of snitches among the warders, but both men carefully picked the times that the known snitches were not on duty. They also smuggled in little treats for the very sick prisoners, such as: biscuits, apples, candies and pieces of cake, and it was very meaningful for us to know that some Germans cared. Father Barz had conveniently hollowed out one of his bibles, which he always carried. The bible was above suspicion, but carried many little treats for the ailing NN prisoners.

The most reliable warders were Hubert Petrie, a short, smiling man with a heart as large as a soccer ball, and Emile Geran, our Luxembourger. Another "good" warder was Peter Steiner, however, both Father Barz and Oberlehrer Klein were unable to smuggle in anything when the warder Skillett, was on duty. It was rumoured that he had been in the Waffen SS, and was wounded on the Russian front, then re-mustered as a prison warder. To my knowledge, Old Schuler and Skillett

were the only warders to strike NN prisoners, but two others were known to be NSDAP members, and had to be watched. The worst of all were the trustee criminals, all of whom were doing their best to get out of prison; and, in fact, they invented incidents to get the political deportees in trouble. They caused no amount of trouble in order to gain a few merit points and an early exit from Wittlich.

When the cells and ward were locked during quiet hours, the warders were reduced in numbers, and never came in the ward unless there was an emergency. I took this quiet time to sit by Maurice, and read or talk to him. He often asked if he could see his Dutch friends, Gerald and Henk, and when I asked Dr. de Saint Paul if that was possible, the good doctor suggested that I not stretch my luck too far. He also reminded me that I should remain inconspicuous, given the circumstances.

One of the out patients was Father Muckensturm, who had been an African missionary for many years. He was known, among the French, as "le Père savate" (Father slipper), and as I rubbed Analgit on his back, he told me that he had studied Chinese medicine, and could diagnose ailments by reading the soles of feet. I jokingly responded that my Grandmother had done the same with tea leaves, however, Father Muckensturm was serious about his claim. He told me that after diagnosing ailments, he inserted pressure points in patients' shoes, and those points had cured some basic, but painful ailments. I believed him, as I saw no need for a man of the cloth to lie, and indeed, I had heard that he frequently massaged prisoners' feet, and eased them from many localised aches and pains. There were many who disbelieved Father Muckensturm, but I had faith.

New about the war, when received, was analyzed by former military officers, who came to the ward as out-patients, and kept us fairly well abreast of the war. We were told that the battle for North Africa had turned in the Allies' favour. We also learned that there had been heavy bombing raids on the Ruhr Valley dams and the Soviets were advancing westward at a steady pace. Some of the news came from sympathetic warders, more specifically, Emile Gerin and Hubert Petrie, without whom, we would have been subjected to the usual German propaganda and other sources, such as Karl Chambach and his Lighthouse.

We now knew that many of our NN comrades had been sent to Cologne for trial, however, we were not prepared for what took place in July 1943, when, approximately fifty NN, who had previously been incarcerated with us at Hinzert and Wittlich, returned, and within hours, their story flashed through the prison - after leaving Wittlich they had been taken to the prison of Klingelpütz in Cologne, where they waited to be tried by the Special Court. The female NNs, who were part of the same resistance actions as some of the men, also showed up in Klingelpütz from the women's camp at Flüssbach, and they, too, were tried along with their husbands, sons and Resistance comrades. The reason for the NNs return to Wittlich was due to the massive Allied air-raids on Cologne in



July, 1943, and during these raids, the prison of Klingelpütz had been badly damaged, and pronounced unfit for further habitation. During the air raids, the NN prisoners were kept locked in their cells; consequently some perished, while the survivors endured a holocaust of flames. Although they cried out and pounded on their cell doors, no one came to their help, because the warders had fled to the air-raid shelter in the prison's basement. The Klingelpütz survivors were thankful to return to Wittlich - if only for a short time.

The returnees also imparted that those NN, tried by the Special Court, had not returned to the ranges, but had been transported elsewhere. We also learned that several NN had been sentenced to death, and were executed by means of the guillotine, which was the method of execution in most German (Lande) Provinces; although it was said that in Berlin, the axe was used. It was the first time that we had heard of death sentences being carried out on NN, and it was not reassuring, given the charges that Maurice and I expected to face. We had know nothing about Germany's methods of execution their criminals, but given the execution of Francois Scornet in Jersey, we had expected a firing squad. The very thought of the guillotine made us sick to our stomachs, as we all knew about Madame la Guillotine from the days of the French Revolution, and while that method of execution may have appeared quite normal to the French, it shocked Maurice and me.

The week after the NN returned from Cologne, we learned, from Oberlehrer Klein, that the Special Court had resumed its sitting in Wittlich, and Herr Klein, because of his knowledge of French, had been seconded to it as an interpreter. He was also used as a go between the NN and their lawyers, when and if any were made available. He suggested that only the most serious cases were given lawyers. Herr Klein told us that as soon as the NN were tried, they were placed in a separate prison wing, away from the other NN waiting to be tried, then quickly transported elsewhere. He counselled us not to expect anything from the German lawyers, as they put little effort in getting their "clients" acquitted of the charges against them. He also suggested that most of the State appointed lawyers were more of a hinderance than an asset, as it was clear that they knew nothing about the cases they were defending.

The Special Court sat in Wittlich until September, 1943, when it was moved to Breslau, in the German State of Silesia, and from September onwards, most NN in Wittlich were sent to Breslau to be tried, unless the charges were grave enough to be tried by the Peoples Court; in which case they could have been sent almost anywhere.

One very alarming fact was learned from Herr Klein. He said that some of the NN had been tried and sentenced to light prison terms - often less than the time they had already served in prison - however, they were not liberated, but were sent to other prisons or concentration camps. There were also rumours that our sentences would not take effect until the war was over, but rumours

abounded in the night and fog of Hitler's prisons and camps. One fact was very ominous: after the NN were sentenced and transported from Wittlich, we heard nothing more about them, and even Herr Klein, despite his best efforts to learn of their whereabouts, could tell us nothing.

September, also saw the departure of our friend and father confessor, Father Joseph de la Martinière. He had done everything possible to help the younger prisoners, for whom he had a great deal of compassion. Father Joseph had taken many risks for us, and had often endangered his own life by attracting the Gestapo's attention. He left with a group of one hundred and fifty NN on 27 September, and on 29 September, fifty of the youngest NN also left for Breslau. At one point, more than six hundred NN had been confined in the prison of Wittlich, but by the end of September, 1943, the prison housed under two hundred of us on the ranges, as well as about sixty sick on the French ward and in the isolation cells.

By end of September, 1943, Maurice had almost stopped eating - symptomatic of the final stages of TB. I often went over to him and sponged his face and hands to make him as comfortable as possible. He had been bedridden so long that his back was covered with large sores. During his final days, as I attended him, he again said to me, "When the war is over Peter, please come and get me! Don't leave me here!" I did my best to comfort him, and told him that I would see that he got back to the Islands after the war. I disliked having that nature of conversation with Maurice, as it brought home my own vulnerability, however, I would have done anything, or said anything, to give him just one second of comfort and happiness. I did not want to see my tall, gentle friend die, as we had been through so much together, and I knew that when he was gone, a large piece of me would go with him. It was a sad time, and there were moments when I was not certain that I really wanted to live, despite my promise to Maurice. At nights, as I lay in my bed, I often thought how brave Maurice had been. I had never heard him complain about his lot, and at times, when I expressed my trepidation about returning alone, he comforted me by saying that I was a hero, and the Bailiff of Jersey and the Attorney General would see that I was honoured - that always raised a cynical smile and a little chuckle between us.

On the morning of 1 October, 1943, while I was changing a patient's dressing, I heard choking sounds coming from Maurice's bed. When I got to his bed, he sat upright and reached out for me. I held his hands, then pulled him to my chest, where I hugged and cradled his head on my shoulder. I begged him not to leave me alone, but he looked at me and weakly whispered, "Remember Peter, tell my Grandfather what happened, and, please don't leave me here!" and with those words Maurice Gould died in my arms, and as he died, the prison clock clanged twice - It was 10:30 am., 1 October, 1943, and my dear friend and companion was gone. I was now alone, but able to consoled myself that Dennis and Maurice were now together. I sponged the blood from the corner

of his lips, washed his face, then straightened out his body, and finally, I gently closed his eyes, after which I pulled his blanket over his face. Mercifully no one interfered, as they knew what I was going through.

I sat at the foot of Maurice's bed and prayed for him, not really knowing what to say to The Lord, but I experienced a feeling of guilt, as I tried to rehearse what I would say to Maurice's grandfather.

I also wondered if he had any other family besides his Grandfather and cousin, Sheila, as he had never mentioned any.

I was still sitting there about ten minutes later, when the doctor told me that he would have to call the prison authorities to report Maurice's death. He then went to the door, and when it opened he reported Maurice's death to the duty warder. Within fifteen minutes, Dr. de Saint Paul came in followed by two trustees carrying a stretcher. After speaking with the French doctor, Dr. de Saint Paul came over and gently shook my hand and offered his condolences, and as Maurice's body was being carried out, he promised to take care of everything.

The door then closed on my dear, brave friend. I was alone, but I remained near his bed area, where I silently thanked Maurice for all the support he had given me, and for giving me the strength to survive, but I also knew that I would have to fight harder to stay alive, as I had no one to turn to. Maurice had always been there to comfort me when I was demoralized. He had been my friend, my big brother, my shelter and my refuge. His passing left a second big hole in my heart, and being a superstitious islander, I thought about the cliché: "Never two without three."

That afternoon Dr. Bithorn came to the ward and expressed his condolences. He told me to choose any six prisoners to act as bearers at Maurice's funeral, which had to take place within two days, according to regulations. He advised me to give their names to the warder, who would ensure that they were made available for the funeral. Dr. Bithorn then took me by the shoulder and steered just outside the ward, where he quietly said, "Hassall, rest assured that I will do my best to keep you in Wittlich as long as I can. I don't know how long I will be able to keep you before the Gestapo send me notice to transport you, but both Dr. de Saint Paul and I will do our best. We don't want to lose you. Please, believe me!" I had no reason to doubt the very brave gentleman.

Later that evening Father Barz came and expressed his compassion. He told me what to expect at the funeral, and hesitatingly asked whether Maurice, a Protestant, could be buried with a Catholic ceremony, as he wished to officiate. I assured the good priest that Maurice would have liked it, and told him that Maurice had given some thought to becoming baptised into the Catholic faith. I also gave Father Barz the rosary which Maurice had made, and asked if he could put it in Maurice's

casket, however, he suggested that I keep it as a keepsake of Maurice.

Two days later, I was met in the prison's outer courtyard by six young prisoners who had been closest to Maurice. They had been given clean prison uniforms and shoes for the occasion. Other than condolences and handshakes, nothing was said. What was there to say? Death among the remaining NN was a daily occurrence in Wittlich, but we were glad that warders Hubert Petrie and Emile Gerin were chosen to accompany us to the cemetery.

We were driven to the Wittlich cemetery in a prison truck, in which Maurice's casket rested. It was a fine coffin, nicely polished with six brass handles. Hubert Petrie said that Dr. Bithorn had chosen the casket, and we knew that this was despite Gestapo orders. At the cemetery we were met by Father Barz, his sister Therese, Oberlehrer Klein and Dr. Bithorn. It was a solemn moment in a war-ravaged country, in which we had witnessed so much cruelty, however, the Germans at Maurice's grave site were of the highest order of humanitarians and manifested the true German sentiments.

Maurice's grave was in the far corner of the graveyard, in the Foreigners' Cemetery, next to that of his Polish friend Chelong, who had died so painfully on the operating table. Over Chelong's grave was a white cross showing his name, nationality and lifespan - Maurice was to be in good company! Father Barz began the burial service and committed Maurice to God, His Maker, and as the service progressed, I was handed a section of the rope to lower Maurice into his grave. When the casket rested on the bottom of the excavation, the sextant retrieved his ropes, rolled them and took them away, after which I scooped up some soil and sprinkled it on the casket. When it was time to leave, Dr. Bithorn said, "Stay with your friend a little longer. I am sure that you have a few words you wish to say in private. I will have Warder Gerin wait outside for you." Then I was alone with Maurice and my memories of him. My tears flowed freely, as I realized how empty my life was and would always be. I had lost my two best friends, and I seriously doubted that I would ever get over their deaths. As I stood looking at Maurice's casket, the sextant kicked his spade, as if to remind me that he had his duty to carry out. I took one last look at the casket, and made a vow to move Maurice out of Germany as soon as I returned to Jersey, then, on those words, I let the sextant do his duty.

I waited until the sextant and his companion had finished their task, then I looked at the freshly replaced earth and selfishly asked: "Why did you do this to me Maurice? Why did you leave me?" And I heard, or imagined that I heard him answer, "You will make it! Do what it takes Peter!" "I'll do my best," I murmured. "Goodbye for now Maurice! Don't worry, I'll be back and get you out of this." Then I turned away and walked to where Emile Gerin waited. Emile asked me how I felt. I thanked him for his concern and said that I felt fine - in fact my mind was suddenly quite clear, which surprised me. I was no longer numb with grief, on the contrary I seemed to have found

inner strength, which I had not experienced for some time. I also had a strong feeling that I would make it back, and as we left the cemetery, I looked over my shoulder and said, "Thank you, Maurice!"

Emile Gerin told me that he would not put handcuffs on me, as regulations required. He also said that we would call in at a friend's house, where he had arranged a little treat. A few minutes later, we stopped at a yellow and brown stucco house, off the main street, where he took me into the kitchen, and handed me a large ham sandwich and a glass of milk. There was no one else in the house, and Emile stood in one corner of the kitchen while I ate. From the neighbouring house I heard the strains of Verdi's Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves. It brought tears to my eyes, as it was a sad piece of music, and as a Nazi slave, I could relate to it.

On the way back to the prison, Emile suggested that the war would not last much longer, but beyond that he did not elaborate. Then, too soon, we were back in the rotunda, where I handed in my shoes and clean uniform, then returned to the French ward to take up my duties.

Our little ward was again devastated on 4 October, 1943, when Father Gavand, a sixty year old priest from the "Vieille Loye," in the Jura Mountains of western France died. He had been ill for some time, and I had spent a lot of time caring for him. I did not know what was wrong with him, other than he had been operated on, and a drain had been inserted in his left side. I knew that puss flowed from the drain, because I emptied and cleaned the receptacle every day, but beyond that I knew nothing and did not ask questions.

Father Gavand was always in great pain, but he suffered silently and prayed constantly. I often saw him raise his eyes to The Lord, and his lips moved silently as he intoned his prayers. He was a great comfort to the ward's patients, as he sustained our faith in The Lord. When I talked to Father Gavand, he told me about his wonderful Jura Mountains, and of the "bon vin" from the area. He said, with a twinkle in his eyes, that it was a little cooler in the Jura mountains than in the major grape growing valleys of France, and he claimed that the cool mountain air improved the grape's sugar content and created France's best wine. He said this with a smile, because his bed was next to a patient who came from Burgundy, and who always rebutted Father Gavand's claim, and laughingly said that all wines, with the exception of Burgundy wines, were unpalatable.

Father Gavand also told me about his ministry and the people he had served. He was very proud of the Veille Loye and its people, and everyone who came in touch with Father Gavand could not help but be influenced by his words, which were mostly of comfort and faith. There was a prolonged silence on the ward when his body was carried away. We had lost another dear friend who would be missed, but remembered for his great faith.

As soon as one patient died on the ward, another took his place from the isolation cells. Beds never remained empty for more than a day, and it was not long before another prisoner, suffering from

TB, took Father Gavin's bed.

In December, 1943, I was visited by Dr. Bithorn, who took me into the hallway, where he told me that he had received written orders from the Gestapo in Trier to ship me to Breslau. He said that Dr. de Saint Paul had written a letter, which he had countersigned and sent to the Gestapo. The letter basically stated that I was too ill and infectious to move. The Director said that he did not know how successful he would be in keeping me in Wittlich, but would let me know when an answer came from Trier.

Christmas 1943, came to the French ward, and the prison authorities had done their best to celebrate it. The soup was thicker, more plentiful and there was a little meat in it. For breakfast, we were given an extra piece of bread with some molasses and a cupful of dried apples. The evening meal also contained a small piece of liver sausage with a piece of smelly cheese and a little margarine. It was a truly festive day for the remaining NN prisoners in Wittlich.

Dr. Jean-Pierre Maillard of Troyes, who had replaced Dr. Normand, also made life as comfortable as possible for everyone on the ward. He was also a very dedicated doctor, and carried on the traditions of Dr. Normand. The doctor had made some Christmas decorations and we had decorated the ward with them. Some of the patients sang Christmas hymns, and I thought that "Minuit Chrétien," (O Holy Night) was the most beautiful Christmas hymn I had ever heard. It was not really a time for rejoicing, as most of us had been imprisoned for almost two years. I was putting on weight, however, I did not dwell on it as I had canalized my brain to think of other things, but I frequently recalled the Luxembourg Room Senior, who had told us: "De-humanize yourselves!" I had come a long way, and intended to live, come what may. It was impossible not to feel ashamed, but as the lone Briton, I was determined to pursue my goal.

In the second week of March, 1944, Dr. Bithorn came to the ward, and again took me outside. He told me that he and Dr. Saint Paul had held up my departure as long as they could, however, he had just received written orders from the Trier Gestapo that I was to be transported to Breslau on Tuesday, 23 March. The good director was upset, but his hands were tied. He and Dr. de Saint Paul had already prolonged my stay beyond my actual trial time, but their latest requests had fallen on deaf and uncaring ears. Dr. Bithorn also said that the Gestapo had informed him that I was scheduled to be tried in Breslau, and nothing, other than my death should prevent me from reaching there for my appointment with the Special Court. Dr. Bithorn could tell me nothing else, but said that he had pushed my case as far as he could. I thanked him for his help and compassion, and told him that I hoped to be able to express my gratitude after the war, when we could talk more freely. He did not reply, but when I looked up, I saw tears in his eyes.

For the remainder of my stay on the ward, everyone saw that I ate my fill. In fact, I was given so much food that I gave much of it back to the doctor, who gave it to his out-patients, who needed it

more than I did.

On the night of 22 March, 1944, I said my goodbyes, but the fact that all the patients, who had been on the ward the day I arrived were dead, did not escape me. They had been replaced by new patients, whose average life span was about three months; depending on the severity of the TB, however, in the quietness of the little ward, their lives sometimes lasted a little longer; even stretching to six months, and in Maurice's case a little longer. The ward was an oasis in a sea of death and misery, and it existed because a few honourable Germans cared and some dedicated French doctors gave their all for their comrades.

On Tuesday, 23 March, Warder Hubert Petrie came for me. He told me to bring all my prison effects along. Kindly, anti-Nazi, Hubert Petrie, allowed me ten minutes to say goodbye. Finally, the door of my "safe haven" closed on me, and I followed Hubert Petrie to the clothing store, where I handed in my prison clothes, in return for my rumpled civilian clothes, signet ring and Oxo tin. I was given a loaf of black bread and a large piece of sausage, which, I was told, had to last three days. I had a few food supplies of my own, and Hausvater Weber looked the other way as I bundled them up in my towel. I was then taken to the administrative wing, where Dr. Bithorn and Father Barz said fond goodbyes, and asked me to come back to see them after the war. Father Barz made the sign of the cross as he blessed me and asked The Lord to be merciful and preserve my life. Then it was time to go.

When we reached the courtyard I was pleasantly surprised to see two older Schupos waiting. I was so happy to see them, that I extended my arms to have the handcuffs put on - I had expected to see SS. The Schupos looked at each other in surprise, then did their duty by telling me that I would be shot if I tried to escape. As I did not tell them that I spoke German, they acted out the actions they would take if I attempted to escape. One of them pointed to me, while the other pretended to run away, at which point the other pointed with his finger at his running comrade and said "Boom! Boom!" He then asked me if I understood. I nodded, while Hubert Petrie grinned, but knowingly and wisely said nothing.

We left Wittlich on foot, obviously bound for the train station. I had been in Wittlich from 24 July, 1942, to 23 March, 1944 - Twenty months in a prison, where, for the most part I had been treated with dignity, particularly by Dr. Bithorn, the Director, Father Barz, the prison Chaplain, dear old Dr. Hans de Saint Paul, Oberlehrer Klein, the youth's teacher and the warders, Hubert Petrie, Emile Gerin and Peter Schneider. Even Karl Chambach had been respectful, although boring. It had been a "good" prison - if there was such an establishment in Nazi Germany.

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**The road to Breslau**

The two Schupos obviously had time to spare, because they leisurely strolled through the streets of Wittlich towards the station. No one gave us a second glance, despite the fact that an untidy, young man, with a shaven head, handcuffs and a hobo's pack, was being escorted through their small town by two policemen. I was very cold, as I was dressed in my thin, woolen sports jacket, flannel pants, white, cotton shirt and summer shoes; whereas the Schupos had on their winter uniforms, long green overcoats, while the citizens of Wittlich still wore their heavy winter clothing.

I noticed the town's cleanliness and apparent exclusion from the war, but I knew that it had not been excluded, because my toilet paper had told me that Wittlich had lost many of its father's and sons - all fallen for Fatherland and Führer. My rear end could attest to some of the losses. That thought caused a smile, and one of the Schupos asked his partner what I had to smile about. The other one suggested, by tapping his finger on his forehead, that I was slightly touched. I held back a smile at that suggestion.

On arrival at the train station, one of the Schupos ordered me to sit on a wooden bench, and from their conversation, I gathered that we had about twenty minutes wait for the train, which would take us to Koblenz, where we would change for Cologne. I sat down next to a very fat lady, who promptly scurried away, but before leaving, she told the Schupos that they had no business allowing criminals to sit next to decent German folk. Her remark irritated one of the Schupos, who told her to shut her "trap," or she would be arrested for interfering with police business. The fat frau snorted, but wisely walked to the other end of the platform, where she told a group of waiting passengers about her concerns. Her voice was loud and her remarks quite derogatory, but were mainly aimed at the policemen. One of the Schupos wanted to arrest her, but the other reminded him that they had more important duties to concern themselves with.

When the train arrived, I was bundled into a third class compartment, but just before the train pulled out, the compartment filled with young soldiers returning from leave. It was not long before one of them asked what I had done to be handcuffed, however, the senior Schupo told the young soldier that it was none of his business, and further advised the remainder not to talk to me, as I was a terrorist. It seemed to appease their curiosity, because they sat silently glaring at the young, untidy terrorist.

The train made a short stop in Cochem, and about thirty minutes later pulled into Koblenz. I did not see any bomb damage, and all the houses around the station were standing. We had a two hour wait, because the railway lines were damaged near Mainz, and as the Schupos did not want to keep me on the railway platform, they took me to the local police station, removed my handcuffs and shoved me into a holding cell.

After I had cleaned myself up as well as I could, I sat at a table, where I ate some of my bread and sausage. My escorts had gone to lunch, and after eating, as there was nothing better to do I lay



down. Before long, an older policeman appeared at the bars, He reminded me to straighten the bunk before I left, then with a sly wink, passed me five cigarettes. I put them in my pocket and thanked the man, who then told me that there was nothing to thank him for, as he had been a prisoner-of-war in Wales during the "Great World War," and had been very well treated.

The old Schupo asked why I had been arrested. I gave him a brief account of Jersey and our escape. He tut-tutted, then told me that I was in "deep trouble," but wished me luck, and with that, he reached through the bars and shook my hand. Before leaving, he put his lips close to the bars then whispered, "Hold on young man! It can't last more than a few months." The old Schupo made my day, particularly as he had suggested, "...a few months," as I judged my probable life span by the amount of food, accommodation - either camp or prison - and harshness of work. I had put on weight, and the last time I stepped on the scales in the French ward, I weighed close to one hundred and thirty pounds, which, I felt, was enough to last those "few months," unless I wound up in another concentration camp, similar to Hinzert. I feared the camps, as there had been talk that some of our NN comrades had been sent to Gross-Rosen, an extremely harsh concentration camp near Breslau.

Shortly before the train arrived, my escorts came back and escorted me to the station. When we boarded the train we were surprisingly put in a first class compartment, in which two German infantry captains sat. It did not take long for one of them to ask what I had done to be handcuffed. The senior Schupo was not impolite, but told the officer that he did not know what I had done, and that he was simply carrying out his orders to take me to a "Versammlungsplatz" (gathering place) in Cologne. He also told the captains that he had been issued strict instructions that I should not communicate with anyone, therefore, he would be, "...obliged if you did not talk to the prisoner." The officers did not take offence, but one of them asked the Schupos if he could give me a cigarette. He was told that, too, was forbidden, as I was not allowed to have contact with anyone. This information made both officers shake their heads, then ignoring the Schupos' orders, one asked me if I spoke German. I shook my head, pointed to my chest and said, "I'm British - Engländer." This irritated the senior Schupo, who asked the captains not say another word to me, or he would call the conductor and have them ejected from the compartment. The captains apologized by saying that they had meant no harm, other than to make a little conversation, as they were returning to the Russian front. The senior Schupo empathized, but suggested that the captains had, no doubt, always carried out their orders, and he was only trying to carry out his - Nothing more was said during the rest of the journey.

The train made two more stops: one at Bad Godesberg and the other at Bonn. In Bonn I saw a lot of bomb damage, however, when we reached the outskirts of Cologne, the bomb damage was on a massive scale. Houses and commercial buildings were demolished as far as I could see. Mounds of

neatly stacked bricks seemed to be everywhere and the citizens picked their way through the rubble of their once beautiful city.

Because of bomb damage, our train was unable to reach the main station, therefore, we were made to de-trained at a siding, some distance from the centre of Cologne. As we drew to a halt, I looked out the window and saw dozens of Schupos in a parking lot, and to my consternation, I saw about a dozen SS, their silver SS ruens prominent on their collars. The sight of them did little to re-assure me, and I quickly found The Lord again, and prayed that I was not going to be handed over to them.

Fortunately, it was not to be, as a car, driven by a Schupo, drove up to fetch my two escorts and me - I breathed a sigh of relief when I was pushed onto the rear seat, where even the bite of the handcuffs into my wrist seemed to compensate for the lack of SS.

We were slowly driven to a medium size-sports stadium, just a few hundred yards from an undamaged bridge over the River Rhine. There, I was taken to an administrative office, where my escorts relinquished their charge of me, but not before retrieving their handcuffs. Once again, my body was signed for by a Schupo officer, which was more reassuring than being signed for by the SS.

The Schupo asked me several questions regarding my identity, but I pretended not to understand. Frustrated, he then showed me a list of typewritten names, in alphabetical order, and with his pencil he pointed to my name, jabbed his pencil in my chest and asked, "Du?" I nodded. He smiled, then put a tick beside name - German bureaucracy had triumphed once more!

After the informal registration, I was escorted onto the stadium's playing field, which already accommodated about two hundred prisoners; mostly in civilian clothes, however, there were some thirty prisoners wearing the grey, blue-striped concentration camp "uniforms." It was the first time I had seen the uniforms, although I had heard about them from other NN prisoners who had been in camps, where identical uniforms were worn.

Most prisoners tended to group together in their national groups, where they introduced themselves to each other. There were no guards directly on the field, but the stadium was ringed by military guards, all with fixed bayonets. The indoor toilets were open, and I asked a guard, near the exit, if I could use them. He said nothing, but nodded in the general direction of the toilets. It was nice to have a choice for a change, as one door was marked, "Frauen" and the other "Herren" (Ladies & Gents). I was fortunate to have brought along a handful of death notices from Wittlich, as the stalls contained no toilet paper. I selected the cleanest one available, in which I made up a sausage sandwich, then sat down and slowly enjoyed it. When I was through, I carefully tied my hobo's bundle, then went back and joined the other prisoners on the playing field.

A hour or so later, three German Red Cross trucks arrived in the stadium. Some young, uniformed girls jumped down from them, then began handing out thick slices of black bread and margarine to

the prisoners. There was even a ladle of ersatz coffee for those who had mugs, but as I had no mug, I drank water from an outside faucet. Just as I finished my drink, a young Netherlander offered me a mouthful of his coffee. He asked what nationality I was, and when I told him, he confided that he was planning to escape if an opportunity presented itself. He invited me to join him, but I declined, for the same reason I had not escaped at the Gare Montparnasse in Paris. I also considered that there were too many guards, among whom was the contingent of brutal SS in charge of the men and women in striped uniforms. It was possibly a cowardly refusal, but I did not see how a successful escape could be accomplished without planning and identity papers; besides which, I stood out like a sore thumb in my rumpled summer clothing and razed head.

The Netherlander, Jan, accepted my refusal in good faith, but in an effort to make me change my mind, he told me that the City of Cologne was not far from his home in Venlo, Holland. He even suggested that we could reach it in two days, and once there, he had enough connections to hide in Holland for a few weeks, after which we would try to cross into Spain. Despite the great temptation, I still declined, but could not help wondering if I had become too Germanized.

But after deep reflection, I concluded that my odds of holding out in prisons were greater than escaping, because I knew that if I was caught and handed over to the Gestapo, I would be shot without trial. I also reasoned that if the Germans were intended to try me, I would take my chances with the Special Tribunal, but deep down I knew that my refusal was simply sheer apprehension at my chance to escape.

That night, Jan slept next to me on the damp, cold grass of the playing field. From time to time, searchlights were switched on and played over the huddled prisoners. At about 9:00 pm., the relative quietness was shattered by air-raid sirens and the thunder of anti-aircraft guns, and as soon as the sirens sounded, the guards disappeared; probably into an air-raid shelter, however, they left us on the playing field, guarded by two machine gun posts. When the all-clear sounded, the Aryan heroes re-appeared to continue their patrol of the stadium. No bombs fell on Cologne that night, but we heard the crumps of their explosions as they fell on a nearby city.

In the early hours of the morning, we were awakened by the usual Teutonic screams and threats. We were then assembled in columns of five, counted and recounted, until all lists tallied, and when they did, we were marched towards the stadium's exit, flanked by dozens of soldiers and Schupos - the men and women in concentration camp uniforms were left behind with their SS guards.

Just as we reached the archway leading out of the stadium, the air-raid sirens sounded again. The guards panicked, and ordered us to run. When we reached the roadway outside the stadium, confusion reigned supreme, and taking advantage of the situation, Jan took off like a startled hare; vaulting over heaps of rubble, and finally disappearing around the first corner, closely followed by

guards, some of whom fired their weapons in his general direction. The remaining guards cocked their rifles and fired shots in the air, as a warning for us to stay put. We were made to lie flat on the road, and quickly did as we were ordered. No one moved, as too many weapons were trained on us by panicky guards with itchy trigger fingers. When things calmed down, we were ordered to our feet, then made to run to the siding, where our train waited. There was no sign of the Jan, nor had the pursuing guards returned. I fervently hoped that he had made it.

The waiting train was made up of five cattle cars and three armoured cell-wagons, and the entire assembly area was ringed with Schupos and armed soldiers. We were separated into several groups, and when my name was called, I was taken to one of the cell wagons, where I was put into a small cell, similar to the one Maurice and I had been in on our way from Paris to Trier. I hoped to be left alone, but ten minutes later the door opened, and I was joined by a young woman, carrying a large suitcase. I asked if she spoke English or French, but she shook her head. Then in flawless German, she said that she spoke German and Russian.

The young lady was Anna Shchitovka, a twenty year old from the Ukraine, who had been rounded up by the Germans when they captured her native town of Zhitomir. About two weeks later, Anna and many other young Ukrainian women were forced into compulsory work-service in Germany. She said that she had worked as a translator for the German Ministry of Propaganda in Berlin, where she had lived with a German family, until 19 March, 1944. About that time, the Red Army Ukrainian Front made further advances, and those advances put Anna and her colleagues out of a job, as their value vanished - there was no further requirement for German speaking Ukrainians to translate for Ukrainian listeners as the Red Army had by passed them.

Anna and her co-workers had not been given any warning that anything was amiss. They were simply rounded up by the German police when they arrived at the Propaganda Ministry for work. They were then escorted back to their homes, where they were allowed to pack one suit case, after which they were taken to a women's camp near Mainz, where they stayed several days, before being taken to the sports stadium in Cologne. The women had not been given any reasons for their arrest, nor had they been told their destination.

I was surprised when Anna told me that she did not want to meet up with Red Army, because she would be shot for having collaborated with the Germans. I found her statement difficult to understand, and asked why she thought she would be shot. Anna explained that Ukrainians were a different race from the majority Russian people, and most Ukrainians wanted the Ukraine to become a sovereign nation again. Anna also said that the mere fact she had been in Germany, working for the German Ministry of Propaganda was sufficient ground for immediate execution, and even if the Soviets were not made aware of her work in Germany, the fact that she had even

worked in Germany would earn her many years exile in Siberia. Anna expressed her dislike for the Russians, and expected only the worst from them. When she had worked in Berlin she had also heard that Soviet Commissars had already imprisoned thousands of liberated Red Army prisoners of war and former Polish army soldiers, and as I was unaware of the ethnic divisions in the Soviet Union, her statement astonished me.

Anna also told me that she still had her German identity papers, and if a chance to escape presented itself, she intended to take it. I told her about Jan, and she said that after the guards began to chase him, she almost ran in the opposite direction, but the mounds of bricks had prevented her from taking flight. I wished her well, and promised to help her escape, but I did not rate her chances too high, but then I did not know Ukrainian women.

As we talked, I told Anna what I had done and what had happened to Maurice and me since May, 1942. She shook her head in disbelief, and added that she knew very little about camps and SS, as she had lived in the lie-filled world of the Ministry of Propaganda, where everything had been coloured pink and where she had translated German newscasts into Ukrainian, for transmission to the Ukrainian people. She also said that she had worked without duress, but mainly because the Germans had promised to restore Ukrainian sovereignty, after conquering the Soviet Union. I was even more astonished when Anna told me that the Germans had formed a Ukrainian Army, under a General, who was to lead the division against the Soviets, and as Anna continued, I realised how ill-informed I had been.

About three hours into the journey, Anna opened her suitcase, from which she took several sandwiches, one of which she gave me. I ate it with relish, as it contained a thick slice of cheese, between two layers of tasty white bread - my first white bread in two years. Throughout the day, our train was delayed because of air raid warnings and rail line blockages, but we kept on talking, as there was so much to say. Anna gave me her address and a pencil, about four inches long. It was a wonderful gift, and could be easily secreted, as the Germans rarely searched body cavities. Our informative talk was finally interrupted when we arrived in Hannover, just as dusk was falling.

In Hannover, the three armoured cell-wagons were uncoupled from the cattle cars, and a smaller locomotive shunted them to a platform. The occupants were ordered out of the wagons, then lined up on a station platform, where again they were counted by Schupos. After they were satisfied that we were all present, some German Red Cross women arrived with two large hand-carts, on which there were slices of black bread, pieces of ersatz liver-sausage and two large cauldrons of steaming acorn coffee. Anna, who was just ahead of me, went to the first cart containing the bread, and when she was handed a piece of bread, she put it in her handbag, then casually walked between the two Red Cross carts, and vanished into the crowd of German passengers.

When everyone was fed, another head count was made, then all hell broke loose when it was discovered that they were one body short. I was later dragged into the guards' compartment, and questioned by a senior Schupo and an Army lieutenant. I pretended not to understand them, until an English speaking German soldier arrived. I was accused of helping Anna escape, but I vehemently denied knowing anything about it. I raised my voice and told my interrogators that I had enough troubles of my own without helping someone to escape. My words seemed to diffuse the issue a little, and taking heart, I went through my routine again, and struck my chest and yelled, "I'm British. I'm a bloody Engländer, not a bloody Russky." I kept up the act, yelling that the Russkys were "Kaput," and somehow it paid off, because I was taken back to my cell, from which a guard removed Anna's suitcase.

About an hour later, several trucks arrived at the platform. We were taken out of our cells again, and put on the trucks, which drove us to a prison, somewhere in the City Hannover. When we arrived at the large, dirty-looking jail, about twenty of us were crammed into a small cell which was infested with blood-hungry bed bugs. When morning came, we were thrown a hunk of dry bread and a little margarine and coffee, then about an hour later, we were put back on the trucks, then driven back to the railway station. On the route back we were able to see that Hannover was badly damaged. It was not a pretty sight, although it was re-assuring.

Probably because of Anna's escape, I was left alone in the little cell, but I was content, as I was able to curl up on the floor and sleep. Before dozing off, I ate some bread, and wondered how long it would be before we were given any more food. I also thought about Anna, and hoped that she had made good her escape. My mind also went back to the things she had told me, and I wondered why we, at De la Salle College, had not been told of the many ethnic races in the Soviet Union, or of their desire to become sovereign nations.

The next days were uneventful as our three cell-wagons were shunted here and there, around damaged railway lines and sometimes standing at sidings or in marshalling yards for hours. We had nothing better to do other than foul the German railway tracks below the toilets, which had no container tanks. We spent one night in Halle, in a filthy, dirty prison, where the bed-bugs must have all been wearing party badges. Their appetites were voracious, and we all left that prison covered in large red bumps where they had bitten us.

The second night was spent in another filthy prison in the Town of Cottbus. It also crawled with bed bugs and criminal prisoners who did their best to steal our pitiful possessions. One of the thugs attempted to snatch my precious bundle, and for his efforts he hopped around holding his crotch, much to the amusement of the warders. It was impossible to sleep, and we spent most of the night scratching and guarding our meagre effects. The stench was awful because the large galvanized

drum, which served as a toilet, had overflowed and added to our discomfort. The next day, when we arrived at the railway station, there was only one cell-wagon attached to the rear of a civilian passenger train. Again, I had a little cell to myself, but when I went to the washroom, I was able to sponge off some of the dirt and stench of the last three cells.

En route to Breslau, we spent short spells in two more filthy, dirty prisons at Glogau and Sagan, where, if it were possible, the bed bugs were the largest and most voracious I had ever seen. After several more detours and hold ups, we arrived at Strafgefängnis Breslau - Kletschkaustrasse 31, but before I was let out of my little cell, I secreted Anna's pencil.

A Schupo van was waiting for me and two other prisoners, and as we boarded it, the Schupos made the usual threats of shooting us if we attempted to escape. My two companions, adult Frenchmen, had joined the train at Cottbus, and other than a few words of greeting, they said nothing more to me. Perhaps they did not trust me, but did anyone trust anyone any more?

At the Kletschkaustrasse Prison, I was put through the usual procedures of surrendering my civilian clothes, ring and Oxo tin; all neatly wrapped in my towel, then shoved in a gunny sack. In return I received clean, dungaree-type clothes, two blankets and an empty mattress sack, into which I stuffed straw, which was piled in a large cell in the prison's basement. I over stuffed the mattress cover, as I did not wish to sleep on wooden or iron bed slats, but before I was taken upstairs to my cell, I was visited by an evil-smelling barber, who shaved me and gave my hair a trim. I was surprised at the short back and sides cut, but later found out that the prison authorities allowed our hair to grow, because they did not want us going into the Special Court looking like razed sheep. I was put in solitary confinement, where I quickly adjusted to the Kletschkaustrasse prison's routine. Reveille was at 6:00 am., followed by a thin slice of black bread and coffee. At noon there was the usual watery soup, made from old turnips, many of which had turned to wood. Finally there was an evening meal, at about 5:00 pm., which consisting of a thinner slice of bread, a teaspoon of fruit compost, or a small lump of margarine and acorn coffee. Sometimes, instead of the evening slice of bread, we were given a half litre of watery, grain soup. The diet was certainly not the same quality nor quantity as in "good old Wittlich" - things did not look too good, and I was thankful for my stay in the French ward and thankful to S. for having given me the chance to survive. I was also very much aware that I would need every ounce of flesh on my bones in order to do so.

My cell was quite similar to the one in Wittlich, except it was smaller and very dirty. The Breslau warders were faceless, silent men, who said very little and generally indicating with their keys, what was expected of me. I also contemplated that it was from this cell that I would probably have my long-awaited day in court, and while I was in the cell, I often thought about being guillotined, and that did not make for peaceful nights.

Like every other German prison, some things never changed, and as soon as darkness fell, the prison grapevine warmed up. I let it be known that I had arrived, and was happy to learn that my Netherland friends, Gerald and Henk, were in the same prison. Unknown voices asked if I knew my trial date, and I replied that I did not, and on hearing this, two or three of my comrades yelled the same advice, "Eh Pierre! When you get to court, deny everything! Don't admit a thing! Compris?" I certainly did.

I learned that some of my companions had been taken to nearby Freiburgstrasse Prison, in another district of Breslau. I also learned that many of them had already been tried by the Special Court, which sat in the adjoining "Palais de Justice." Once tried, the condemned NN were sent back to both prisons, from which several were sent to work on outside kommandos. The NN held in the Kletschkaustrasse prison, only did odd jobs, or sat around their cells dreaming up food recipes. There was a rumour that they were being detained just long enough to make up a good size transport, after which they would be sent elsewhere.

The Kletschkaustrasse Prison was a gloomy, dirty, de-personalized prison. This was probably because the war was going badly for the Germans, and the prison staff knew the Red Army was fast approaching Breslau. My friends yelled that, with two exceptions, the guards said nothing and did nothing other than their required duties, and none of them leaked news about the war. I also learned that most of my friends, who had already been tried, were crammed in large holding cells in another wing of the prison.

It was terrifying for those waiting to be tried, as we now knew that the Special Court had meted out several death sentences. It was also know that those sentenced to death, were placed in special cells, where they spent their final days in chains, and practically without food, as the Germans felt that it was non-productive feeding those condemned to death.

Some of my friends, sentenced to "Zuchthaus" (Hard labour), had been transported elsewhere, immediately after being sentenced. A few NN had been found innocent, while others had received light sentences, however, instead of being liberated, they were still with us, or had been sent to other prisons. Rumour had it that they had been handed over to the SS, who took them to the sinister concentration camp, Gross-Rosen, which appeared to be the main camp for the NN in Silesia.

I was told that some of my closest friends, particularly the Breton group, worked in a sugar factory at Burgweide, just outside Breslau, where they had met up with French prisoners of war. I was repeatedly advised not to talk about my pending trial, as there were collaborators who reported everything they heard - at least some things had not changed! I asked if André Callaux was in the prison, but no one had seen him, although he may have been in another wing.



The duty warder often banged on my door, and told me to shut my trap. I ignored him, because there was no longer any need to hold back because someone rapped on the door; besides which, I had too much catching up to do. I told my friends that Maurice was dead, but surprisingly, they already knew.

On the first night, it was impossible to sleep, because from every corner of my cell, I was attacked by blood sucking bed-bugs. I thought that I had met the finest on my way to Breslau, but the Kletschkaustrasse bugs were the largest, fastest, fattest and hungriest I had ever experienced. They bit every part of my body, and after crushing dozens of them, my hands and cell stank of their sour odour. I was thankful when 6:00 am. arrived, at which time I stripped off, then washed down with cold water. After washing, I searched for the pesky bugs, but was unable to find even one. I thought they might be hiding in my straw mattress, and I resolved to empty it as soon as an opportunity presented itself.

After my first breakfast in Breslau, a warder came into my cell, followed by a prisoner carrying several blue boxes of unglued, unfolded, business-size, white envelopes, a pot of glue, a brush and a wooden pallet-like stick. I was told that I had to make envelopes, and that a daily quota was expected. The criminal prisoner then demonstrated how to make the envelopes, while the warder stood by. That evening, when the warder screamed at me for my pitiful efforts, I showed him my stiff finger, and told him that it would not fully bend, which made it hard to make envelopes. He was not impressed, and told me that I was a "bad envelope-maker," but he was more infuriated, as my spoilage rate was quite high, and, indeed, I was forced to agree with him, as I had glue all over the table, floor and myself.

However, making envelopes turned out to be a Godsend, as they came packed in blue cardboard boxes, and from this cardboard, I cut out two covers for diaries. I then took unglued envelopes, sized them, and made dozens of pages, then I unravelled some string from my mattress, and stitched the pages in the diaries, after gluing them in place. When the first diary was dry, I began writing all the events, dates, names and occurrences that I could recall since my arrest on 3 May, 1942. I did not make too many envelopes, but news of the approaching Soviets had mellowed most warders, and they did not persist.

I was told that some NN had been sentenced to death by the Special Court, and had been guillotined in the prison. It was said that the bloody instrument was located in a small prison yard, but wherever it was, the thought of having my head cut off was unpleasant, particularly when I thought about a gloomy film of Mary Queen of Scots, in which she was decapitated with an axe. The flashback to that film made me even sicker, and my bowels contracted every time I thought about it. The prison barber passed by weekly, and he confirmed that decapitations took place in the prison

yard. Beyond that, he volunteered little else, and in an attempt to loosen his tongue, I gave him one of the cigarettes given to me by the old Schupo in Koblenz. This loosened the man's tongue a little, and he told me that some Czechs, Poles and French had been decapitated in the prison yard. It was not a pleasant conversation, but I needed to be prepared for the worst. I asked him if there were any more British in the prison, but he replied that to the best of his knowledge he did not know of any, but would check and let me know if he found any.

### **Trial by Sondergericht**

I remained with the envelopes, my diaries and lightning-quick bed bugs until the morning of Wednesday, 31, May, (Maurice's birthdate) at which time I was taken to the prison's filthy, administrative office, where a fat senior warder told me that I was to be tried by the Special Tribunal the following day, Thursday, 1 June, 1944. I said nothing, which caused the fat man to raise his eyebrows and stare at me as if I was a complete idiot. He then asked if I had understood, but I still said nothing. Finally, he fetched a French speaking Alsatian criminal prisoner, who, in French, asked me if I had understood what the warder had said. I held my tongue. After all, what there to say? The warder became quite exasperated, and booted me out of his office.

Early the next morning, the barber came in and shaved me. I was seventeen years and seven months of age, and had a little more beard than when I had been arrested two years before. He also trimmed my hair, however, we were unable to say too much as a slovenly warder stood nearby. I managed to slip the barber another rumped cigarette, and as he left, he quietly wished me the German equivalent of "Good luck!"

Some time after breakfast, I was fetched by a diminutive warder who conducted me through several corridors, until I was finally pushed into a large cell, where seven other NNs waited. All but one was known to me. Four of them had been part of a Communist resistance cell near Paris, and I knew two of that group quite well. We did not have too much time to talk, as the four young men discussed their defence strategy. At about 9:00 am., the four were the first to be fetched to face the Special Court. It seemed if ages had passed before another of us was fetched for trial. The first four did not return to the cell, which was disappointing, as I may have learned something of the judges' moods.

After recess, I found myself alone in the cell, and as I waited, I wondered if my tail-end place was significant. At any rate, the months of fear, rumours and waiting had ended, and I was either going to be guillotined or given a long prison sentence, but I was also aware that my deportment and fighting spirit was going to be a factor in any verdict. I was not about to roll over and die willingly.

I had always been a fighter, but I knew that my next fight would be the most critical of all, as my life was on the line. I was very much aware that some NN had been guillotined for having done less than I had, but I hoped that the changing war situation, my nationality and my languages would go a long way to saving my life - I was as ready as I could ever be, and once again I reached out and found the Good Shepherd.

Finally, it was my turn. The warder led me into a large courtroom, complete with public seats, prisoner's dock and a wide judges' bench. There was a clock which told me that it was 12:55 pm. The Special Tribunal had dispatched the other three cases relatively quickly, and I hoped that I

would not be there too long, as I felt that a short trial would be in my favour.

There were only four people in the court room, excluding the warder. I had no idea who they were, but they sat in the public seats, and by their clothing, it seemed to me that they were not part of the general public, as they had the stamp of Gestapo or policemen written all over them.

In the prisoner's box, I felt quite naked, let alone feeling dirty and repulsive. I did not know what to expect, but anticipated the worst. One could have heard a pin drop, and I heard my heart thump against my ribs. I was scared out of my wits, but determined to put up a fight. My tension eased a little when three judges came into the courtroom from a door behind their bench. One of them carried a package of manilla envelopes and files, while the others carried black, leather briefcases. They were dressed in black robes, funny little hats and German eagles and Swastikas prominent on the shoulders of their robes.

The middle judge, seemingly the senior one, looked at me and asked if I needed an interpreter. His question was relayed through a middle-age civilian, whom I suspected was to act as a French translator. I answered, in polite German, that I would prefer an English interpreter, as I was English. Tongue in cheek, I also asked to be represented by an English speaking lawyer. I made these remarks, not because my French was not fluent, but I wanted the trio of judges to be aware that I was British.

There was a quiet, but hurried conference on the judges' bench, after which the senior judge looked at me, and asked if I understood enough German to get on with the trial, as no English speaker translators were available, as they had not been forewarned of my national status. I replied that my German was fluent enough, but I would have to be excused if I failed to understand every legal word. The judge on the left then asked me to confirm that I was Peter Denis Hassall, born on 20 November, 1926, in the Parish of St. Clement, Jersey, Channel Islands. I said that I was, and again, I excused myself, and asked if I was going to be represented by a lawyer. I almost fell out of the box when the senior judge said that a defense lawyer was not required as they had all the facts, and as he said that, he tapped the mound of files on the bench - it seemed to me that I was pre-judged through whatever evidence lay in front of them.

The senior judge went on to inform me that I was charged with: 1. Espionage; 2. Illegally attempting to escape from the Island of Jersey in order to wage war on Germany; 3. Illegal possession of a boat with which the escape was made; 4. Possession of an illegal maritime chart used in the escape and 5. I was an enemy of the German Reich. When he finished reading the charges, he asked me how I pleaded to them.

I replied that I did not understand the fifth charge of being "An enemy of the German Reich." He explained that it was a valid charge in occupied countries, and meant that in committing any hostile action against the Germans, I had acted against German orders, which meant that I was hostile to

the occupation authorities. Then, for good measure, one of the judges informed me that Charge No. 5 was punishable by death or a lesser sentence.

When I asked the senior judge if I could reply to the charges in any order, he became irritated, and asked rather harshly, "How do you plead to these charges Hassall?"

"Not guilty!" I answered, and as I looked up I saw a hint of a smile cross the senior judge's face. It was not an unfriendly smile. He seemed to have been amused at my reply, and I wondered if any NN had ever pleaded guilty. The faces of the other two judges remained impassive, and as they made up the majority, I wished that they had smiled too, but it seemed as if they were less than impressed with my plea.

The senior judge said that the court would deal with the charges in order, then asked, "How can you say that you are not guilty of espionage, when this photograph album contains many photographs of German troops, aeroplanes, artillery, tanks and fortifications. Was the album not in your possession when you tried to escape from the Island of Jersey?"

Seeing my photograph album on the judges bench brought a ton of bricks crashing down on my head. Neither the Jersey nor the Paris Gestapo had mentioned having the album, although I assumed that they had it, as Maurice had mentioned the photographs, albeit, not the album. I asked if I could see the album in order to identify it, as well as to gain time to mend my shattered nerves. The judge passed the album to the court clerk, who then handed it to me.

I leafed through it, and although it was water-stained, it was definitely my album, and was full of photographs of: German military ordnance and materiel, military installations, aeroplanes and fortifications and a host of other incriminating photographs. There was even my brother's name on the inside cover, so that I could not refute that it belonged to my family. I took a long, slow look through the album, before replying, "Sir, I did not know that the photograph album was with us. If it was, then it was probably in our suitcase, and one of my dead companions must have put it there without my knowledge, as we took only the one suit case with us. You will also see that the name, inside the front cover, is not mine."

Grasping the bull by the horns, I continued, "I also do not understand how possession of these photographs can be classed as espionage, because if you look closely, you will see that the photos are all different film sizes, and most of the people in the pictures are posing to have their pictures taken, in fact, every photograph in that album was taken by a German soldier, sailor or airman, and I cannot presume that any German soldier is going to pose to be photographed by a fifteen-year old spy, particularly standing in front of a fighter plane or gun emplacement." This reply elicited a loud chuckle from one of the men in the public benches.

I did not think it wise to labour the point too long, and accordingly, I handed the album back to the clerk, who gave it to the right hand judge, who leafed through it for a few minutes before asking

me, "How did you get all these photographs?"

I answered, "Sir, I had nothing to do with them. I was a fifteen-year old schoolboy when I was arrested, however, my father was an official photographer for the German Forces on the Island of Jersey, which permitted him to process German soldiers' films. He had hundreds of German clients, as Germans are keen photographers. Those photographs were put in that album because there were many spoilages during printing, and sometimes, too many prints were made, or the owners never called in for them, before being posted back to Germany. It is these photographs, which were put in that album. They are harmless souvenirs, and certainly not intended for espionage purposes. Again, I did not know that the album was in the suit case, and if the photographs constitute espionage, then you will have to consider that all the Germans who took them are guilty of espionage, as I did not own a camera, and had little interest in photography.

"What would you have done with these photographs had you reached England?" asked one of the judges.

"I can't answer that question, as I had no idea that the album was with us. It was kept in my father's shop, and my friends, including German friends, often leafed through it. It was never hidden, and I have no doubt that one of my deceased friends thought it a good idea to bring it along with us. Furthermore, I do not think that there is anything of military value in the album. May I have another look at it, please?" The senior judge replied that it would not be necessary, but before pushing the album to one side of the bench, he lifted the front cover, and obviously noted that my name was not the one in the album.

The judges quietly debated my answers, before asking, "Are you not guilty of leaving the island with the aim of joining the British Armed Forces to wage war on Germany?"

I replied that I was guilty of leaving the island, but not guilty of the rest of the charge. I asked the court to consider my age, as I was sure that they would see that I had been only fifteen years and six months of age when I was arrested. I added that to the best of my knowledge, it was not possible to join the British Army until one was eighteen, and even on this particular day, 1 June, 1944, I was still only seventeen, and had been in prison for over two years. I explained that I had joined the escape, only because I was influenced by two older boys, and my sole aim in going along with them had been to continue my schooling in England, as I wanted to become a bacteriologist, as this was not possible in Jersey, which did not have a university.

The right hand judge reminded me that another of the charges was that I was in possession of an illegal boat. I answered that the boat had not been purchased illegally, but with the intent of going fishing, and before I had bought it, I had obtained a fishing permit from the German controlling authorities. I explained the food shortages on the island, and told the judges that many islanders

fished to supplement their rations, and handed much of their catch to the Germans. I said that both Dennis and Maurice knew that I had the boat, and they had influenced me into leaving the island, which I did not consider to be an aggressive act, but the act of a younger boy being pressured by older ones. I hoped that my answer had taken care of the charge of being illegally in possession of a boat, and I assumed that it had, as they did not return to the subject of the boat again.

The judges again debated in low voices and made several notes before asking, "Why were you in possession of a hand-made maritime chart?"

I answered that I had no knowledge of a maritime chart, at which the senior judge reached into the pile of document and held up Captain Sowden's chart. I hoped that my mouth was not hanging open too wide, but I managed to say that I did not know whose chart it was, and had never set eyes on it. I suggested that it had been obtained either by Dennis or Maurice, as I certainly had never seen it before. I was asked to take a look at the chart and explain to the judges how we intended to reach England, but after looking over the chart, I said that I had no idea how we were supposed to reach England, as I knew nothing about navigation, and I had been along merely along for the ride. I also noted some German script on the chart. It was a pencilled observation that the "evidence" was found on Dennis' body.

I was relieved when they went on to ask, "How can you say that you are not Germany's enemy (Deutschfeindlich)? Your actions were unfriendly and endangered the lives of German troops. How do you answer that question?"

I said that I had always had good relations with the Germans in Jersey, and gave the judges several names of German officers who could attest to the fact. I also told the judges that I had gone out of my way to be friendly, having studied German so that I could talk to the troops who came into my father's shop. I also pointed out that I was often invited to the Water Police Headquarters, where I had made many friends, and for more weight, I threw in that my family had been friendly with the Germans troops, and our home was filled, at least one night a week, with soldiers and sailors who came to play cards and relax in a homelike surrounding. I explained that my mother was so friendly with the German authorities, that she was one of a handful of Channel Islanders allowed to travel to France and Belgium, in order to buy photographic supplies, so that the German troops could have their films processed. Then looking the senior judge in the eyes, I blandly suggested that I had never committed one unfriendly act against the German occupiers, and whoever had made the suggested, certainly did not know to what extent that I and my family co-operated with the occupying troops.

Finally, in a very sombre tone, the senior judge asked me, "Do you realize that all these charges are punishable by death? They are extremely serious charges, young man!"

"Sir, I realize that they are serious charges, but I am not guilty of any of them. My only guilt is that

I let myself be influenced by others. I had no intention of harming Germany, nor can it be said that I did Germany any harm. If anything, I am only guilty of having behaved in an irresponsible manner. I have lost both my friends, one by drowning and one of TB in the prison of Wittlich, and I respectfully hope that you will consider that I have been punished enough for my schoolboy stupidity. I did not intend any disrespect, and I respectfully ask if I look like a spy and terrorist?" None of the judges answered that plea, but the senior judge said, "Young man! You have demonstrated respect for this court, and we compliment you on your use of our language, in which you defended yourself very well. You most certainly did not need a lawyer. You did quite well by yourself. Now go back and sit with your warder until we return!" - it was 2:42 pm. on the court clock. I had been in the dock only one and three quarter hours, but it had seemed like a lifetime. After I was seated near the warder, the three judges took their pens, books and evidence, then went out the back door. When they were gone, the warder took a sandwich from an aluminum, kidney-shaped box, and cut it in two pieces, giving me the larger piece. I was quite surprised, as I had thought him to be a typical Hun. As he chewed his bread, and without looking at me, he quietly said, "Bravo young man!" But I did not feel too brave. My bowels were contracted, and I felt very faint, probably through fear and apprehension. I had been taken off guard by the album and Captain Sowden's chart, as I had not expected them to have followed me all the way to Breslau - I should have known Germany bureaucracy better!

As I summed things up, I felt that I did not stand a chance, given all the material evidence on the judges' bench, and I already had visions of the bloody guillotine, which almost made me bring up my sandwich.

Almost an hour later, the three judges returned without the bulky dossier. I was put back in the prisoner's box, where I stood and clutched its edge to stop myself from falling. What was it to be? Life or death? I could not tell from their impersonal faces, but I was very scared, given the judge's last remarks about all charges being very serious. Had they believed any of my replies? However, I did experience a certain relief, as the waiting was over and one way or another, my fate was sealed. I had done my best, but had it been good enough?

The senior judge looked at me for a moment or two before saying, "We have deliberated, and find you guilty on all charges, although your guilt is not direct, but mostly by association; which is also punishable by death. It is the verdict of this court that you are guilty on all charges which are punishable by death, however, because of your youth and as your guilt was mostly by association, this court has been understanding and merciful by commuting the mandatory death sentence to eight years hard labour."

The judges probably did not know what they had done in sentencing me to eight years hard labour, which translated to Gross Rosen concentration camp, which was a worse fate than a death sentence,



as it meant death by degrees of starvation and savagery. My mind went numb, and I was unable to think, and did not realize that the senior judge was still speaking.

"....again, you are very fortunate, young man. Because of the time you have already served, this court has decided to give you the minimum sentence, and has also decided to commute that eight years hard labour to four years prison. We have also decided that you now understand the foolishness of your actions, which brought about the death of your two friends. Again, this court congratulates you for the manners and respect you have shown. Now leave our court young man, and we advise you to think twice before becoming involved in such dangerous events!"

I was unable to leave their court, as I had passed out their prisoner's box. The first to come over was the warder, followed by the senior judge, who brought a glass of water from the bench, and as I got to my knees, I heard the judge ask, "Is everything in order?" All I could say was, "Yes, thank you! I am fine now."

When I was able to walk, the warder took me back to my cell, where, an hour or two later I was visited by the prison doctor. He was not a pleasant person, and smelled of liquor and stale body odour, however, he gave me five lumps of sugar, which he said were "Good for shock."

It was over and I had made it. It 4:00 pm. according to a church clock which sounded the peals. My trial had lasted almost two hours, but given the two years and one month I had been in Germany's Night and Fog, I was not out of it yet.

When the warder came to collect my envelopes that day, he said that it did not matter that I had not made any, because I was being moved the following day. He added that I was a liability as an envelope maker, and he was happy to see me go. As soon as the door slammed, I fished out my diary from its hiding place, then wrote in every word I could recall from the trial. It was almost dark when I finished, and it had been a very long and trying day; one that I would remember for the rest of my life.

When darkness fell, the grapevine started up, "Hey, Pierre! Ca va? What did you get?" asked friendly voices.

"Four years," I happily answered.

"Simple or hard labour?" they came back.

"Simple," I answered.

"They'll move you tomorrow, so hide everything because they might search you again. Get some sleep Pierre! Watch those bed bugs!"

I looked up and asked Him to explain to Dennis and Maurice that I regretted blaming them for everything, but they had been my only defence. I imagined that I heard Dennis tell me, "There's nothing to forgive Peter," and I also imagined that I heard Maurice say, " Now you'll make it! Don't forget your promise!"

Real or unreal, I answered my dear friend Maurice, "I won't forget Maurice. I promise you." I also felt that I was forgiven much of the guilt I had carried, and hoped that their families would understand what I had done and why I had done it, if and when I returned home alone. It had been a tense day, but I had been surprised that the judges had acted relatively decently; although they had played the roles of judge and jury. I had expected them to behave the same way as the Gestapo or SS, however, they had exercised some semblance of jurisprudence.

As some NN had been sentenced to death for lesser charges, I credited my age and nationality for the lenient sentence. I also suspected that my ability to speak German had something to do with it, as at one point, all three judges had laughed convincingly at one of my answers. They had, as they said, respected my attitude, and no doubt they were aware that I had been fighting for my life. I also felt that I had given the most outstanding performance of my life.

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### **Retreat and liberation**

On 2 June, a seedy, little warder came to my cell and told me to pack up everything and follow him. I had little to take, but just as I was about to leave, he told me to bring my mattress with me. I asked if I could leave it behind, as it was full of bed bugs, but the sour, little individual gave me a mouthful of verbal abuse instead, however, he relented when I asked to see the Head Warder. He then took me to the prison basement, where he let me change the straw, and when I had pulled out the old straw, there was not even one little blood sucker in sight.

When my mattress was filled, the warder led me along grimy corridors, until we came to a large corner cell, then with a curt gesture of his key ring, he motioned me in. There were twelve or so prisoners inside, some of whom I did not know, however, my two Netherland friends, Gerald and Henk were there. The good natured Gerald asked with a smile, "Well Peter, what took you so long?" I was happy to see that his cheerfulness was still intact.

The three of us spent a day or so catching up on past events, and trying to determine what was going to happen to us, and as we reminisced, we spoke English; not because we intended to slight our French comrades, but because it was a welcome change from speaking French. A Frenchman took offence at our English. He was an ex-sailor with one eye, who was possibly a little deranged from the ill-treatment he had suffered in the camps, because each time we spoke English, he became quite agitated, and accused us of plotting against him. We tried to reassure him that we were not talking about him, however, he refused to believe us, and insisted that we speak "his" language. He also reminded us that it was rude to speak another language in his presence. He was, of course, quite right, and after that admonition, we spoke French whenever he was near us. We had noticed the French reluctance to speak other languages - it may have been that they were satisfied with their beautiful romantic language, and needed no other languages, however this national character had created problems for us.

Gerald and Henk were among those who, in 1943, were taken from Wittlich to Cologne to be tried, and had been in the Klingelpütz prison when Allied bombers destroyed Cologne in July. I had been unaware that Gerald and Henk were among the returnees to Wittlich, as I was in the French ward at the time, and had not heard their names mentioned over the grapevine. Like us, they were an oddity among the predominantly French NN, but the fact that they could talk French helped integrate them quickly into our NN society - Maurice and I took a little longer, probably because we were British, whom the French mistrusted.

Other than talk of food, the past and future, there was nothing to do in the cell, and our only

physical activity was the ongoing war with bed-bugs. Some prisoners played belote (a popular card game analogous to Nap) all day long, while others played chess. Two of my cell companions had also made diaries from the envelope material, and they, too, updated them every day. I took advantage of the situation, and updated my diaries with everyone's help when I was unable to recall dates, names, places and events. I also recorded some excellent food recipes in Diary No.2, and had every intention of concocting them after the war. My handwriting was very small, and the ex-sailor, who always looked over my shoulder, wanted me to write in French so that he could read it, and to avoid any more arguments, I wrote in his language whenever he looked over my shoulder. It seemed to satisfy him because he told me that I was a "Bon gar" (Good guy).

Occasionally, one of us was sent to do some menial work in the prison: such as cleaning out a cell, washing toilets and corridors, or even helping in the kitchen - I never got in the kitchen despite my sterling catering curriculum vitae. Apart from the little stints of work, it was day after day of learning, dreaming up fantastic meals, talking, playing cards and writing diaries, but our greatest pre-occupation was creating menus, as our minds were totally focussed on the lack of food, and talking about it seemed to ease our hunger. I invented an outrageous recipe which, at least in my mind, would have been quite tasty and filling. My recipe was: take a square loaf of bread, cut one end off, then take out the entire white dough, leaving the crust whole. Into the crust, stuff layers of corned beef, crispy fried bacon, mushrooms and onions. Finally re-cap the loaf with the crust. Eh voila! A feast fit for a King. Most of my cell mates, who knew food a lot better than I, thought my recipe was the craziest yet. Pride in my registered profession of "Koch" (cook) was shattered, and I never related another recipe, other than my Grandmother's conger eel soup recipe, which always intrigued my friends, who were unused to cooking with marigold leaves.

There was no segregation of the young from the adults in the Kletschkaustrasse prison, as it was a transit prison in which the NN procedure continued its course. Those sentenced to death by the Special Court were kept in chains in a special wing of the Breslau prison. Their executions were usually carried out within six weeks of being sentenced, but if their appeals were successful, they re-appeared in front of the Special Court, where their sentences were either confirmed or commuted to long terms of hard labour, which meant being sent to concentration camps or the grim, fortress-like prisons of Brieg, Gross-Strehlitz and Wolfenbüttel. They were all Hell holes, where one died of starvation and overwork - perhaps, the guillotine might have been kinder.

The Special Court turned down most appeals by the men sentenced to death, however, the majority of women who appealed, had their death sentences commuted to long prison terms. Unfortunately, after being reprieved, most of the women were sent to the barbaric women's concentration camp of Ravensbrück, where some of them had already spent time. Through the women we learned of the terrible atrocities perpetrated there by the female guards, whose savagery equalled their SS

colleagues.

When appeals failed, the condemned were not informed of their execution dates, only learning of them on the eve of their executions. We learned, from prison sources, that the condemned men and women were moved to holding cells near the yard in which the revolting instrument was set up. On the eve of their execution, each condemned NN was given pencil and paper, and permitted to write a final letter to their loved ones. They were visited by a German priest, from whom most accepted their final communion, but many fervent Communists refused to see the priest, and went to their deaths believing in their Godless ideals.

Some prisoners claimed to have seen wicker coffins being carted out of the prison, and said that the coffins were shorter than normal ones, but this was never confirmed by any of our NN group. Prisoners, near the execution yard, told us of the sounds of the guillotine being re-wound and released - it was a very difficult period, as we all had close friends who had stepped through the little door to be executed.

On Wednesday, 7 June, 1944, the prison grapevine was ablaze with the news that the Allies had landed in France. We reserved judgement, as we had heard too many rumours, however, the invasion was confirmed on 8 June, by the barber. We knew that the Soviets were advancing towards Germany, and with the Allied having landings in France, we felt that it could only be a matter of weeks before we were liberated. Our morale soared, as we felt that we had a chance to survive, despite starvation and the extremely unsanitary conditions in the Kletschkastrasse prison. Sadly, we were not liberated in Breslau by the Red Army, because on 23 July, we were told to get our things together, as we were being "transported." The grapevine said that we were on our way to Gross Rosen. We discussed that grim possibility, as we knew that there would be no survival from Gross Rosen. We had been in prison too long, and our bodies were unable to withstand any more beatings nor increased starvation. It was grim news, but not surprising, as we expected nothing but death from our keepers. I had already lost more than twenty pounds since leaving Wittlich in March, and I calculated that I could last, perhaps, another nine months in a prison, but less than three in a concentration camp.

The day we left the Kletschkastrasse prison, we were re-united with our Breton friends, who had been working in the Burgweider sugar factory. They had all put on weight, as they had bartered sugar for bread and other foods, after organising sugar from the refinery. As I looked them over, I was happy for them, as I knew that the added weight would help them survive.

Fortunately, God smiled that day, but like most things in the Night and Fog, we were the last to

know of His Divine intervention, which was imparted to us only after we were re-issued with our civilian clothes.

As we were standing in line waiting to be transported to Gross Rosen, the buck-tooth, impersonal prison director arrived and told us that our destination had been changed, and that we were going to Strafgefängnis (Maximum Security Prison) Schweidnitz (Now Swidnica, Poland), a town about forty kilometres south of Breslau. The word "prison" was good news, as it meant a longer life, as we would be sheltered by four walls instead of barbed wire. However, we remained apprehensive, knowing the Germans penchant for trickery and humourless jokes, but when a group of green-uniform Schupos showed up, we heaved collective sighs of relief. We had, hopefully, been given a life-saving break.

On 26 July, we set out on foot for Schweidnitz. We made slow headway, because of the thousands of German refugees and military vehicles. We were obliged to spend a miserable night outside in the rain, and the following morning, we were put on police trucks then driven to the town of Schweidnitz, just a few miles from the Czechoslovakian border. Our first sight of the prison quickly told us that it would be dirty and badly administered, and when we stepped inside, we saw that it was the same as all German prisons, but as we had suspected, it was very filthy. It was designated as a "security prison," which meant that it was neither hard labour nor maximum security. This was good news, as it the work regimen would not be too brutal, however, one look at the warders told us that they were suffering from the "Russians are coming" syndrome.

After the usual head count, we again lost our civilian clothes; were read the riot act, then herded into cells throughout the prison ranges. Some cells were large, and housed six to eight NN, while others were standard size and housed from three or four NN. This was a definite health hazard, because some of our friends had TB, and this meant that there would soon be more cases of TB, as the Schweidnitz authorities did not give us a medical inspection and made no effort to isolate those with TB.

The routine at Schweidnitz was the same as that in the Kletschkaustrasse prison, but the quantity of food was less and tasted even worse. This meant that criminal prisoners and guards were stealing our rations, as usual. More bad news took place when we discovered that the Schweidnitz bed bugs were as voracious as those in Breslau.

There was a workshop on the prison's ground floor, where about seventy NN prisoners manufactured square boxes, which, it was rumoured, were the outer cases for anti-personnel mines. No one really knew what they were for, and in keeping with the NN Decree, it was no small wonder, as the civilian supervisors said nothing beyond work related matters.

We learned that one small group of NN braided straw, and when each braid measured a certain number of metres, it was wrapped around a large jackboot-form, where it was stitched together, and

made into a "snow boot," to be worn on the outside of German jackboots - they were supposed to protect soldiers' feet from the cold on the Russian Front, but we had no idea how long the boots lasted, however, those who braided the straw told us how boring the job was, not to mention the effects on their tired and arthritic hands.

The overcrowding in the cells became more acute when more of our NN comrades arrived from Breslau; bringing our numbers to just over two hundred. TB increased throughout our ranks, but still no action was taken to segregate the contagious men; despite representations made to the prison administration. In our weakened state, and given the highly contagious nature of TB, there was no chance of escaping it, and as there was no hospital in the prison, those with TB died slowly and painfully in their cells, but as they waiting to die, they passed on the little microbes to their cell mates. When death occurred, the bodies were carted away, and we were not told where, nor did we hear of any burial services. Schweidnitz was a faceless, impersonal prison, which lived up to our initial expectation!

Still with us, were those NN who had been tried and acquitted, or had served out their sentences. The rumours had been right - no one was allowed out of the Night and Fog, unless feet first or headless.

The grapevine was practically inactive, but on occasions, a German criminal prisoner gave us news about the war, which, unfortunately, was usually restricted to, "The Russians are closing in on us." We were delighted when Soviet Air Force planes raided the Schweidnitz railway station and marshalling yards, which were about a mile away. The sounds of plane engines and explosions were morale boosters, but they were not positive symbols for us, as we were being starved to death, and needed the Red Army to batter down the prison walls before it was too late. Our rations would not have kept a dog alive for too long, but the criminals and prison staff looked robust enough.

In September, 1944, about thirty-five young NN were selected to work in a small workshop on the second floor of the prison, and I was among them. The workshop was run by the German firm, Siemens, which made electrical components for the military. We were told that we would be taught to make dies, which would stamp out little metal components used in electrical engines and radios. We were processed for the job by an elderly German doctor, who gave us a cursory glance, then pronounced us fit or unfit for work in the small factory. For some reason, only one adult was selected to work in the Siemens factory.

Our "Meister" (foreman), Herr Snider, a short, not-unpleasant man, was in charge of the factory. I was happy to see that most of the Breton group were there, as they always livened things up, by German baiting or other forms of mischief, such as "organizing" things for themselves, as well as for the common good of their comrades. My closest friends and cell mate, René LeClerc, from Meulan, near Paris, joined me in the factory, where we worked side by side. René and I had

become very close since Breslau. He was able to keep up my morale when it sagged, and I did the same for him. We had become almost inseparable.

Our indoctrination into the tool making process began with a demonstration on how to file a square piece of steel to within 1/1000 of a centimetre tolerance - all sides had to be exactly equal and perfectly flat. We were also shown how to use large files, medium files, rat tail files, bastard files, as well as very fine, finishing files and all grades of sandpaper. Moreover, there were lathe machines and drills to master.

When we felt that we had filed the perfect cube, the Meister was called, and he measured all six sides with his micrometer, then placed a steel ruler along each side, and inspected them against an electric light bulb. If light showed under his ruler, it meant that the side was either slightly concave or convex. It also meant that we had to file the cube down, until the Meister was satisfied that we had produced the almost perfect cube. It was not difficult nor demanding work, and within two or three days, we had all filed our cubes. It was to our advantage to make the cubes to the exact specification, because if they were rejected more than once, the "offender" was sent back to the general prison population to languish in TB infected cells.

As we were making the cubes, other pieces of equipment arrived in the little factory. There were: large and small lathes, drill presses, an electrically heated vat in which the steel was to be tempered, and many other pieces of equipment I could not identify. We were issued with: a set of files, micrometer, varying grades of sandpaper, and finally a blue-print of the tool we were expected to make for the Third Reich.

Two of the Breton group had previous mechanical expertise, and were able to help others, however, I was content with my progress, feeling that I caught on quickly. I found the work interesting, and more importantly, it was time consuming and better than being in a cell, where one inhaled TB microbes and lived in a fantasy of French recipes. I was determined to stay in the factory as long as possible, therefore, I worked as diligently as I could at making the little dies, which were not unlike dies which stamped out coins in national mints. No two dies were the same, and we never really knew what they were intended for, although it was rumoured that they were used in German armaments.

I took about three weeks to finish the first little stamp, which was accepted by the Meister. Not all were as fortunate, as some were unusable, as too much had been filed off them. We had to be very careful not to ruin the dies, as the word "sabotage" was often mentioned by the Meister and warders, and we knew sabotage and death to be synonymous.

When the Meister was satisfied with the measurements and quality, the finished product was tempered, but before any die left the work benches, we gave each one a sharp rap with our



hammers, hoping to damage it ever so slightly. After tempering, the dies were assembled and tested by the Meister, who pushed thin strips of metal through their slots, then stamped out a few pieces, which he carefully measured. If satisfied, he packed the dies in cardboard boxes, and took them with him after work. We understood that the little dies were then driven to a Heliowatt Inc. factory, where, no doubt, they stamped out thousands of little pieces, for whatever machine or weapon they were intended. Our alternate to co-operation was death on the ranges, therefore, none of us felt guilty about making the little dies; besides which, there was a distinct possibility that they were not used by the German war industry.

In December, one of my cell-mates, who worked in an outside kommando, told me that a group of English prisoners had been brought to a nearby creamery to work, and that they had contact with them. As soon as I heard this, I sat down and wrote an open letter to them. I explained my situation, and asked the recipient of my letter to try and get a Red Cross message to "Mr. and Mrs. Hassall, Winchester House, Winchester Street, St. Helier, Jersey, Channel Islands," and to let them know that I was in Silesia, and still alive in December, 1944. A week later, I was given a small note from Gunner Hancil, of Cardiff, Wales. He wrote that he would do his best to get some news through to my parents. I was ecstatic, and hoped that I had made a small hole through the Night and Fog of Nazi Germany.

The winter 1944/1945 was extremely cold. More than a foot of snow lay on the roofs and streets of Schweidnitz. Our cells were ice-cold and our two thin blankets did little to keep us warm. Worse still, the food ration was cut again: the morning slice of bread was thinner and the turnip soup now included the peels. It was a pleasure to leave the cold, crowded cell to the workshop, where the hot oil vat kept the place warm, and where we did not have to think of food and TB, as we concentrated on making the little stamps.

At bed time we pushed the iron bed into a corner, and made room for our mattresses on the floor. That way, two of us had four thin blankets and the benefit of one other's body-heat. It was not uncomfortable sleeping next to my friend René, who entertained me into the night with stories of his childhood, his mother's cooking and his father's work.

It was obvious that the Soviets were getting closer, because the main road, leading to the Schweidnitz train station, was constantly jammed with German refugees. Some were on horse-drawn carts, others dragged little carts behind them, while others walked, burdened down by large suitcases. The refugees were mainly from East Prussia and areas east of the River Oder, which were threatened, or had been overrun by the Red Army. We took note that the refugees were

mainly older people, women and children, and that gave us some indication where the able bodied men were. They were frozen and covered with snow, and while we felt badly for them, it told us that the end of the Third Reich was near.

The refugees kept glancing backward, as if expecting to see Red Army cavalry charge down the main street. They all made for the railway station, where trains waited to take them to the west. Our cell was on the second floor overlooking the road leading to the station, and we were able to see the refugees in the early morning before we left for work. When we returned of an evening, they were still streaming towards the station. As we did not work on Sundays, we watched them shuffle past all day long, however, it was not a very pretty sight, even for convicted "terrorists."

One particular day, the Schweidnitz air-raid sirens screamed their warnings of approaching enemy planes. We looked out the factory windows in time to see stubby fighter planes, with red stars on their wings, roar down the main street, almost at roof-top level. Then came the sound of machine guns - the resulting carnage was gruesome: bodies and body parts were scattered all over the road and the snow was no longer white. Some crumpled forms twitched, and the cries of the wounded, particularly the cries of children, were haunting. Then the chatter of machine guns sounded again as the little planes came around for another pass.

Some NN workers on the ground floor were sent out to help clean up the terrible carnage, however, the refugees turned on them when they heard French and other foreign languages being spoken. Fortunately, the warders had presence of mind to herd the prisoners back into the prison before the refugees were able to lynch them from the nearest lamp posts. The refugee columns continued through January, 1945, but thinned out in February. We remained in the work shop making our little metal stamps, the food worsened and more of us died of TB.

In the first week of February, 1945, we awoke to a strange rumbling sound, which was distinguished as artillery fire - the Red Army was nearby. We speculated, across the ranges, on how far away they were - some said ten kilometres, while others said twenty, but we were not artillery experts. Our ranks had already thinned out, as most of our NN comrades from the ground floor had been shipped out, but no one knew where.

On the road leading to the station, the flow of refugees increased again. The newcomers were in worse shape than the earlier groups, as they had escaped the Soviets with only the clothes on their backs. There were no horse-drawn carts, and only a few hand carts. They were dazed and disorganized, but were fortunate, as there were no Soviet air attacks on the station; from which they all got away safely to the west.

In the second week of February, we were told that we did not have to report to our little factory. Later that day we learned that German technicians had taken away most of the equipment on Sunday - there was to be no more die making, which was unfortunate, as it had been life-saving work, due to the warmth in the workshop. The fact that we might have helped the enemy's war effort was of no consequence to us, as life, after what we had been through, was more important than a few pieces of metal. The most important aspect was that we had not shed too much of our precious body weight.

On the morning of 17 February, we were herded to the ground floor, where we were re-issued our civilian clothes. I heard a guard confirm that one hundred and thirty terrorists (NN) had already been shipped out, and all but a handful of high-risk, German criminal prisoners and ourselves remained in the prison.

We asked where we were being sent, but the warders were, as usual, tight-lipped. We were each given a half-loaf of bread and a piece of sausage, which had to last us three days, then, after the food was distributed, a little over sixty of us, mostly juveniles, were marched into the prison courtyard, where, thank goodness, Schupos waited. Some had rifles, while others carried machine pistols. Many of them pushed bicycles, to which suitcases and bundles were tied. This told us that they did not intend to return to wherever they had come from.

The Red Army must have been very close as we stepped out the prison gate, because the artillery sounds were loud and crisp - however, the Schupos chose not to elaborate. We had learned very little from the Schweidnitz warders, who had been faceless, mute men, who had hardly said a word to us during the entire time in Schweidnitz. They certainly knew what was going on, but there were no friendly guards at Schweidnitz, only very frightened ones, who continued to enforce the NN Decree, and as we were leaving Schweidnitz, I hear a Schupo say that the Soviets was less than ten kilometres away - they had missed us by only a few hours!

It was an ice-cold, snowy day when our evacuation began. I walked with Gerald, Henk, Pierre and René. The remaining four of the Breton group were not far behind, as we could not miss their chatter. Two of the original six Bretons, Pascal Lafaye and Jacques TARRIER had been sent elsewhere from Breslau, but we did not know where. As one of the Schupos drew abreast of me with his bicycle, I casually asked him, "Where are we going?" Surprisingly he answered, "To Hirschberg." We asked around if any one knew where Hirschberg was, but no one did.

Our nightmarish, foot-march continued in the freezing weather, and even the brisk march tempo did nothing to warm our abused bodies. The snow smashed horizontally into our faces, and there was nothing we could do about it. Some of the NN had been arrested during the winter, and had their overcoats or raincoats with them. They were much better off than those of us who had been

arrested in the spring or summer, as we had no outer wear. My canvas shoes were soaked, and the ice-cold wind pierced my thin sports jacket and flannel trousers, but I was not alone in that predicament.

When dusk fell, at about 6:00 pm., our column was halted. There was a hurried discussion among the senior Schupos, after which two of them ran up to a farmhouse. When they came back, we were marched into a large empty barn, which was to be our refuge for the night. We had nothing to keep us warm, but the barn was better than remaining outside, even though the snow and wind penetrated the barn boards. We huddled together for warmth, pulling straw over ourselves, while those with overcoats shared them with others, however, it was impossible to sleep.

When we set out the following morning, I heard one Schupo complain that we had covered only twelve kilometres the previous day. He was not too happy about it, as he felt that we could be overrun by Soviet leading elements. When we arrived in the village of Landeshut, our column changed direction and went in a westerly direction. Along the road to Landeshut we passed dozens of corpses of concentration camp inmates, who had died along the way, or been shot as they could go no farther. Most lay in roadside ditches, but many had been dumped in front gardens - no doubt by the brutal SS who accompanied them. Many of them were naked, and we saw that they were all very emaciated, like skeletons covered by layers of stretched yellow parchment. Some, who had obviously been there the longest, were almost covered by snow, but the recently dead and murdered had less snow over them. Their open mouths appeared to cry for help, but they were past all help - the SS had seen to that. Starvation had crippled and deformed them. They all looked old, their faces wrinkled, and buck teeth grinned from open mouths below hollow, opaque eyes, from which all signs of life was gone. It was difficult to keep our eyes off them, because we knew that their fate could have been ours had we been sent to Gross Rosen, besides which, we all knew that we were not out of the woods yet.

At some point we were halted again, and the Schupos held another discussion. As we stood waiting for the results of their conference, we hear strange, plaintive wails, not unlike animal cries. We looked at each other, and wondered what could make such a terrible sound, but none of us had any ideas.

After the Schupos broke off their discussion, we changed direction, and were marched down a narrow country road. As we went down it, the awful cries grew louder, and when we had walked about a kilometre, we were able to make out the sinister profile of a concentration camp; complete with searchlights, watchtowers, growling dogs and SS. The stench of decaying bodies permeated the night's air, despite its frigidness, and as we drew closer, we saw hundreds, if not thousands, of uniformed prisoners huddled in the centre of the camp's roll call square - it was their death wail that had startled us, and we had probably passed some of their former companions along the way, in the

gardens and ditches.

I was near the head of the column, and able to hear the conversation between the senior Schupo and the SS Interior Camp Commander. The gist of the conversation was that we were not allowed in the camp, as it was overcrowded. The SS officer said that if the Schupo insisted that we enter the camp, he would personally guarantee that less than half of us would be alive the next morning. To make his point, the SS officer also said that if the Schupos did not get us away from the camp immediately, he would make sure that it was not necessary to find "overnight lodgings" for us, because he would have us shot, thereby resolving the accommodation problems. He finished by asking the senior Schupo if he was aware that there was a war on. The Schupo held his tongue, then turned around his little column of NN prisoners, and continued their march towards Hirschberg.

In the early hours of the morning we were allowed to lie down in a large field, which was already occupied by hundreds of French prisoners of war. The Schupos said that we could stay next to French prisoners, as long as no one escaped. They also warned that for each escape, ten of us would be shot, and on that note they disappeared into the farm house without leaving anyone to guard us. It was not easy to talk to the French prisoners of war as they were still guarded by German soldiers, but they threw some cigarettes and bread at us.

Fortunately, we were all there at daybreak, but the tension showed on the Schupos's faces, and they began to scream at us for no obvious reason. This was unusual, because they had been extremely patient. We speculated that they had heard some bad news about the war, or their home towns had been overrun by the Red Army. Whatever had happened to make them irritated would certainly reflect on our well-being.

It had stopped snowing and the wind was not quite as high, but our food was gone, and many of us were out of strength. Seeing that some of us had to be helped, the Schupos suggested that we stop for a rest, but we asked if we could carry on, and they agreed. The Schupos allowed two sick NN to sit on their bicycles, and be pushed along by their comrades, rather than leave them for the following SS. One of the sick was Gerald, whose legs were so badly swollen, that he could not put one foot in front of the other. We sat Gerald on the Schupo's bike, and those of us, with enough strength left, pushed the bike, until Gerald had rested sufficiently and was able to make his own way. Had it not been for the bicycles, we would have left two of our long-time friends in the ditches, where, no doubt, they would have died of exposure, or been shot by the next band of SS criminals.

Our little column reached a small train station, where the Schupos spoke to the station master. We were overjoyed when we were allowed to board a waiting train, which was to take us close to Hirschberg. It was a stroke of luck, as the snow was beginning to fall again. Four of the Schupos

had left or deserted during the march, and an old Schupo told me that they had gone back to their villages, where they hoped to find their families, and bring them to the west. The desertions left insufficient men to guard us, however, they experienced no problems, as we were all too weak to run anywhere.

When we left the crowded train, we did not walk too far before we reached the town of Hirschberg, and it was not long before we were marched through another prison portal. The prison's courtyard was not dissimilar to all the other Nazi prisons, except in Hirschberg there was a stack of emaciated bodies piled in one corner of the courtyard. The dead men had obviously been executed, given the bullet holes in their chests, backs and necks, and the pile of corpses made us ponder over our futures - the date was 20 February, 1945.

In the prison, which was even smaller and dirtier than Schweidnitz, the usual procedure took place: strip down, bundle up and hand in our civilian clothes, even though they were soaking wet; a cold shower; then into prison uniforms, after which we were locked up four to a cell. The next morning we were given a bowl of ersatz coffee, a thin slice of bread and a smear of jam, but that morning, the ersatz coffee tasted like pure Columbian. We had been without a hot drink for three days, having lived on snow, but we were very fortunate to have had Schupo guards, without whom we would have perished along the road, or in the terrible concentration camp near Landeshut.

Hirschberg was a small maximum security prison, less than fifty kilometres from Schweidnitz, but it had taken us almost three days to get there; despite the help of the little train. The majority of us were young men, and our years together had forged close bonds, as we helped each other through the night and fog of Hitler's Hell. None of us had expected the war to have lasted as long as it had, and we knew that it had to end very soon, or there would be no survivors from our little NN group, as we had no more to give.

There was nothing to do in Hirschberg, and we languished in our cold cells. The thunder of guns receded instead of getting louder, and we asked ourselves what had happened to the Red Army. There was no prison grapevine, as the prison was populated by hard-core German criminal prisoners, who did not communicate with us.

A lucky break occurred when one of the warders asked if I spoke German. On learning that I did, he told me to follow him to the clothing store, where I was put to work cleaning and stacking clothes, under a cantankerous old Senior Warder, wearing a Nazi party badge. In the clothing store, I met Otto, a fat, bald German, who was serving a lengthy jail term for a white-collar crime. On learning that I was British, he sought me out daily when he brought the old warder his coffee and sandwich from the cook house. Otto suggested that the war was almost over, and gave me the latest locations of both fronts. Occasionally he slipped me some bread, which I took and shared with my cell mates. The bad news from Otto was that the Red Army had by-passed us in the north

and south, and had left us in a pocket which was not being fought over.

Otto told me that his home town of Dresden had been savagely bombed by the Allies, and had been totally consumed in a maelstrom of fire. He did not know if his wife and children were still alive, and had not heard from them for almost two months. I could not believe that a city, the size of Dresden, had been entirely destroyed, and I put it down to Nazi propaganda drummed into Otto's head.

Occasionally, Otto gave me some raw potatoes, which I roasted on the warder's stove, and later shared with my cell-mates, one of whom was close to death with TB. The dying man, André, was terribly emaciated, just as all advanced TB cases were, but the fact that he did not eat all his food gave a few more days life to his cell mates. Mealtimes were positive nightmares, as we waited to see how much of his food he would eat - starvation had made predators of us.

André told me that he had been in the French Navy, and candidly admitted his dislike for the British, because they had torpedoed and sunk his destroyer, the Chevalier Paul, which was running supplies to Vichy troops in Syria. He never held the sinking against me, but he had an intense dislike for anything British. During some of his less lucid moments, he cursed the British rather soundly, but I understood. He was a dying comrade, and needed all the help and comfort we could give him. I explained to him that I had not known there were any French troops in Syria, and furthermore, knew very little about the war in the Middle East, as the Germans had controlled Jersey's news media. André always apologized for his bouts of frustration, and told me that he thought of me as a Frenchman and not as "un Anglais." He, unfortunately, did not make it - our brave comrade, André, died of TB on 15 April, 1945. He was only twenty-four years of age, and had been in the Hell of Hitler's Night and Fog for three years.

In April, Otto told me that the Red Army had surrounded Berlin, and had occupied most towns to the north and west of Hirschberg. He again explained that the war had rolled right past Hirschberg, and suggested that the area's terrain was very mountainous, and the Red Army was probably concentrating on more important targets. He had heard rumours that there were two SS divisions in the mountains around Hirschberg, which was very disturbing news for us.

April turned into May, and on the 1 May, 1945, Otto said that his Führer, Adolf Hitler, had died at the head of his troops while defending Berlin. Otto did not seem too worried that the Führer was dead, but some of the remaining warders were in tears. When I passed the good news along, low cheers echoed from some of them.

Other than wait for our starvation rations, three times daily and sometimes only twice, there was nothing to do - not even a book from the library. The food was awful, and consisted of turnip soup

and a small piece of black bread and synthetic margarine daily. We sat around and watched each other slowly die of starvation. It was a dismal prison, the cells were overcrowded, and we had only one cold shower since our arrival. The invisible prison administration did nothing to ease our lot, despite the knowledge that Germany was close to losing the war. They did not even attempt to isolate the TB cases; they simply let them die in the tightly packed cells, and when they died, their emaciated bodies were carted away. No one knew where, or if they were given any form of burial. It was a very trying period, and we were disappointed and frustrated that the war had passed us by. Rumours circulated, and one spiteful warder told us that the SS were in Hirschberg and were coming to fetch us. Another weasel suggested that we were being held hostages. It was very traumatic, as we deeply resented death, when freedom had been so close.

On 8 May, 1945, the Head Warder sent for me and René, an older NN prisoner, who spoke German. He sat us down in front of his desk, then with a resigned look told us that the war was over, and that we would be "liberated" the following morning. The man sadly acknowledged that Germany was "kaput," and although he had received no orders about us, he had unilaterally decided to set us free. When we asked how our liberation was to be effected, he simply said that our civilian clothes would be given back, after which he would open the outer gate and, ".....Then you are on your own! You can go where you please!" We asked him where we could go. His reply was, "How do I know? You are the victors! Take your pick, but don't go into the hills because they may be full of SS."

The man had spoken so casually. It was unbelievable, given the fact that we had been in Hell of Hitler's Night and Fog for three years. That was it! Kicked out by a lone warder, and with no place to go! It did not seem credible nor believable.

René did not let the Head Warder off the hook, and demanded guarantees of our safety, given the rumours about the SS. The man assured him that the prison would remain locked until 8:00 am. the following day, and he would personally guarantee that no one would interfere with his establishment. He ended by saying, "No one will interfere, after all, it is the law of the land that I am responsible for you." Neither René nor I felt like pursuing the matter any further. There was no point. The man was still German and had his orders!

René left the office to spread the news to our comrades, however, I did not hear any shouts of joy, not even from the Bretons. We had been fooled before! It might have been different had the Red Army fought their way in and liberated us, but we had heard nothing from them for weeks, not even a pistol shot. Perhaps we were all too spent to celebrate the news of our liberation, or perhaps we still mistrusted the Hun.



After leaving the warder's office, I met Otto, who ironically asked me for a character reference, which he wanted to give the Soviets as proof that he had been a "good guy" by helping Allied prisoners. I gave him my home address, and suggested that he write to me when he returned to Dresden, or whatever was left of it. We, the NN and Otto, were the last prisoners in the prison, as all German criminals, regardless of their crimes, had been freed during the week.

At 6:30 am. on Friday 9 May, 1945, our cell doors were unlocked and left open. We then walked down the steel staircase for the last time, and assembled outside the clothing store, where I helped hand back the civilian clothes - those rumpled, smelly clothes, which had surprisingly followed us through so many prisons and camps. To the very end, German bureaucracy prevailed, and the cantankerous warder asked that we sign for our clothes and five Reichsmarks - five Reichsmarks payment for three years in Hell.

It was approximately 7:30 am. when the last of the NN changed into their civilian clothes, but it was too late for the eight comrades, who had died in Hirschberg's unsanitary and crowded cells. We were all on our last legs, and even those of us who had previously managed to gain weight, looked like the rest of the walking skeletons. There was an old iron scale in the clothing store, and when I had stepped it during the final week, I saw that I was down to eighty-two pounds, and as I stood on the scale, I wondered where I would have been, had some very a very gallant Frenchman and brave Germans not helped me put on that extra weight, during my extra months in the "good" prison of Wittlich.

We were a sorry sight. Our rumpled clothes no longer fit. We looked like dirty, emaciated, scarecrows, as we stood around the rotunda wondering what to do and where to go. The Head Warder, in a hurry to get rid of us, suggested that we go to a nearby sanatorium, in which, he had heard, were some liberated French prisoners of war. There was some hesitation as the French gathered in their preferred groups, besides which, two of our comrades were too sick to be moved, and that brought up the question of who would stay with them. In fact, who was in charge now that we were liberated? Who would make decisions? Were any of us capable of making any?

We were handed some bread and sausage by Otto, and then it was time for us to leave. The Head Warder led us to the a side door, to the left of the large gates. We watched, with fascination, as he drew back two bolts. Would he open the door, or was it another German trick? We watched as the door swung open on squeaky hinges, however, not one of us moved until it was fully open, and when it was, we breathed the air of freedom for the first time in three years.

The leading NN prisoner took a few cautious steps, like a small child learning to walk. He stepped outside and looked around for signs of danger. Was it a trap? Were the SS waiting? What was out there? Was it safe to leave the prison? So much mistrust, but we knew the Germans to be capable

of anything. He stood for a while, peering around, like a wild animals sniffing his enemies on the wind, and when he was certain that no SS lurked in the shadows, he ducked back in and gave the all clear to his waiting companions, who with tentative steps put distance between themselves and the prison; most having decided to go to the sanatorium to join their countrymen. None of us trusted the Soviets. We had heard too much about rapes, pillage and murders by Red Army troops, and although we had no confirmation of the rumours, we had learned to be cautious.

I stood inside the court yard talking to the Head Warder for a few minutes, and when I looked around, I was alone. My former comrades had disappeared. I wondered where I could go, and although I was out of prison, I was not free. I was still a captive, however, I knew enough to walk away from the prison, but I was amazed and hurt that my former comrades had left without me.

### **The long road home**

I stood outside the prison trying to make up my mind what to do, but I seemed to have lost my thought process. It had happened so suddenly, and now that all my friends had disappeared, there was no one to turn to for advice - I felt terribly naked and lost. Many of the French had gone to the sanatorium, while others, like Gerald, Henk and Pierre Tourneux, had started to walk westward, hoping to make it home quicker. My Breton friends had also taken off by themselves, God knows where? I should have gone with one group or the other, but I had lingered too long talking to the warder about the sick NN.

I looked across the road at the row of neat houses, and in one of them a fat lady peered at me from behind her heavy, floral curtains. This made me angry, so I crossed the road, and glared her at her through her window, which caused her to step away from the window. I wondered if she was the wife of the remaining warder.

The last two months in Hirschberg had taken their toll on me. For several weeks I had been coughing, and had fevers each day. I knew that the symptoms were the first stages TB, and that I had to be hospitalized as soon as possible, however, I had no wish to linger in Hirschberg, as I feared the nearby Soviets. I felt abandoned by the French, but rather than go to the sanatorium, and look to them for help, I made up my mind to leave by myself, and attempt to reach the Allies as quickly as possible. Before leaving, I again looked across the street at the fat lady's house, and saw the curtain move again. She was, no doubt, looking at a dirty, emaciated scarecrow, and it was little wonder that she might be thinking of rape and pillage, as I was really a mess; although I had tried to smooth out my clothes and comb my short hair. I made eye contact with her again, and that got rid of her.

While I was standing near the prison gate, a German Army truck drove up the road. I flagged the driven down, and when he stopped I explained my situation, and asked what he thought I should do. He suggested that I go to Liegnitz, as he was certain the Polish Army was there, and as he said, "I'd rather take my chances with the Poles than the Reds." He also suggested that I stood a better chance of being repatriated by the Poles than by the Soviets, and before he drove away, he cautioned me to avoid the Soviets at all costs, but I had already made up my mind on that issue.

It was a little warmer, I was less cold, and it was a good day for a walk. Accordingly, I tied my towel around my shoulders, shoved my food in my pockets, and after a short visit with my former comrades in the sanatorium, I set off in a northerly direction towards Liegnitz. I walked most of the day, carefully avoiding refugees and former Red Army prisoners, however, by nightfall I was exhausted, and was obliged to stop and rest in a village called Mittel (Centre) Schreiberhau - I had

walked through Neider (Lower) Schreiberhau earlier that day, and no doubt I would pass through Ober (Upper) Schreiberhau on my way to Liegnitz, unless the Germans had changed their way of doing things.

I stopped in front of a barber shop. I was very hungry as I had eaten all my bread and sausage, but most of all I needed a good bath and some way to clean up my soiled and rumpled clothes. The barber shop door was locked, but I peered through the window, and attracted the attention of a middle-age woman who stood by the lone chair. She looked very frightened, but opened the door, then re-locked it as soon as I was inside. When I explained my plight, the woman was sympathetic, and said that she would help me as much as possible. She could not believe that I was only eighteen years of age, as she had taken me for a middle-age man. When I stopped talking, she called her son, Johannes, and told him to heat some water, and while it heated, she sat me in the barber's chair and trimmed my hair, then shaved me with an open razor. When I looked in the mirror, I was unable to recognize myself. Staring back at me was a skeletal, emaciated old face; skin stretched over a skull, hollow, yellow eyes and yellow, rotting teeth - I was a ghastly sight, but it felt good to have been pampered for a few minutes.

The German lady, Frau Kopitz, lived with her two teen age children, the son, Johannes and daughter, Hanna. The fourth person in the house was an attractive, twenty year old Romanian girl, Walli. Frau Kopitz took me in her kitchen, where she invited me to share their evening meal, which was rather opulent, given the times. Johannes bombarded me with questions during the meal, and he found it difficult to believe the part about Hinzert and Gross Rosen. He explained, that like most boys of his age growing up in Nazi Germany, he had hoped for a better future under Adolf Hitler. He had initially enjoyed the various German youth movements, but as the war progressed he became disillusioned with them, particularly after they heard no more from their father, who had been reported missing on the Russian Front.

I asked about the Red Army, and was told that their vanguard had roared into the village early that morning, but had stopped only long enough to rape, plunder, and tell the village officials that more soldiers could be expected the next day. Frau Kopitz said that almost all the village women been raped by the Soviet troops, but she had been spared as she had cut the Commanding Officer's hair. The night before, she had sent Walli and Hanna into the fields to hide, and they escaped being raped, despite the fact that the troops had hunted through the fields for women. She also said they all intended to hide in the fields that evening, leaving Johannes in the house, but would return in the morning. Frau Kopitz said the second wave of troops had behaved like depraved animals, and no age group had been spared their savage lust. She had spoken to other Germans from a nearby village, and they, too, told tales of horror, theft, rapes and summary executions of alleged SS and Nazi party officials.

My hostess had not heard from her husband for more than a year, but hoped that he was a prisoner of war in the Soviet Union. She had managed the barber's shop for the entire war without him, but had no idea what would happen to it once the Soviets took over the village administration. She had heard that they were to be kicked out of their homes, and moved further eastward so that the Poles could move in, however, she had heard so many rumours that she had decided to stay in the village, in order to keep her family home and business intact.

I was invited to spend the night, and after a cold sponge bath, I luxuriated in a clean bed, covered by a snow white eiderdown. I slept until 6:00 am., then got up and looked around for my clothes, but they were nowhere to be seen. I panicked, thinking they had been stolen, but when Frau Kopitz, heard me moving around, she ran up the stairs and told me that Walli had sponged and pressed my clothes, and was waiting for my shirt to dry. I got back into bed, and about thirty minutes later my clothes were returned - I felt very badly for misjudging my hosts.

After a breakfast of two boiled eggs, bread and milk, I decided to walk around the village, despite the fact that I was not feeling well. Life on the main street was on the move again, however, all stores were closed and boarded up, except for the baker, who was busy making bread for the locals. There was no apparent panic in the village, and although there were not many people about, life seemed normal, despite the fact that the only people visible were old men and young boys. From that, I assumed that many of the women were still hiding, and the men were either dead or prisoners of war.

I went in the baker's shop where I asked for some bread. I had no ration tickets, but when I explained my situation, the baker handed me two large loaves, which I took back to Frau Kopitz. After my short walk, I was so tired that I sat in the barber's chair and dozed off in the May sunshine, but my sleep was interrupted by the roar of a motorcycle engine, and when I looked out the window, I saw a Soviet Army officer sitting astride a large German Army motorbike. Its engine was running, and the officer just sat and looked around the small village, as if surveying his domain. I lifted myself out of the barber's chair, then walked towards him.

As I approached him, he put his hand on his pistol holster, so I quickly raised my hands. I pointed to my chest, and in the few words of Russian I knew, I said, "Ya Anglichan" (I am an Englishman). He said nothing, but motioned that I get on the pillion - I did not argue - he was the occupier and the owner of a rather large pistol. When I was seated with my arms around his waist, he drove off in an easterly direction, as if chased by the Devil himself.

About five miles later, we came to another village, in which there was a Red Army encampment. My escort took me into a large camouflaged tent, where another officer, of higher rank, was sitting behind a long table. My mentor said something to the man, who looked at me as if I was a piece of dirt - I knew that look so well. I went into my act and pointed to my chest, as I told the officer that I

was an Englishman. My act received no applause, but caused the officer to snap his fingers, extend his hand and ask for my "papers." I turned the insides of my pockets out to show him that I had none, and I attempted to explain that the Germans had taken them from me. Whether he understood or not, the officer screamed at me, and from the tone of his voice, I knew that I was in trouble, because I had understood the word "spion" in his diatribe. While he was still snapping his fingers and yelling at me, a Soviet Engineer lieutenant came into the tent. He looked on for a moment or two, then in excellent German asked if I spoke that language. I nodded to signify that I did.

The officer behind the desk exploded and cursed me in fluent German. He inferred that I was a "damned German spy" and I would be shot unless I produced some form of identity. He ended by saying that all Germans had identity, and I was no exception. He was calmed down by the lieutenant, who patiently, over the next hour or so, went over my last three years in Hitler's Night and Fog. During this conversation I asked for a pencil and paper, then drew a map of the Channel Islands, France and Germany, and tried to explain how I had arrived in the area. To impress my interrogators, I stripped off all my clothing, including my underpants, and showed them my eighty pound carcass - this achieved a much desired results, as the senior officer was impressed with the physical evidence. He sent for a soldier, who took me to their field kitchen, where I was given a bowl of greasy cabbage soup, which I immediately regurgitated, as my stomach was not ready for grease.

After cleaning myself with some paper, I went back to the tent, where I asked the Soviet officer to provide me with some form of identity. He tore a sheet of paper from a notebook, took the top off his fountain pen, then asked for my Christian names, surname and date of birth, which he printed on the paper. He also wrote something in Russian, which, he told me, was only a temporary identity card and only identified me as a released political prisoner, who was to be accorded help by his compatriots. He also told me to show it to any German official, particularly those distributing food, as it entitled me to food from German sources, as I was a former concentration camp inmate.

With these formalities over, he told the Soviet lieutenant to take me back to Mittel Schreiberhau, but before leaving, he instructed me to remain there, as he would be moving his unit there in a day or so, at which time he wanted to talk to me again. I nodded, but did not intend to be around when he arrived; then armed with my new identity, I climbed aboard the motorcycle, then was flew back to Mittel Schreiberhau.

When I arrived at the barber's shop, Frau Kopitz and family were relieved to see me. I told them what had happen, and when I said that the Soviets intended to park themselves in their village the following day, their faces fell. They suggested that I look somewhere else to live, as they could not afford to be associated with me now that the Soviets had showed interested in me. I understood their dilemma, and promised to move out as soon as I could.

As we spoke, the front door bell rang and a very drunken Soviet soldier barged his way in. He was carrying a sack in one hand and a sub machine gun in the other, however, he was grinning and appeared to be quite friendly. I said that I was an Englishman, and showed him my newly acquired identity. He read it, gave me a comical salute then staggered back to the street. Seconds later, the door opened again and the happy soldier came back in and handed me three tins of German cooked pork. In my limited Russian I said, "Spasibo tovarisch!" He grinned again, then staggered off down the road singing at the top of his voice.

The next day, a platoon of Red Army foot soldiers arrived in the village, and took over the administrative buildings, and within minutes the Soviet flag was hoisted on the mast. This was followed by raucous cheers and the discharging of firearms in the air.

That afternoon, the Soviet lieutenant came and took me back to the same tent in the nearby village. There, with a more senior officer in attendance, I was again questioned about my past. The new officer did not participate in the questioning, he just sat and listened to what I had to say, but it was obvious that he understood German. When I was through, the quiet one introduced himself, as the Commissar for the region. He asked about the prison of Hirschberg, and I told him all I could about the innocuous little prison and its pile of corpses we had seen on the way in. I also said that there had been two very sick French political prisoners still in the cells when I left. The officer did not respond to my information, nor did he show signs of being interested, but asked, "Where did you learn German? It sounds as if you were born in Germany."

I was not a complete fool and knew what he was hinting at, but I told him where and under what circumstances I had learned the language, and in order to make things clearer, I drew another map of the Channel Islands. The Commissar said that he had not known of the islands' existence, nor had he known that they had been occupied by the Germans. He then cautioned me against overeating, and told me that many former Soviet prisoners of war had killed themselves through excessive eating. I thanked him for his advice and promised to be careful.

As I was leaving, he called me back to the table and asked, "Tell me again, where you learned your German? I am surprised that it is so fluent."

I repeated my story, and added that I had no difficulty learning languages, as I had a good foundation in Latin from school. I became somewhat alarmed when he asked, "Is it possible that you improved your German in captivity by collaborating with the Nazis, or are you really a German telling a good tale?"

This suggestion made me very angry. To be taken for a German was all I needed! I raised my voice, and in no uncertain terms I told him that he was mistaken, and that all he had to do was take me to the sanatorium, which was not far away, where dozens of former French political prisoners

would vouch that I had been with them in prisons and camps for the past three years. I said that I resented his remarks and again ripped off my clothes, and showed him my skeletal frame. I was fired up, and suggested that he was acting the same way as the Gestapo. When he heard me liken him to the Gestapo, his face went as black as thunder - I had hit a sore nerve!

His angry expression did not last long, but he stared intently at me for a while, then grinned and said, "Just testing! Now put your clothes on and go back to the village!" I asked if he spoke English, as my outburst had been in English. He did not reply, but reiterated that I go back to the village and wait there for him.

Back in the barber shop, I told my hosts what had gone on. Frau Kopitz suggested that I leave Mittel Schreiberhau immediately, however, I did not need her kind advice, as I had already made up my mind to get out early the next morning.

At about 7:00 pm. that evening, the German speaking Soviet Engineer lieutenant, who had been in the tent on the first day, drove up in a captured German truck. He walked in the barber's shop where he drew me aside and said, "Peter my friend, the Commissar does not believe your story! He intends to send for you again tomorrow, and pass you along to higher authority for interrogation. Your German has made him suspicious, because he feels that you speak it too well for an Englishman. He even suggested that you were born in the Rhineland, given your German accent. By the way, he is of German origin, and went to school in Dresden. I advise you to get out of here now! After what you have been through, you don't need any more problems!"

"Where can I go?" I asked, shocked at the Commissar's outrageous allegation.

"Go anywhere! But go now! I advise it strongly." With that, the lieutenant jumped in his truck and drove off. I looked upward and gave thanks, as I was certain that the man had saved my life, or at least saved me from a long term in a Soviet concentration camp, or even another trial as a spy.

Within twenty minutes I was "gone." My towel crammed with sandwiches and my two diaries in my inner jacket pocket. As I was leaving, I promised to get in touch with Frau Kopitz as soon as I got back to Jersey.

I walked throughout the night in a northerly direction, until I came to a secluded Gasthaus, "The Prussian Crown Inn." It was closed, but when I saw a faint light glowing in a lower window, I banged on the door. It was cautiously opened by a fat German army corporal, who had ripped the Nazi eagle and swastika from his military jacket. When I explained what I had been through, the man invited me inside.

I had no sooner stepped in the hallway when I collapsed in his arms - I had reached the end of my strength. I don't know how long I was out, but I woke up in a clean bed with a well-dressed, elderly man bending over me and listening to my chest through an ancient, wooden stethoscope. He was the local doctor, who had been fetched by Franz, the German corporal, who owned Inn. The doctor



had been apprised of my past, and after listening to my chest, suggested that I needed an X-ray, because I had either TB or pleurisy, but without blood tests and X-rays, he was unable to make a proper diagnosis. I told the doctor that I could not stay too long, as I was in a hurry to get back home, and that I was probably being hunted by the Soviets. The doctor was sympathetic, but insisted that I rest a few days, and put a little meat on my ribs before continuing my journey. He said that if I had TB, any exertion would aggravate it, therefore I had to rest and do gentle exercises.

As he listened to the doctor, Franz, concerned for my welfare, suggested that I stay in the Gasthaus until I was a little better. I asked Franz about the Polish Army, and he confirmed that some elements were in Liegnitz. He also agreed that I stood more of a chance with the Poles than I did with the Soviets, but insisted that I go nowhere until I was fit enough. Franz assured me that he had plenty of food, as he knew all the farmers in the district.

I stayed with Franz and his family for almost three weeks, by which time my coughing had almost ceased and my fevers had subsided. Better still, I had gained fourteen pounds. The most exercise I did was to walk in the nearby woods, where I sat on logs and updated my diaries with a new pencil, given to me by Franz. I had exercised very lightly, and felt myself improving daily. One day, Soviets soldiers came in and gave the restaurant a quick search, as they looked for anything of value which had not been looted already. They did not bother me when they came to the attic where I slept, as Franz passed me off as his sick relative; moreover, things had quietened down a lot since the first hectic days of Soviet occupation.

When I felt well enough to travel, Franz said that he had spoken to a farmer who had agreed to take me to Liegnitz, where he was taking a load of turnips. It was an opportunity, which I seized, as I felt up to travelling. Franz made up some sandwiches for me, then perched me on the handlebars of his bicycle, and pedalled over to the farm, where the farmer waited, his team of two horses hitched to a large cart full of turnips. I thanked Franz for his help, and gave him my home address. I knew his address, but he said that it was no use writing it down, as he and his family had already been notified that they were being moved out of the area, which was to be occupied by Poles.

I climbed on the cart, waved to Franz, then we were on our way to Liegnitz. As I sat up front with the farmer, I did not speak of my past, as I was sick of hearing myself bleat the same distasteful, boring mess - I had told the same story so often that I was sick of hearing it. I felt like a gramophone record with a needle stuck in on of its grooves. Besides, who cared now? Every German had serious problems trying to cope with life after the Third Reich, and I assumed that the farmer was no different, and as I sat perched on the cart, I resolved never to talk about the past three years again, unless it was absolutely necessary, or forced on me.

The farmer was, thankfully, not talkative, but did ask if I had any tobacco, and when I said that I

had none, he continued to suck on his empty, well-used pipe. He often spoke to his horses, and cursed as Red Army trucks drove past at break-neck speeds. His remarks were not very flowery! It took almost four hours to reach Liegnitz, and as we drove past the railway station, I thanked the farmer for his kindness, then jumped off the cart, and went into the railway station to look for Polish authorities. I had not gone far when I saw a British Army staff sergeant standing by a bench. My spirit soared, and I went over and introduced myself.

The staff sergeant, John Belcher of Bear Road, Brighton, England was one very surprised soldier, and, despite earlier resolution to keep my mouth shut about the past three years, I gave him an ear full of the same bilge and waved my diaries around, as if I was sending out a semaphore message. When I had sense enough to shut up, or was simply exhausted, John took me to the Polish military office where he vouched that I was as a former British political prisoner. I had to draw another map of the Channel Islands, and give an outline of my period in Germany, but it must have satisfied the Polish officer, because he wrote out a pass, permitting me to board the train and travel as far as Cottbus.

We were taken to a passenger coach, in which we were given a compartment to ourselves, and as the train pulled out, John was amazed that I still had so much to say. Mercifully, he suggested that I get some sleep, however, sleep was not on that night's agenda, because when some Polish Army soldiers saw John's British Army uniform, they came in with several bottles of vodka. They wanted to toast the victory over Germany, but found dozens of other things to toast from Churchill to the Pope. I refused their kind offers of vodka, because I knew that I would get sick on it, and I had come too far to make an ass of myself.

When we arrived in Cottbus, it was crawling with Soviet and Polish troops, and as soon as I saw the Soviets, the hair stood up on the nape of my neck. I told John that I would make my way to the West alone, as I did not want to go through another Soviet identity check. John strongly suggested that I stay with him, as he would vouch for the authenticity of my story, however, I insisted that I make my way alone, given my experience with the Soviets. I pointed out to John that he was safe, as he was in uniform, and still had his identity discs and a prisoner of war card, but I had nothing except a piece of paper with some Russian writing on it, which was probably useless. With my mind made up, I said goodbye to John, then started across country for Torgau, where the prisoner exchange point was set up. I knew that John would have no trouble boarding the trucks for Torgau, but I did not fancy my chances talking to the Soviets with green hat bands, who acted like political police.

On the way to Torgau, I avoided main highways, and kept to the country roads. I managed to get a ride or two on passing farm carts, and whenever I was hungry, I went to the nearest German

administrative building, where I received vouchers for bread, milk and butter. I always moved to the head of the queues of women and children, and this most always evoked some muttering, however, I paid no attention to the Germans' yells - I had learned well from our Luxembourgish Room Senior.

Sometimes I went to farmhouses, where I was usually successful in finding a meal and a bed. I met only one uncooperative German who flatly refused to help me. I told him that I would report him to the Soviets, but he still told me to get off his land, I did not argue with him, as he was a big, strong man, who looked as if he had been in the army. I was unable to cover many miles each day, as I still tired easily, besides which, I spent most of the daylight hours hiding, sleeping and avoiding the many Soviet truck columns en route to Torgau.

The slow walk and fresh air did wonders for my lungs and legs. I had put on a little more weight, and my breathing was much easier - the dry hacking cough was almost gone, as was the constant spitting. The weather was fine, the nights warm, and it was wonderful to sleep under pine trees, and look at open skies - no more barbed wire or bars! My thoughts were for my family in Jersey, and I wondered what I would find at Winchester House, and what to do about our betrayer.

At one point, just south of Cottbus, I came across the German autobahn. It was very wide, and filled with vehicular traffic, mostly going in an easterly direction. The super highway was also full of German buses, trucks and automobiles, all driving eastward, no doubt with spoils of war. A few miles further on I came across another wide highway leading to Dresden. It did not have too much traffic on it, but after having crossed it, I made for Finsterwalde, which was on my route to Torgau. I almost had a heart attack when I came to the outskirts of Finsterwalde - the place seemed to be the Headquarters for the entire Red Army. There were virtually tens of thousands of artillery pieces, tanks, trucks and hundreds of tents, as far as the eye could see, and seeing most of the Soviet Army in one place, I gave it a wide berth, and made for Herzberg.

In Herzberg, I learned that Torgau was also full of Soviet troops, many of whom were former prisoners of war. I was warned that Torgau was obviously not the place for me. Along the route, I ducked into an open Gasthaus, where I asked the owner for some milk or water. As I drank the water, I asked the man where the Americans troops were. He told me that they were at Eilenburg, on the River Mulde, a tributary of the River Elbe, about fifty or sixty kilometres south west. He said that a prisoner of war exchange point had been established there, and suggested that I make for it. When I asked him if he had any food, he started to shake his head, then changed his mind, and went to the kitchen and returned with two boiled eggs and a slice of dry bread. I thanked him, then left, but did not give him my five Reichsmarks - I had worked too hard for them!

The next evening, after by-passing Torgau, I finally arrived at the Eilenburg prisoner exchange

point, which was not hard to find, as I just walked in the opposite direction to the many trucks full of cheering, repatriated Soviet soldiers.

In Eilenburg I located the temporary bridge across the River Mulde - the main bridge having been destroyed. On the east side of the river were dozens of Soviet soldiers milling around two large, decrepit tents. I also saw several American trucks arrive on the west bank. They ground to a halt and off-loaded hundreds of former Soviet prisoners of war, who formed themselves in three ranks, then marched across the bridge. After crossing the bridge, they were assembled in front of waiting Soviet trucks, where they stood at attention while a Soviet Military band played, what I presumed was, the Soviet national anthem. A Russian colonel gave the returnees, what must have been, a welcoming speech, after which they were loaded on the trucks, then driven up the road towards Torgau.

I noted that during the playing of the national anthem, everyone stood at attention, and a Soviet honour guard presented arms. Even the six-man American guard, on the west bank, presented arms at the same time. I crouched in the bushes making up my mind what to do next. I did not wish to fall into Soviets hands again, therefore, I had to be very cautious. I noted that only a few trucks drove in a westerly direction, but when they did, the Russian military band played the American national anthem, and everyone stood at attention again. When the American and Allied prisoners had been exchanged, and were safely on the west side of the bridge, they were put aboard large trucks, with white stars painted on them. Some of the returnees were British soldiers, but the Russians only played the American national anthem; perhaps it was the only sheet music they had. I watched the procedures for about two hours, before I made up my mind, and walked slowly towards the bridge and freedom. On the way, I ignored the yells from the first Soviet tent, and was almost at the bridge waving my pass, when a Soviet officer ran out of the tent and screamed at the sentries on the bridge to stop me. I tried to step between them, but one of them shoved his bayonet in my middle, then prodded me back to the huge tent.

Inside the tent was an English speaking Soviet colonel, who refused to believe my story. He gave me back my temporary pass, then handed me over to the Soviet military police. The colonel informed me that I was to be returned to a displaced persons' camp in Torgau, where I would be properly documented, and after I had proven my identity, I would be allowed to return to the west. It did not sound too reassuring!

I was pushed into a small, open Russian truck, then taken back to the outskirts of Torgau, where I was put in a former concentration Nazi camp - there was no mistaking its former purpose. It overflowed with the former Soviet prisoners of war who had just returned from the west, and had cheered on their arrival in Eilenburg. There were also, judging from the number of languages spoken, many other national groups in the camp. I did not feel too happy, as after three years in the

Hell of Hitler's Night and Fog, I was back in a concentration camp, albeit a Soviet one, however, this time I did not intend to remain.

I was taken to an office, where I was again questioned by a group of Soviet officers, but this time I spoke only English. I handed one of them my Soviet identity card and the letter of introduction, in which John had identified me as a liberated British political prisoner. The officer took both pieces of paper, glanced over them, then handed them back to me. He seemed sympathetic, but told me that I needed to have someone identify me as a British subject. He explained that many Germans were trying to get to the west, and it was his job to positively identify everyone who had the right to return there. On that note, I was escorted to a dirty barrack block, where I was allocated a bunk piled high with filthy, stinking blankets.

I stayed overnight in the dirty barrack block, where it was impossible to sleep, as all the Nazi bed-bugs had fled to Torgau. I lay awake scratching, and when first light came, I crept out of the block, and seeing no one around, other than a female guard at the main gate. I walked around several huts until I came to the motor pool, where dozens of Soviet Army trucks were parked in long rows, waiting to fetch the returning Soviet ex-prisoners from Eilenburg.

I jumped in the back of the first truck, and hid beneath a tarpaulin, and within two hours I was on my way. About thirty minutes later the truck stopped, and was reversed against some bushes. I quickly jumped off and hid under them; almost in the same place I had hidden the previous day. It was not long before the band played the Soviet national anthem, and although I could not see them, I knew that everyone, including the two guards on the bridge, were standing at attention, and when I saw the boots and clogs of the returning Soviet prisoners, I made my move.

I crept to the end of the line of former Soviet prisoners, who were standing at attention, listening with rapt expressions to their national anthem. They did not notice me, and I was less than fifty yards from the bridge. I said a quick prayer, mustered all my strength, then sprinted straight for the centre of the bridge as the band played on. No one moved, not even the sentry, until I was almost on top of him, however, by that time it was too late. I was past him on the bridge and still running. Then I was on the west side of the bridge, where I was grabbed by a tall G.I, with six stripes on his arm. He looked down at me and said, "Here! Easy on! Just where the hell do you think you're going?"

I babbled out my story in twenty short seconds, after which I was taken to a small bell tent, in which there were three more Americans, including a young officer. I repeated my story slowly, and gave the young officer my Russian pass and the letter from the British staff sergeant. I told him that I had no other papers, as I had been arrested in 1942, and had none. The Americans were quite puzzled and cautious. I had to draw a map of the Channel Islands, as one of them thought I claimed to be from Jersey, USA, and I did not "sound like an American." I also stripped to the waist, and

although I had put on a few pounds, I was still quite emaciated.

When I had cleared things up as well as I could, the Americans talked together for a while, after which they decided to believe my story, and not send me back over the bridge. I had told them that I would be shot if they sent me back, which they found that a little hard to believe. I was driven to a hotel in Eilenburg, where the American detachment was billeted, and on the way to Eilenburg, the G.I. driver said that I was lucky, as the US Army was going to pull out of Eilenburg, in accordance with orders from their Headquarters. He explained that the Americans had advanced beyond the pre-designated lines of responsibility for the occupation of Germany, and they were, technically, on Russian controlled territory, which they had to vacate.

Later on that morning, two sergeants from the US Army Military Police came to the hotel where they questioned me. Both NCOs were very direct, but when they were through, they said that they believed me, and that arrangements would be made to hand me over to the British. The MPs said that they would like to have stayed longer, but they had other work on their minds. I had no idea what day it was, but I was too happy to care, and for the first time I admitted to myself and Maurice that I had really made it.

When the Military Police left, the tall six-striper, into whose arms I had run, asked me what I wanted to eat. I asked if it was possible to have bacon, eggs and toast with a glass of milk. He grinned at me and said, "Now that really proves you are a Limey!" I laughed wholeheartedly for the first time in years, and I did not even remind him that Jerseymen were not Limeys.

About thirty minutes later I was eating my dream meal. No more stuffed loaf and corned beef, but crispy fried bacon and eggs, "easy over." The cook gave me a jug of milk, and a few amused GIs stood around laughing when I bolted for the bathroom, before even finishing my dream meal, however, what little I had eaten, was just like I had imagined it to be during the past three years, but my stomach was not up to it. When I came out of the washroom, I apologized, and told them the story of my dream meal and my great corned beef recipe - they howled with laughter.

Early the next day I was driven to Halle. I learned that the Americans had to leave there also, as it, too, was in the "Russian Zone." In Halle I was taken care of by another group of Americans, who took me to an airport, where I met my first British official, a captain, in army uniform. He sat me down; took my statement, and thankfully he chose to believe me. During the questioning, I told him that I had met a British soldier in the Soviet Zone, and gave him John's name. The officer looked down a list, which confirmed that John had been there.

The officer did not feel that it was necessary to continue with my interrogation; instead, he sent me to an American run-field hospital, where I was packed into bed, X-Rayed and given all kinds of needles. I must have remained there for a week, before they decided I was fit to travel to Brussels, which appeared to be my exit point from Continental Europe.

I did not sleep to well in the hospital, as there were so many questions to which I had no answers. The memories of our escape and arrest continued to fill my mind. I re-lived Maurice's death and the deaths of many of my European comrades, and when I recalled our arrest over and over again, I had to cope with the terrible knowledge that we had been betrayed by my mother, who had gone to her German associates, then directed them to Green Island - the situation, the timings, the Water Police, all pointed in her direction, but I wanted to know why she had done it. I really wanted to believe that it had been done out of motherly love, as she wanted her younger son back. I could forgive her that, but I wanted the entire truth, and as I could not sleep, I kept my my diary up to date, and even added a few interesting facts. I had been given an air mail letter by the British officer, and had written to my mother - in it I wrote that I loved her and would take care of her when I got back to Jersey. I wrote that she would never have to work again, and that I would take care of her for the rest of her life, as I had, "...two strong arms, and a heart full of forgiveness." One day in mid-June, at about 9:00 am., I was loaded on a Dakota aircraft. I must have appeared glum, as the man next to me asked, "What's the matter with you? The cat got your tongue? You should be happy - you're going home!"

I told him that I was worried, because I did not know what to expect in Brussels. The soldier put his arm over my shoulder and assured me that I would be, "...just fine, as you are no longer dealing with the Soviets, but with your own people." That was exactly the problem which bothered me. I had lost faith with all officials.

One of the crew called out that we had left German air space, and a loud cheer went up from the former prisoners of war, some of whom had been in German camps for five years. As I looked down at the disappearing German landscape, I prayed that I would never see the cursed country again. It had been my Hell on earth for three years, and Maurice was buried there, but I had to get him out somehow, as I had given him my promise.

When we arrived at an airport in Brussels, I was separated from the former prisoners of war, then driven to a cavalry barracks in the centre of the city. I was sent to a delousing station, where someone shoved a hose down my pants, up my pant legs and down my shirt - I assumed that this was a British guarantee that I was finally rid of German lice, or so the operator of the DDT machine told me, however, the procedure left me covered with an evil smelling white powder, and made me look like an skinny circus clown in over-size clothes.

After the delousing process I was taken to a small office, where an officer, from British Field Security, told me to sit down, then began to interrogate me. The man was painfully pedantic, and wrote everything carefully and slowly in a brown note-book. It took forever, and when he was almost through, he suggested that I had a strange, even foreign accent for a Channel Islander. "Here we go again," I thought. I asked what a Channel Island accent sounded like - he did not know. I

reminded him that I had spoken nothing but French and German for three years, which may have been the cause for my "strange accent." My explanation appeared to satisfy him, but he was a little miffed when I expressed my dislike at being "interrogated." He tried to placate me by saying that all returnees were interrogated, as, "We can't let all kinds of riff-raff into Britain, you know!" He could not understand that I was very tired and sick, and that I just wanted to go home. He just about broke my heart, when, as I was leaving his office, he told me that I would not be allowed to leave Brussels until I was positively identified. I suggested that he telephone my father's shop on the Channel Islands, and almost fell off the chair when he said that the islands had been occupied by the Germans until 8 May, 1945, and communication was at a premium. He also suggested that he would probably not be able to get through to the Jersey, as he did not know the state of the telephone lines between the United Kingdom and the islands. However, I insisted that he try, but he would not.

He told me to go into Brussels to the "Channel Island Refugee Committee Centre," where I might find someone to identify me. He gave me a handful of Belgian money, which I tucked in my pocket, then left the barracks with my hobo's pack. I was not out of the woods yet, and when I reached the main road, I contemplated escaping, and travelling across France to Saint Malo, or even Granville, where I was certain that I could get a boat back to Jersey. It was very tempting now that there were no Krauts around, but I was not ready for another escape, due to my deteriorated health - I therefore took a street car to the address given to me by the Oh-so-very-proper-officer.

The street car was crammed with people, so I jumped on the back platform and grasped a rope, which, unfortunately, was attached to a long arm running along overhead wires. I must have put too much pressure on the rope, as the arm came adrift, and the tram ground to a halt. An irate driver ran around the back and gave me a piece of his Belgian mind, then threw me off his tram, causing me to walk the rest of the way. I tried explaining that I had never seen a tram in my life. I tried to explain, in French, that it was an unfortunate accident, as I did not know how the thing worked, but the irate driver was in no mood to listen, besides which he didn't give a damn that we had no street cars on the Channel Islands.

The Belgian capital seemed relatively undamaged, although most of its shop windows were bare. I walked around a film crew, and nearly dropped dead with fright when a group of German soldiers charged around a corner - they were only actors hired for a film about the Belgian Resistance, but, for a few seconds, they put the fear of the Devil in me.

At the Channel Island Refugee Committee Centre, I checked in with the receptionist; gave her my name, date of birth and home address, all of which she wrote on a card. She then asked me to take a seat, and told me that she would get back to me "shortly." I sat around the place for the remainder of the day, but met no one capable of identifying me. I did not want to stay in Brussels forever, and



somehow, I had the feeling that I would, unless I got myself identified, or took it upon myself to walk to St. Malo. I knew none who one had come into the place, neither did I recognize any names on the lists of Channel Island refugees shown to me by the prim and proper receptionist.

I returned to the cavalry barracks that evening and spent another fretful night. The food, in the British-run barracks, was nothing to rave about, but as a consolation, there were no bed bugs. The next morning I asked to see a doctor, and when I did, he said that I would have to wait until I got back to England, as he had no facilities for treating TB. I was worried as my temperature had increased and I had started coughing and bringing up phlegm again.

Having listened to the doctor's pathetic line of nonsense, I went back to the Channel Islands Refugee Centre, where I waited around for the better part of the day. That day also proved to be fruitless, and I became sick of the secretary's glances in my direction - I suppose the woman expected me to sit at attention until I was identified, but most of all I should shut my mouth and be thankful for their devotion.

On the sixth day, I was just about to give up again and go back to the barracks, when a rather stout lieutenant in the British Army Pay Corps uniform walked in. I had no idea what he was doing there, but I knew him to be the son of Mr. Krichefski, the merchant who owned the clothing store opposite my father's earlier workshop in Trooper's Yard, Jersey. I knew the Krichefskis were Jewish, and remembered Mr. Krichefski senior with a great deal of affection.

I had no idea what the man was doing there, but I went over to Lieutenant Krichefski, and introduced myself. He was puzzled, but I explained that I needed someone to identify in order to get back to Jersey. The pleasant lieutenant did not recognize me - understandably, as he had left the Island in 1940, when I was thirteen. It also did not help matters that I had aged five years and looked a lot like a middle-aged scarecrow, however, Lieutenant Krichefski did not give up on me, and asked a number of questions, which, eventually, left no doubt in his mind that I, "had to be Ted Hassall's son." On that resolution he told one of the officials that only a son of "Ted" Hassall could have answered his questions, and with those sterling qualifications, I, Peter Hassall, was accepted back into the fold as a Jerseyman, and entitled to be returned to England; as soon as there was an available plane.

I returned to the cavalry barracks where I reported to the Field Security officer, who seemed satisfied, and issued me with a temporary identity card. He also suggested that I was to expect more interrogations when I returned to England, and advised me to show more patience with my interrogators in England, "who, after all, are only doing their jobs." I promised to be patient, and apologized for having upset him, but deep down I despised his type of bureaucrat.

Towards the end of June, some Channel Islanders, former prisoners of war and I were driven to an airport, where we were loaded into a cargo aircraft, which promptly took off. I sat at a

window seat, and looked down as we flew over the coast. I saw the wonderful, open sea again for the first time in three years. It was such a wonderful sight. Minutes later the aircraft began its descent, and we soon bumped down at Croydon airport. The aircraft door opened, and a stairway was wheeled up for our disembarkation.

I waited until all other passengers had disembarked. Some of the returnees had kissed the ground, as they stepped on British soil. Then it was my turn, but only because one of the crew suggested that I leave, as they had to park the aircraft elsewhere. I slowly walked down the ramp onto British soil, but I did not feel like kissing it.

I felt anger as opposed to elation as I walked past a Military Policeman, who beckoned me into a waiting room, where I caught up with the plane's passengers, who stood around in groups; some already in the arms of their relatives, hugging, kissing and crying. Their road had been long and trying too! I looked around for someone whom I might recognize, but saw no one. I then sat in an armchair, and no sooner had I done so, when a smiling Salvation Army lady pressed a cup of tea in my hands.

I sat, sipped and waited for something to happen, but nothing did - I had no direction, and did I know what to do or where to go. I had five Reichsmarks in my pocket, but doubted that it would get me a hotel room. When the room was empty, a tall gentleman came over and asked why I was still there. I explained my predicament, and asked what to do. He had no answer, but went and made a telephone call, then came back and told me that I would be taken to a hotel, where I would be lodged until a relative came to fetch me. I shook my head with frustration, and asked if I could telephone my father in Jersey, but the man said that he could not authorize the call.

A little while later the tall man told me that a taxi was outside. I got into it with my hobo's pack still tucked under my arm. The Customs man had opened my Oxo tin and probed into the sticky green stuff, but there were no diamonds, neither did he find anything on which I could be charged duty. I had brought nothing except myself out of Germany, and I was not feeling too good about myself. I wanted to forget everything German, with the exception of Maurice's remains, but I found it difficult to get out of the Night and Fog, even in England.

I did not bother to ask the taxi driver where we were going, nor did he volunteer anything. He kept driving until we reached a small three storey hotel, which I believe was called Northolt House, in which I was given a room. An elderly lady told me that some Home Office official had telephoned her to say that I would be staying there until I was identified and collected - I was too mentally drained to even smile at her, and the darned TB was coming back.

So that was it! No banners! No streamers! No welcoming committee or band! Nothing! Worse still, I was still not free, because my mind was where it would always be - in the Night and Fog of Hitler's Hell! I realised that Britain had a lot to do as the war had ended, but what I had experienced

was only the beginning of my battles with a faceless, uncaring bureaucracy.

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- ADDENDUM -

In captivity, Maurice and I often went over the events leading up to our captivity, and given the curfew, the timings of the escape, the arrival of the Water Police and the Feldgendarms, there was no doubt that we were denounced by my mother. However, when I returned to Jersey, and based on information fifty years later, I was assured by our lone confidant, that someone, other than he, had learned of our escape plans, including location and timing, and informed my mother. Regardless of what he said, I knew that our security had been air tight, and only the confidant, outside of Dennis, Maurice and myself, knew the exact date and departure point - that person having been let in on the secret in case we perished at sea.

Over the years, and more recently on 1 March, 1995, my brother swore to me that he knew nothing at all about our intended escape plans. He admitted knowing about the boat, but denied knowledge of our plans to leave from Green Island on 3 May, 1942 - I have my his word for it. - That left the confidant, who also swore that he had not informed my mother. Furthermore, when I returned to Jersey in 1945, both my father and brother were not long in confirming that my mother had denounced us to the Germans. I also had Walter Linde's written testimony.

Over the long the years I had reconciled her betrayal as an act of motherly love - an act of a terrified mother, desperate to get her younger son back safely, and during all the years I had forgiven her, as I think that I understood her sad dilemma on the night of 3 May, 1942.

It has been suggested to me that the old carter, who moved our boat, also knew the location, and may have suspected that we were going to escape, however, he was not interviewed by the Germans until 6 May, 1942. Furthermore, had he denounced us, the Germans would have been lying in wait at Green Island - moreover, the carter was an honourable man with an untarnished reputation for loyalty.

It was also hinted that my uncle knew of the boat and our escape plans. I agree, but while he knew of the boat, he did not know of the escape plans nor of our point of departure. The suggestion that he had anything to do with denouncing us is quite preposterous. Besides which, had my uncle known of our escape plan, he would have asked to go with us in order to joined his wife and daughter in England.

From 1945 until 1970 I served in the Armed Forces, and during that time, I visited Jersey

infrequently, due to several overseas postings. On those visits, our denunciation was never openly discussed, and when I raised the question with my father, he changed or avoided the subject. His sole utterance was, "I tried to stop your mother from going to the Pomme d'Or Hotel that night, but I was unable to. You know your mother when she gets in one of her rages! I begged her not to go, but she ignored me and went. What could I do?"

My answer to that was, "You could have tied her to a bed until the next day." It met with stony silence.

My father also told me that my mother had "left" her family, in 1943, and had gone to live on the Continent with her latest lover, a Spanish labourer, probably one of the many shipped to the island by the Organization Todt to work on fortifications. He also suggested that the pair skipped to France just before the Allies closed their net on the Islands. As stated, I had not been in a position to know that the Channel Islands were not liberated in the early months after D Day, despite the fact that the Americans had captured the entire Cotentin Peninsular by August 1944. The reason that the Allies by-passed the islands in August, 1944, was that the islands had lost any strategic value, as France was occupied; and to have stormed the islands' well-fortified beaches, would have caused unnecessary and heavy loss of life.

On my final visit to Jersey, in February, 1954, I found myself frequently drawn to Dennis' grave at St. Saviour's cemetery. I also made detours around St. Helier's vegetable market, where Dennis' father and younger brother still operated their vegetable and fruit stand. I even detoured Maurice's grandfather's pharmacy, as I could not hold up my head, having placed so much blame on myself. It was a disquieting period in which I could not settle down. I had no job, no training for "civvy street" and furthermore, my father had lost his lucrative photographic business because he had been unwilling to work within the terms of his lease on the shop. Therefore, in March, 1954, after giving it a lot of thought, I decided that I could no longer live on the island with my memories and guilt. In 1988, I became quite serious about completing this book. Most of which had already been written from my diaries, and from four hundred, handwritten pages, which had yellowed with time. My NN friends asked me to finish it, as very little had been written about NN prisoners in English language books. Records indicated that there were possibly many British, who had been interned as NN prisoners, and like ourselves, they did not understand the reason for their harsh treatment. It is possible that members of the SOE became NN prisoners for the same reason as ourselves.

After the war, former French NN looked for answers concerning their unusually cruel treatment, but it was not until 1960, that most of the facts emerged. Prior to this enlightenment, there had been vague writings about Night and Fog prisoners in dozens of books - none of which came near the truth, but every writer agreed that the Night and Fog prisoners were more harshly treated than many other deportees.

As several parts of my life were unanswered, I felt that writing the book would help put my life back on track and might help exorcise my past. I also felt that I could correct the many inaccuracies written about Dennis, Maurice and me in numerous books regarding the occupation of the Channel Islands. In some of these books we were blamed for "rocking the boat" and disturbing the "cordial cooperation" between the States of Jersey and the Occupier. In others, we were viewed as vandals, who had prevented fishermen from harvesting much needed food from the sea. I realize that I have to take some blame for the inaccuracies, as I did not to speak about my imprisonment when I returned - I had no reason to. Besides which, the Jersey news media the Jersey Evening Post even published an inaccurate item, allegedly given by myself, at a time I was flat on my back with TB and certainly unable to get talk to them.

Today, I still feel that some of the States' members demonstrated a remarkable lack of intestinal fortitude when it came to protecting those arrested and interned by the Germans. In our case, the States did not protest when we were deported, neither did they attempt to find out where we were sent. Why should they have? We had broken German proclaimed law and rocked the States' boat, therefore, rightly or wrongly, they washed their hands of us, and promptly forgot us.

By 1991, I had gathered most of the information on our experience within the Night and Fog Decree, having spent five years periodically researching and gathering material in France, Holland, Germany, Luxembourg, including two days in Jersey. I also interviewed many NN survivors, with whom I had experienced the Hell of the Night and Fog Decree. However, several family related matters were still unclear, and needed to be resolved before the final chapters of this book could be written.

In the summer of 1991, with those loose ends in mind, I wrote to my brother, and asked for more answers. With one exception, he promptly replied to my queries.

The unanswered question was worded, "What happened at Winchester House on the night of Sunday, 3 May, 1942?" I had also telephoned my brother and suggested that I had the right to know the truth. He did not give it to me over the phone, but promised to write the answer in the near future.

True to his word, shortly after Christmas, 1991, his letter, dated 18 December, 1991, arrived. Part of the letter reads: "**..... She [my mother] knew you had this boat quite some time before the ill-fated trip. That's why on the night of, May 3rd 1942 she asked why you were not at home, and the curfew had gone by. I said I did not know anything. She then twigged, put two and two together and in her usual lady-like way screamed at Dad and I [sic] and said off the top of her head, "The little wretch. I bet it's that boat, he's leaving the island." She then shouted, "We will all be arrested for his stupidity." Dad and I tried to calm her down, and Dad said, "E [sic] if he's gone, good luck to the boy and God speed him. Please do not go to the Harbour**

**Police (German Wasserschutzpolizei)." "No! No!" she screamed. " We must inform them, then they will look at us more kindly. Then they won't arrest us all." There was nothing that Dad or I could do. She stalked off down Winchester Street, towards the Pomme D'Or. It was no use pleading with the b...h.**

**It was only about a half-hour or so later, a German Kriegsmarine car arrived and picked Dad and I [sic] up. They got nothing out of Dad, and nothing out of me. Because, neither of us knew anything. To put them off the scent, I said that you used to go once a week to a farm on the West Coast to stay with friends, but I did not know the farm nor your friends. Hoping that if you had gone that this would give you more time to get away. There were so many farms at St. Ouens that they would spend hours searching the land.**

**It was only months later that Walter Linde informed me that alarms had gone out to all the coastal areas, Cherbourg, St, Malo, Granville patrols (sea) had all been alerted (NAVAL PATROLS) Walter said, "If it would have been in his hands he would have saved your bacon. What was difficult he said, "One had to account for a body Dennis's [ sic]." .....**

..... More personal paragraphs to end of letter.

The letter was quite shocking, as I had forgiven my mother in the belief that she had tried to act in my best interests, and during my Christmas Holiday, 1991, finally knowing that she had deliberately denounced us was a great shock - even fifty years later. As I re-read my brother's letter, I asked myself, "Was she afraid of punishment, or was she frightened of losing her lucrative black market operation?" Reading my brother's letter, almost fifty years after the event, was painful enough, but the fact that she might have been responsible for Maurice's death made matters worse - had she not denounced us, and even if the tragedy had taken place, we had a contingency plan to go into hiding, and we might have succeeded in hiding out until the end of the war - others did.

That night, I also realised that my brother had not fully answered the question. He should have explained how the Germans arrived so promptly at Green Island, as my mother certainly did not know our escape point, and, as my brother swore to me, neither did he. That left the missing link in the affair - the "Fourth Man" one might say.

When I spoke to Dennis' and Maurice's families in 1945, they assured me that they were unaware of the boat, nor did they know that we were making plans to escape, or, as both said, they would have put a stop to it.

That being the case, how did my mother's black market accomplice, Walter Linde, arrived at Green Island so quickly? It was, after all, a most unlikely place from which to escape, given the hundreds of jagged rocks extending far out to sea, and which, Walter Linde, as an experienced seaman, would have accepted as a most unlikely escape point, particularly with the relatively high and rough tide of 3 May, 1942. Again, what was it that Linde said to me, as he pushed us into the Feldgendarm's car?

"I could put my foot up your arse. Look at the trouble you have caused your poor mother!"

I am certain that, in my lifetime, I will never get the truth from the person who told my mother that we were leaving from Green Island. I know who did it, but is it right to make accusations at this late date? It would also be too simple to drop the whole thing, but I was not alone in the affair, and I will be unable to sleep properly until I have that admission of guilt. It should not be too difficult to tell the truth at this point in time, as I cannot take any legal action over it, as there are no existing laws to cover such eventualities. To this date and to the best of my knowledge, no one has been arrested nor tried on the Channel Islands for collaborating with the Germans, although collaboration is still an issue on Islands still experiencing moral dilemmas with their past.

In December, 1991, as I read my brother's letter for the tenth time, my past was as vivid as the day on which all events had occurred - I had lived them daily for fifty years. I still wonder why my father, a British ex-serviceman, had not overpowered my mother. He had once been my hero until he, too, kissed German jackboots.

I could not take any more of my brother's letter that night, besides which, there was nothing I could do about it in December, 1991, as I knew both my parents to be dead. I, therefore, took a sleeping-pill, then went to bed. I had time to think, and part of the missing links had been answered by my brother. But before I went to sleep, I was again thankful that, in 1945, I had gone immediately into the Armed Forces for twenty-five years, and also immigrated in 1954, as I might be living in Jersey and suffering with a case of severe "Occupation syndrome," as there are many who keep dredging up the past - I suggest to those who were not there that they cannot testify. They can only speculate, and continue to cause much grief to islanders, many of whom, who want the whole thing to go away.

Then something stranger than fiction occurred - In July, 1992, during my noon-hour lunch break, I collected the mail from my down-town postal box. It contained several flyers, a monthly utility bill and a letter bearing three French stamps, which I did not pay attention to at the time, as I receive many letters from former NN comrades, and by habit, I put the mail in my brief case until I arrived home from work of an evening.

That evening, when I took the mail from my brief-case, I saw that the large, brown envelope bore a Parisian post-mark, and when I opened it, a pile of newspaper clippings fell out. Greatly astonished, I looked them over, and saw that they had been sent by my mother - amazing as it was, she was still alive and living in Paris! I was floored! In the top right hand corner of the first newspaper clipping, in which she had made headlines, she had written, "**Is it so hard to forgive X.**" I presume that the "x" meant that she was sending me a kiss.

"Is it so hard to forgive?" Quite a difficult question to answer in 1992, particularly from a person

whom I had presumed dead. Now that she was alive, would Maurice want me to forgive her? I thought deeply, and tried to connect with Maurice, and when I did, or believed that I had, I experienced a chilling reply. My mind went back over the years, and I thought of the failed attempts I had made to have Maurice's remains returned to the island or to his birthplace, in Leicester, England. I recalled the curt replies from the States of Jersey, the Government of the United Kingdom and most of all, I recalled Mrs. Thatcher's buck passing. The end result was that Maurice's remains were still in Wittlich's "Ehren Friedhof" (Cemetery of Honour), to which he had been transferred in June, 1973. I had walked through it several times, and have prayed over his grave. I had kept my word by keeping his memory alive, until others took up the sword. I am glad that they did, as I had not much more to give.

After thinking about Dennis and Maurice and having read the newspaper clippings, I thought over my mother's plea for forgiveness. I then went over to my desk, where I typed a short reply. Forgiveness was not mine alone to give. I had to include Maurice's option in my letter, and I felt no joy nor vindication when I mailed my reply the following day - but then, I am not a very forgiving person. I still carry an enormous amount of guilt and my nights are always long. However, from my mother's short plea for forgiveness came one consolation: she seems to acknowledge her guilt and needs forgiveness - perhaps that will help ease things a little? .

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- EPILOGUE -

**Oberwachtmeister Linde, German Water Police** returned to Hamburg where he was re-instated in his pre-war job. In 1946, I met him in a restaurant, close to the famous St. Pauli church, and without coercion he told me that my mother had come to the Pomme d'Or Hotel at about 11:30 pm. on 3 May, 1942, where she reported to him that two others and I were trying to escape to England from Green Island. I asked if he was certain that my mother had said "Green Island." He answered me with a question: "How do you think Stromp and I got there so quickly?" Linde told me that his car arrived at the Pomme d'Or Hotel about fifteen minutes after my mother, and that it had taken approximately fifteen minutes to drive to Green Island, where they found us on the beach, and arrested us. Linde also said that before leaving the Pomme d'Or he had instructed the duty watchman to call the Feldgendarms and direct them to Green Island. He was sure of his facts, as gave a written deposition to the Feldgendarms on 4 May, 1942. He admitted that he had done his best to shield my mother from the affair by crediting her with our arrest. [Author's note - He must have succeeded as my father's shop was not closed down.]

**SS Sonderlager Hinzert's staff.** Between 18 June, 1948, and 28 October, 1948, the French High Court tried several of the former Hinzert camp staff in Rastatt. Unfortunately, not all were



available, as some had been killed, or lived in East Germany. Among those sentenced to death, and mentioned in this book, were: Rottenführer Anton Pammer and the Chef der Kammer (clothing store), Oberscharführer Johannes Schattner. Napoleon, alias Hauptsturmführer Alfred Heinrich, the Lager Führer, was sentenced to life imprisonment with hard labour. The civilian doctor, Theophil Hackenthal, was sentenced to seven years hard labour. Many ex-NN, including Father de la Martinière, were subpoenaed and gave evidence at the trials, and although I did not attend, I gave a deposition to the British Foreign Office, as the French had asked that I do so.

**SS Kommandant Hauptscharführer Paul Sporrenberg:** This coward of a man was eventually arrested sometime in 1949 or 1950. He was charged with many violations of our human rights, unfortunately he died before he was brought to trial.

**The French Kapo, André Callaux** was tried before a Military Tribunal in Paris in 1948, and during the trial he admitted nothing. Callaux even failed to acknowledge the identity of his accusers as they took the witness stand against him. He testified that he had "helped" NN prisoners, as opposed to torturing them - he was not believed, and was sentenced to hard labour for life.

**The Swiss Kapo, Eugen Wipf** finally "earned" his way out of Hinzert. His masters were satisfied with his work, and released him to be inducted into the Waffen SS. Luxembourg witnesses said that they last saw Wipf as he walked past the SS camp on his way to the Reinsfeld train station. After the war the Swiss authorities arrested and tried Wipf, sentencing him to a long jail term. I later discovered that the SS treated him as a German because he was living in Germany when he committed a criminal offence. Hence the reason for his appointment as Senior Camp Person, as the SS had a penchant for nominating German criminals as Kapos. It was not surprising to learn that Wipf had never been in the Foreign Legion, but just fancied the képi - Wipf died four years into his sentence.

**Dr. Bithorn, Director of the Prison of Wittlich** was arrested by West German authorities in 1946, and charged with having handed over five German Communist prisoners to the Gestapo when he was a prison director in Frankfurt, prior to 1941. The prison priest, Father Anton Barz, alerted many NN of Dr. Dr. Bithorn's arrest, which caused a flood of favourable written testimony. The charges against Dr. Bithorn were subsequently dropped, in part, due to the NN testimony, but the legal decision was that the Gestapo had been responsible for the Communist prisoners in question at all times, and that they were simply detained in Dr. Bithorn's establishment.

**Oberlehrer (Senior Teacher) Klein, Prison of Wittlich.** For reasons better known to themselves, the judicial authorities in the French Zone of Occupation, arrested Oberlehrer Klein and disenfranchised him as a school teacher. Again Father Barz took up the cause and wrote to many NN, who came to Oberlehrer Klein's defence. Based on the former NN's testimony, the French

court was obliged to reverse its decision, and Oberlehrer Klein was re-instated.

**Dr. Hans de Saint Paul, Doctor to the Prison of Wittlich.** Again, for reasons unknown, the French judicial authorities arrested him in 1947. On learning of the good doctor's arrest, Father Anton Barz again called and wrote to many NN. Based on our testimony, Dr. de Saint Paul was acquitted of any wrong doing, but was unable to cope with the indignity of having been arrested. His fine moral character suffered an irreversible blow, and quite rightly, he was offended, as he had done his best for us. In 1945, I wrote to him and Dr. Bithorn, and thanked them for their protection, which undoubtedly saved my life. Both responded to my letters, but when I tried to visit Dr. de Saint Paul in 1957, he was only willing to talk on the telephone, and specifically requested that I not come to his home. I was disappointed, but respected his request.

**Pfarrer Anton Barz, priest to the Prison of Wittlich:** I am unable to find enough, or the right kind of words to express my feelings for Father Barz and his sister, Therese. It is a tragedy that he and his sister were not recognized for their humanitarian conduct, as well as for the many risks he took for the NN in Wittlich and the women in the nearby Flüssbach camp. After the war, Father Barz received letters of thanks from three European governments, but no awards. He was invited to France shortly after the war, where he spent many weeks with several former NN, who wanted to express their appreciation. I was fortunate to visit him in 1946, 1947, 1957 and 1958. He had not changed, and his concerns were still for others. His sister, Therese, was still alive in 1990, when I visited Wittlich. She was thrilled to talk about her brother, and gave me some mementos of my favourite priest. **Monsignore Anton Barz**, after 30 years at the Prison of Wittlich retired in 1966, to a small village church near Wittlich. He died on 22 July, 1988. He is deeply missed by those of us who had the honour and privileged of knowing him -

**Father Joseph de la Martinière** was obsessed with the Night and Fog Decree. He had ended the war, with many other priests, in Dachau concentration camp. Father Joseph was determined to get to the bottom of our imprisonment, despite the fact that most NN records had been destroyed by the SS and the German Ministry of Justice. He travelled all over Germany, France, Luxembourg and Poland, collecting every piece of documentary evidence available. He also interviewed hundreds of former NN, and wrote to many more asking for their testimony. The end result was about a ton of documentary evidence, which is now the property of the "Museum of Resistance and Deportation," Besançon, France. Father Joseph is also the co-founder of our NN Organization, "Souvenir de la Déportation NN." Today, in May, 1997, 1996, his mind is as sharp as ever. When I last saw him, he was still driving his car, and furiously writing to finish his second, third and fourth volumes on his personal Calvary. Father Joseph was never tried by the Sondergericht, which deemed him innocent before he came to trial, however, he spent three years in concentration camps and prisons. He is still angry at the way we were treated, but as I am not his father confessor, I do not know if he

forgave his enemies, and if he did, then it had to have been with a great deal of reluctance.

**Pierrot Marionneau ('ti Pierre):** Little Pierre, the man with the very big heart, is retired and lives with his wife, Colette, in the small town of Mer, near Orleans, France. When he returned from Germany in 1945, he went into his father's flower shop business, and managed it for many years. His younger brother, Roger, now carries on the Marionneau family tradition, almost in the shadows of the historical Castle Chambord, to which the French government fled in May 1940, as the Germans advanced. Pierrot is an active member of our organization's council and is active in local veteran's groups. His disposition has not changed and his heart is still as big as it was.

**Gerald van Rykervorseln van Kessel** made it back home with Henk Klerkx. As stated, they did not go with the French to the sanatorium in Hirschberg on 9 May, 1945, having the same fears as harboured about the Russians. Instead, he and his friends **Henk Clerkx** and Pierre Tourneux, went in a westerly direction, and eventually arrived in the American Zone of Occupation. After the war, Gerald and his wife, Els, emigrated to America, where their three children were born. He remained there for sixteen years, but was drawn back to his homeland, where his is the recipient of a comfortable State pension; compliments of German reparations to the Netherlands. Paradoxically, after the war, Gerald was interrogated by the Netherland security services because someone had denounced him for having collaborated with the Germans during the years 1942 to 1945. The informant alleged that Gerald had voluntarily gone to Germany to work. Both he and Henk Clerkx, who is also retired after a long association with a maritime company, live in or near s'Hertogenbosch, Holland.

**The professor, Pierre Tourneux** returned home to Besançon, where he resumed his career as a high-school professor. He has seven children, all scholars and graduates of French universities. He and his wife, Françoise, still reside in Besançon in their large house overlooking the town. His home is full of wonderful antique furniture, and there is a large garden, full of fruit and magnificent walnut trees, in which Pierre potters. When Pierre was in Germany he composed many poems, all of which he committed to memory, as he had neither pencil nor paper. After the war his father urged him to put them on paper. He did, and three of his poetry books grace my, and others, bookshelves. Pierre, our professor who had tutored so many young NN in the prisons, was able to recall every line he had mentally composed in the camps. Not one word was missing. Bravo Pierre!

**Lucien Vautrot, Resistant from Chalons sur Saône** made it, although I don't know how. He now lives in Sennecey le Grand, just outside Chalons sur Saône, with his wonderful wife, Odette. Lucien recently lost his only son, who was very dear to him - his grief continues today. I understand Lulu! Lucien's docket at Arolsen, the Red Cross Document Centre in Germany, is numbered TD/896 866. It shows that he was in many camps - all bad ones! The Sondergericht sentenced him to eight years hard labour; mostly because of his Communist affiliation. Lucien

spent time in: Chalons sur Saône (prison), Dijon (prison), Fresnes (prison), Trier (prison), Hinzert (concentration camp), Breslau (prison), Brieg (prison), Gross Rosen (concentration camp), Herzbruch (concentration camp), Sachsenhausen (concentration camp), Flossenberg (concentration camp). He told me that Herzbruch, which was an outside kommando, was the worst of the lot. I have no idea how Lucien made it through that lot. His sense of humour is still acute. While I was having coffee in his kitchen with his wife, Odette, a figure in striped concentration camp "pyjamas" walked in. I was startled, as I did not recognize Lucien, who stood in the shadows. Lucien wore the striped uniform all the way back to France, and refused all efforts to have him put on decent civilian clothing - the pyjamas were his badge of survival. As I said, Lucien is a gallant man with a great sense of humour!

**The Breton Group:** Guy Faisant, Gilbert Anquetil, Yves Le Moigne, Jacques Tarrière and Michael Goltais made it back to France. The youngest member of their group, and the youngest known NN, Pascal Lafaye, died in Nordhausen, Germany on 5 May, 1945, as a result of American bombing of the armament works in which Pascal worked - just three days before Germany capitulated. His mother, who was also arrested in the "Breton" case, died on 14 April, 1945 in Jauer, Germany. In Rennes a school, Groupe Scolaire Pascal Lafaye, was named after him. A street, rue Marie et Pascal Lafaye, in Rennes is also named after Pascal and his mother. Jacques Tarrière made it back to France, but died soon after. In Rennes, a street is also named after Jacques - his lifespan, on the street sign reads: 1926-1945. The indefatigable Guy Faisant, now retired in Rennes, was instrumental in building a wonderful memorial to all the deportees from the Department of Ille et Villaine, Brittany. Stones were brought in from many concentration camps in Germany, one of them from Hinzert. Guy Faisant is a much respected French hero, and he and the other young Bretons, are Knights of the Legion of Honour. I was saddened to learn of Yves LeMoigne's recent death. Now only Guy Faisant and Michel Goltais remain of that sterling band of six brave, young Bretons. I was proud to have them present on 3 May, 1997, when Maurice's remains were re-buried in Jersey.

**Gunner Hancil, Cardiff, Wales,** on receipt of my letter from the prison of Schweidnitz, wrote a letter to Wales in which he somehow outlined my case. It got into the right hands, and a Red Cross letter, addressed to my parents, arrived in Jersey in March, 1945.

**The Strafgefängnis Wittlich** was liberated by the Americans in the autumn of 1944, and with the liberating contingent came two French officers. It is not known if the French officers or the Americans seized all documents relating to the NN who had been imprisoned there. Unfortunately, no trace has ever been found of the NN documents from Wittlich. The only record the prison has of the writer is in a large ledger, which shows that he was born on 20 November, 1926, and was registered as a "cook." Today, the Prison of Wittlich is almost twice its 1942 size. The ranges are

painted in light pastel shades and flower baskets hang along each range. The famous chamber pots have been replaced with in-cell toilet facilities, and although there are cards on cell doors, I saw that they were for dietary purposes: permitting the occupant to receive white bread instead of black, and entitling the occupant to extra milk. The present prison authorities know of Dr. Bithorn's work, as well as the valiant efforts of Father Anton Barz, Oberlehrer Klein and Dr. Hans de Saint Paul.

**SS Sonderlager Hinzert:** many Luxembourgers were sent to Hinzert to be "disciplined." They first arrived in the camp in 1941, but after the Luxembourg general strike against the Germans in 1942, hundreds more followed. Hinzert became the end station for many of them, who were murdered there. They were shot just behind the Commandant's house, and buried without religious service nor coffins. They were later re-buried with full honours. After the war, Luxembourgers built a small chapel on the site of the former SS camp, alongside of which are hundreds of tombstones. The cemetery at Hinzert is still a well-used rallying point for many of us who were in that dreadful camp. In 1945, the camp was quickly vandalised by Germans, desperate for fuel during the immediate post war years. The last building standing was the administrative hut, in which the quarantine once existed. The loud-speaker poles also survived, however, the land was gradually reclaimed by a local farmer, who benefited from our labours and sufferings. His fields are stone and root free. When I was last there, the pastures were beautifully green, cattle turnips abounded and the aroma from the pines was just as strong as it had been on 13 June, 1942 - I took a handful of soil from the field, and was not surprised when the farmer shook his head when he saw me put it in my pocket. The road leading to Trier, above the camp, where we cleared out the tree stumps, is nice and wide and by-passes the Luxembourg cemetery and former camp. The lone surviving building of the SS Camp was Kommandant Sporrenberg's house, which was occupied by a German caretaker, who is paid by the German Government to maintain the SS victims' cemetery. A new house was recently built for the caretaker, as the Kommandant's old one simply fell apart, leaving nothing but the foundations. It may well have been, but I have no proof that the Luxembourgers hauled away the remaining block to Luxembourg where it might have been turned into a museum. The Luxembourgers were the main occupants of Hinzert, and after removing their own dead, they caused to be erected a small chapel and a cemetery containing all the remaining dead from SS Sonderlager Hinzert.

**"Fat" Otto from the prison of Hirschberg.** After the war I received a letter from him. In it he asked me to vouch that he had been good to me. The intent of his letter was to use me as medium to enter West Germany. I wrote a short letter outlining the basis facts, however, I do not know if Otto made it to the West.

**Franz from the Prussian Crown Inn** finally got out of the Soviet Zone. He purchased a restaurant

just outside Minden, where I frequently visited him and expressed my thanks for what he did for me in May, 1945. I am almost certain that I would have made it back without his help.

**Police Constable Albert "Bert" Chardine.** On the morning of 4 May, 1942, some of the gasoline cans were discovered on the beach when the tide ebbed. They were traced back to the patriotic policeman, who was arrested by the Germans, and on 13 June, 1942, he was sentenced to two months in prison by a German Military Court. Bert was reinstated on the force, as his act was acknowledge to have been patriotic rather than criminal. Not content with having served time for helping us, Bert assisted another group to escape. His sterling character manifested itself again, when on 15 February, 1945, he was given orders to patrol Gloucester Street and Newgate Street to prevent political prisoners from escaping from jail. His Police Report reads: "On receiving these instructions, I refused to carry them out because I don't think that it is the duty of a civilian Policeman. I have friends who have been put in Prison by the Germans for very little reason, and I would not like them to know that I was outside waiting to catch them if they tried to escape: and as you know, I and other Policemen have been imprisoned by the Germans, and I am sure if any of us were in there today, we would not like to know that our workmates were waiting to try and stop us from escaping." Signed A.A. Chardine. Bravo Bert! It was a a joyous moment to hold him in my arms at Maurice's re-interment on 3 May, 1997, exactly fifty-five years after the event.

**Maurice Gould** - Over a fifty- year period, I attempted to have Maurice's remains returned to Jersey, but never succeeded. Perhaps I failed because I was stationed all over the world, and my current home of choice is many thousands of miles away from Jersey, Wittlich and the United Kingdom. However, recent actions by the States of Jersey and the Jersey Branch of the British Legion, finally returned Maurice's remains to the Island, where he had been recognized as a hero worthy of repatriation. In January, 1997, the States of Jersey, voted in sufficient funds to cover the expenses of the Maurice's re-interment from Germany to Jersey, and on Monday, 17 March, 1997, his remains were removed from the German Military cemetery, and were re-buried on 3 May, 1997, alongside other British fallen heros in the War Cemetery, Howard Davis Park, Jersey. It was not a sad event for me, as I had at my side my two dear Breton friends, Guy Faisant and Michel Goltais and their wives. In addition Madame Jacqueline Leitman, the Vice President of our NN organization, was also there to represent the surviving NN - my long half-century Crusade is over - Maurice is home!

## - CONCLUSION -

In the first chapters of this book, I have attempted to explain the events which took place between July, 1940, and the night of 3/4 May, 1942. They are not intended to be historical facts, but rather the way we saw and understood the German occupation, as it unfolded on our lives. As young men, our values were quite distinct. We were never preoccupied with specifics, as the world was ours to enjoy. Then on 1 July, 1940, our world disintegrated, when our idyllic island was occupied by the Germans, and for some high-spirited young men, that was too much to accept.

This book was mainly written from two diaries, which I kept during my last year in captivity. I have kept as close as possible to the facts, but changed several names in order to protect the innocent.

Although this book is written about a particular NN group, the NN Decree extended to all parts of Europe, as well as to the members of the SOE, who were sent to Mauthausen, Ravensbruck, Buchenwald and other murderous camps staffed by SS - one should be aware that SOE members were legitimate soldiers, and were protected by the 1929 Geneva Convention, however, Hitler incarcerated many of them in his Night and Fog, in order to dissuade the Allies from sending more agents to France and other occupied countries. This, too, is their story, for they, unknowingly became wards of Hitler's criminal Decree.

Our little NN organization: "Souvenir de la Déportation NN" prints a small newspaper every four months. It keeps former NN from: Hinzert, Gross-Rosen, Jauer, Sonnenburg, Cologne, Brieg, Wolfenbüttel, Düsseldorf, Wittlich, Brieg, Breslau, Schweidnitz, Hirschberg, Anrath, Langenbielau, Kamenz, Diez, Bautzen, Berlin, Lübeck, Gross Strelitz and other prisons, in touch with each other. There are not many of the original 6000 French NN left, but those who are still able, meet once a year, somewhere in France, the Netherlands or Belgium. At those meetings, we talk of former days and reminisce about departed friends, and, as one of my friends, the late Colonel Roger Delachoue, said, "Peter, it is about time you put your testimony on paper, before it is too late." I said that I did not have much to say, but Roger reiterated, "Peter, you told me that you promised Maurice to take his story back to Jersey." I suggested that I had done so, as I had informed his relatives of his life and death in Germany. Roger then insisted that I was obligated to write this book, and testify about the NN for the English speaking world.

He was right, and I did not break my word. My wish is that this book will expose a little more about the NN. It has been very difficult to write, and as I turned back the years, and looked in my little diaries, or interviewed some of my comrades, it was, at times, unbearable. I can now put the book away and write about other adventures in my life.

I hope that I have not offended anyone, and if, in places I am historically incorrect, or I have

misspelled someone's name. It was only because my eyes were clouded and I had no more to give, as I have been unable to escape Hitler's Night and Fog Decree, which took away the lives of Dennis and Maurice and has not given me a proper night's sleep since May, 1942.



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## PROLOGUE

I first met Peter Hassall in November, 1945, when he was enjoying his first leave on leave in Jersey, Channel Islands, since having been called into the Royal Navy. The barman had pointed him out to me, as he sat in the Cosy Corner - an excellent pub in St. Helier. He was wearing his Navy uniform, and looked quite trim, but this was small wonder, seeing the starvation he had experienced. As I sat, sipping my gin, I saw three couples nod in his general direction, but he either ignored them, or chose not to see them.

As a free-lance journalist I was interested in the story of his escape and imprisonment, and wondered how best approach him, seeing his negative responses to others, however, taking the bull by the horns, I picked up my drink, crossed the room, and sat at his table. I was not surprised when he refused my outstretched hand, but wondered if it was time to leave, however, as I was on assignment in the Channel Islands, I stood my ground and asked if he was not the Peter Hassall, who had attempted to escape from Jersey in 1942.

He did not answer, but stared at me with the coldest, darkest eyes I have ever seen, then, without a word he returned his unfinished glass of beer to the bar, put on his overcoat, then without a word walked out the pub. I had met a lot of people who were deeply affected by the war and its tragedies, but I had never been so impolitely given the cold shoulder. Peter's actions made me smart, but made me more determined than ever to get his story. I had already interviewed some of his family and friends about his imprisonment, but they all told me that he had refused to talk about it. I found this unusual, as most Channel Islanders were too willing to talk about their life during the German Occupation from July 1940 until 8 May, 1945.

I did not see Peter again until 1952, when I was reporting on the Korean war. At the time, he was the Intelligence Sergeant of the 1st Battalion Black Watch (R.H.R.). It was during the last week of November, 1952, and the Black Watch had, a few days earlier, fought off thousands of bugle blowing Chinese Liberation Army troops, who had attempted to capture a dominant hill feature being held by the Black Watch.

It was three days after the so-called "Battle of The Hook," when I turned up at the Black Watch Sergeants' Mess, where I re-introduce myself to Peter. When I asked if he remembered me from Jersey, I received the same treatment: a cold stare, after which he turned his back on me, put on his parka, then left the Mess. AT that point, I gave up on him, as I figured that it was pointless; besides which, I had written my feature about the Channel Islands, however, I was still curious to learn what had happened to him between 1942 and 1945. Much had been written about him in books, however, they lacked detail and were contradictory.

I retired from journalism in 1992, then took up residence with my widowed daughter in Toronto,

Canada. Months later, as I was reading the financial section of a local newspaper, I read about a fraud case which had been investigated by a Peter Hassall. I wondered if it was my impolite, elusive quarry, and subsequently I called his place of work, and asked to talk to him. When he answered the telephone, I re-introduced myself, then waited for the phone to click, but I was pleasantly surprised when he asked for my address and telephone number. He promised that he would be in touch with me in the future, and with that he hung up.

I did not hear from him for almost two years, and was surprised, when a heavy package was delivered to my daughter's home. It was Peter's autobiography, and stuck to the front page was a yellow sticker which read, "You are persistent! Perhaps you might consider editing this, and giving me your comments!"

It took three months to read his manuscript, which, I was unable to edit it, as I suffered a rather serious stroke. I finally sent it back to him with a yellow sticker which read: "I'm sorry, I was so persistent. I now understand your silence. Your book must be published, and I agree with your friends who say that the story should not die with you."

I did not hear from him again, but I think that I better understand the man through his manuscript. He has carried a heavy load. I feel that it is appropriate to write any more about him. What more can be said?

Hal Brownlee

Toronto, Ontario

Canada

## **SOURCES**

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## **SYNOPSIS**

### **HITLER'S NIGHT AND FOG DECREE (NACHT UND NEBEL)**

**OR**

### **THE UNKNOWN PRISONERS**

**Peter D Hassall - Copyright - 1991**

The first few pages of the manuscript profile a short history of Jersey, Channel Islands, its pre-war demographics and industries.

The circumstances surrounding the writer's birth are extremely relevant, as events in his life could not have occurred, had he been born within normally accepted marriage conventions of the 1920s. The author's birth certificate identifies him as Peter Denis C. (Peter), son of Emma Maria née Le Normand (Emma) and Antonio C. (Antonio); born in the Parish of St. Clement, Jersey, Channel Islands; whereas his biological father, without a doubt, was Edmund Hassall (Ted).

Emma was born on 22 December, 1905, on the Island of Guernsey and Antonio, an Italian, was born in or near Milan, Italy, around the same time. Ted, an Englishman, was born in February, 1895, in Hanley, England.

Peter's birth certificate indicates that he was born on 22 November, 1926, whereas, until twenty-one years of age, he celebrated his birthday on 20 November, as his parents had always maintained it was his birthdate. Peter did not become aware of his true birthdate, nor the facts relevant to his birth and parentage until he was twenty-one years of age, as Jersey conventions usually precluded children from being informed about common-law relationships - The subject was too shameful to mention in those days!

Emma married Antonio in Guernsey in 1923 or 1924, at which time she assumed Italian nationality, as the then marriage laws dictated. The three children born to Emma (Bernard, 1925; Peter, 1926 and Anne, 1939) were registered in the name of C., at the Registrar's Office (Greffier), St. Helier, Jersey, however, the children were not told of their registered names.

In 1939, the Hassall family was doing well financially; Ted having established a lucrative photographic business in the Town of St. Helier. They moved to a large, rented house: Winchester House, St. Helier, where the maternal grandmother, Marie Le Normand (Gran), took care of the housekeeping and cooking.

As war clouds approached in 1939, islanders tried to insulated themselves from international events. The local government, the States of Jersey (States), did little to prepare its citizens for the outbreak of World War Two.

Peter, a high spirited youth, was raised in the belief of the infallibility of the British Empire. His father was his hero, as Ted had served in the Royal Engineers during World War One, and Peter's

schooling, reading material and friends also influenced his British concepts and allegiance to the Crown.

When war was declared on 3 September, 1939, life on Jersey went on as if the war was being fought on another planet. Thousands of young islanders joined the British Armed Forces, but apart from the uniforms and a few sand bags piled in strategic places, there were few signs of war. Vacationers still came to Jersey, and Peter and his friends spent the balmy summer of 1939 and the spring of 1940, on the then pristine beaches: swimming and socialising. The most obvious signs of war were: cardboard "gas mask" containers slung over people's shoulders; occasional Air Raid Wardens blowing their whistles to assert their authority and the taping of store windows against flying glass.

Apart from Gran and the Christian Brothers of de la Salle College, a private school which he attended, Peter had not experienced any parental guidance nor affection, however, he was a good student, excelling in languages, history, geography, religious education and athletics.

When the "phony war" ended on 10 May, 1940, and the Germans rolled over France, Jersey was unprepared for the after shocks. The States seemed to do little to prepare its citizens for an inevitable German occupation, which loomed closer, as the German forces crushed French and British resistance in Northern France, then stormed towards the Channel ports. With the Channel Islands threatened, the United Kingdom made ships available to evacuate those who wanted to leave the islands, however, during the evacuation crisis, there was little direction from the States of Jersey, other than to "remain calm."

Emma was interned as an enemy Italian national in June, 1940, but was "rescued" by Ted, who must have testified to their fifteen-year common-law relationship.

The Channel Islands were demilitarized in June, 1940, however, the British Foreign Office was tardy in informing the Germans, and both Guernsey and Jersey were bombed on 28 June, 1940. This unprovoked bombing caused numerous casualties and property destruction.

On 1 July, 1940, a young Luftwaffe officer, Lieutenant Kern, flew over Jersey in his Dornier bomber, and seeing thousands of white surrender flags, landed at St. Peter's airport, after which he returned to France and reported what he had seen to his Commanding Officer. That same afternoon dozens of troop-carrying aircraft arrived on Jersey. The German officers were met by the Bailiff (Head of government) and the Island's Attorney General. The negatives of the seemingly amicable meeting were brought to Ted's photographic shop for processing, and several copies were made for posterity.

Within days of the German occupation, Ted's store overflowed with German troops wanting their films processed or portraits taken to send home to Germany. Ted's immediate subservience to the Occupier shocked Peter, and his hero's star lost some of its glitter, and Peter's shame began.

Emma, driven by financial profits from the shutter-hungry Germans, applied for, and received authorization to become one of the island's official photographers to the Occupation Forces. A German language, notice announcing this fact, was soon placed in the shop window at Charing Cross, St. Helier, and this caused more of Ted's glitter to fade.

Peter's mother enrolled him in a German language class with a private tutor, Professor Steiner. Mother had unilaterally decided that it would be beneficial if someone, on the shop's staff, spoke German, and Peter became the candidate. Within six months he had a good command of the language, and used it in the shop on Saturday mornings; much to the pride and delight of his watching mother.

Emma became very involved with the Germans as the Occupation progressed. Capitalizing on her good looks, her Italian nationality, her friendship with the German Water Police and well-placed senior officers in the German Administrative Headquarters, she received permission to travel to Europe on purchasing trips; ostensibly to buy films, photographic paper and processing chemicals for Ted's business.

As a side-line Emma also purchased: cognac, Armagnac, butter, coffee, tea, cigarettes, chocolates and other black market goods, which were safely off-loaded on St. Helier's docks, then delivered to Ted's place of business and Winchester House - compliments of the German Water Police.

Winchester House was turned into a "Soldatenheim" (Soldiers' rest centre) for Emma's black market accomplices. This caused Peter's shame to intensify. He viewed the occupation as a form of rape by the very presence of German troops, and the fact that his parents were collaborating with them did not help.

Ted was oblivious to, or chose to ignore, Emma's European trips and close relationship with the German Water Policemen; as long as he had his glass of cognac and was able to chain smoke. Even some of the island officials came into Ted's store to buy: butter, meat, cigarettes, tobacco and any other goods Madame Emma had to offer. The most hypocritical of all was an island judge, who came in for his pound of tea and tobacco - Then off he went to his courtroom to sentence a farmer for illegally selling a few eggs to a hungry neighbour.

Peter's shame escalated when Emma ordered him to deliver black market goods to her clients; among whom were the parents of many of his friends. On one occasion he had to deliver illegally slaughtered meat to the person he respected the most: his school principal, the Reverend Brother Edward. After that delivery, Peter was unable to look up again.

In October, 1941, Peter learned of Dennis Vibert's brave escape to England. This gave him and his friend, Dennis Audrain (16) ideas of their own, and after talking things over, the two decided to follow Vibert's course to England. Later into their planning, they enlisted the help of another youth, Maurice Gould, who was 17 at the time.

In order to obtain the money to buy a boat and motor, Peter temporarily left school to work at his father's shop. He was used as a go-between the Water Police and Emma, often entering German Navy Headquarters at the Pomme d'Or Hotel, where he "organised" cigarettes and anything else not tied down in the German sailors' bedrooms. When sufficient money was on hand, a twelve-foot dinghy and outboard motor were purchased. It was transported across town in plain view of the Germans, then stored in an uncle's back yard, where it was caulked, painted and made ready for the voyage.

By April, 1942, the trio had assembled all the necessary equipment for their escape, then taking into consideration the tides and curfew, the boys decided to leave on Sunday, 3 May, 1942, because the Germans planned to celebrate "Workers Day" on Saturday, 2 May, instead of the traditional date - The boys hoped that most Germans would be nursing hangovers; thereby being less vigilant on Sunday.

A few days before the escape, the dinghy was loaded onto a horse-drawn cart, then brazenly driven along the German occupied streets of St. Helier. It was off-loaded at Green Island, on the island's South East coast, where a party of young German soldiers helped the youths get it off the cart.

Before leaving, Peter had collected hundreds of photographs of German war materiel, which he and his brother had duplicated from the negatives brought into their father's shop by German troops. The photos, depicting almost every piece of German military ordnance, were then placed in a photo album, then to make their trip more worth while, the boys photographed every known German gun emplacement, then plotted the positions on a small map from a local shoe store. Leaving nothing to chance, the boys then went to a well- respected sea Captain, and known patriot, who made them a chart, on which he plotted several courses and lay-overs to England.

Apart from the three boys, only a handful of others knew about the boat, and to disguise the actual reason for having it, the trio had applied for, and obtained, fishing permits from the German administration. Those knowing about the boat were: the Registrar of Vessels, the vendor, Peter's uncle and brother and the carter, but only two people knew that the boys intended to escape: the Captain and a Police Constable, who had obtained some gasoline for the boys. However, both men were unaware of the date and point of departure. Only one other person knew the overall escape plan, as it had been necessary to inform someone, in case of tragedy at sea.

On the morning of Sunday, 3 May, 1942, the trio set off on foot for Green Island, carrying the fortification map and the Captain's chart in their pockets. The remaining kit, including a small suitcase which contained the photograph album and a change of linen, had been taken to Green Island during the week, where it was buried in the sand below a beach cabin. Before leaving that morning, the three youths told their parents that they were going fishing, and would then overnight



at each other's homes.

When time came to launch the boat at 10:00 p.m., the winds had risen, and the ebb tide was very rough, therefore the launch was postponed. As time was running out, the dinghy was finally launched at 10:45 pm., despite the rough seas. Unfortunately, when the boat was but a few hundred yards from shore, a combination of starting the motor, a large wave and heavy swells threw it against a rock, and caused it to capsize.

Maurice was swept out to sea, as Peter struggled to save his friend Dennis, a non-swimmer. Although they had life jackets, the trio had not put them on because they were too bulky, and had made rowing impossible. Dennis drowned when a large wave snatched him from Peter, who lost sight of him in the dark and turbulent sea.

Just as Peter thought that he was about to drown, his feet touched bottom. He then dragged himself out of the water onto the beach, where he found Maurice, who was a very strong swimmer, and had made it back to shore quite easily. When Peter had caught his breath, they discussed their contingency plan of going into hiding. However, it was not to be, as between 00:05 and 00:10 am. on Monday, 4 May, 1942, they were startled by pistol shots, being fired from two cars full of German Water Police, led by Emma's black market accomplice, Petty Officer Walter Linde, who arrested them, then handed them over to the German Military Police, who arrived about ten minutes later.

Held for the remainder of the night at the Pomme d'Or Hotel, the boys were collected by the German Secret Police at 10:00 am. on Monday, 4 May, 1942. They were taken to the German wing of the Gloucester Street prison, from where they underwent three days of harsh interrogations.

Unknown to Maurice and Peter, Hitler had enacted his Nacht und Nebel Erlass (Night and Fog (NN) Decree) of 7 December, 1941. The Decree had grown out of Hitler's frustration to curb resistance in occupied Europe, and was applied to: "A category of prisoners whose detention, condemnation and sentence would escape all research." The Decree also enveloped many Strategic Operations Executives, who, like all NN, were unaware of the reason for their harsh and unusual treatment.

The NN Decree had grown from Hitler's mistrust of the German Military Courts' efforts to expedite the trials of Resistants in Europe. The NN Decree stated that all resistants, who could not be brought to trial and sentenced within eight days of capture, would be deported to Germany, where they would be held incommunicado and tried by specially constituted Sondergerichte (Special Tribunals) and Volksgerichte (People's Courts), which were responsible to the German Ministry of Justice, led by the notorious Nazi Chief Justice, Roland Freisler - The decree was signed by Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, the German Chief of Staff.

The NN Decree took several months to be implemented, due to administrative problems, but it was finally in place on 27 April, 1942, and, unknowingly, Peter and Maurice became the first Channel Islanders to be categorized as NN prisoners and undergo the entire NN process.

In mid-May, 1942, the two youths were shipped to the notorious German military prison of Fresnes, on the outskirts Paris. They were interrogated at the rue des Saussaies by the Gestapo, who suspected that ex-military officers had planned the ill-fated venture, but when they were certain they could extract nothing more from the pair, the Gestapo deported them to Germany - into Hitler's Night and Fog.

On 12 June, 1942, with fifty other French NN prisoners, Peter and Maurice were sent to the German prison of Trier, where they were held overnight. The next day, they were taken to the small train station of Reinsfeld, in the pretty Mosel Valley, from which they were marched to a small concentration camp - SS Sonderlager (Special Camp) Hinzert, where, for the next six weeks they were continuously tortured and beaten. They were strenuously worked for twelve hours a day on starvation rations, and no one escaped the SS beatings nor those of the Swiss Head Kapo (work supervisor), Eugen Wipf. Maurice was further singled out by an Anglophobe French Kapo, who all but beat him to death. His beatings were so traumatic that Maurice never overcame them, and they led to his early, untimely death.

On 24, July, 1942, Peter and Maurice, together with one hundred other juveniles (under 20), were transported to the maximum security penitentiary of Wittlich, where they were put to work in a basket factory.

The beatings from Hinzert, starvation diet and damp conditions in the basket factory, were the factors which caused Maurice to contract tuberculosis (TB) - the NN's most prolific killer, and on 1 October, 1943, Maurice Gould died of TB, as Peter held him tightly to his chest.

Meanwhile, hundreds of French NN were transported from Wittlich to Cologne, where the Special Tribunal sat. In July, 1943, Cologne was heavily bombed, and the NN prisoners were returned to Wittlich, where the Special Tribunal resumed its sitting.

Through the grapevine, the Cologne returnees made it known that many NN had been already tried in Cologne, after which they were transported elsewhere: probably to other concentration camps. They also imparted the shocking news that some of our NN friends had been sentenced to death then guillotined.

In September, 1943, the Special Tribunal moved its seat to Breslau (now Wroclaw, Poland), where NN trials began in earnest. All the NN from Cologne were moved there from Wittlich, as well as hundreds more from other prisons and camps throughout Germany and France.

Peter remained in Wittlich, with the complicity of the German doctor and prison Director, until the

Gestapo, in Trier, sent a written order to transport him to Breslau in March, 1944. By this time he had put on some weight, having eaten the left-over food of those suffering from TB, who were unable to eat in their final stage of life - That added weight became Peter's life insurance, without which he stood no chance of survival.

After a frightening trip across Germany in cell-wagons and cattle cars, and overnighing in some of the filthiest prisons in Germany, Peter finally arrived in Breslau, where he was kept in solitary confinement until his trial. In the prison of Breslau, the NN designation became a little clearer, however, the deportees still did not know the full import of the criminal decree, as they attempted to make sense of their ongoing, inhumane treatment.

On 1 June, 1944, Peter was tried by the Special Tribunal in Breslau. He faced five charges, the most serious being that of espionage. There was no defense lawyer, and the trial was conducted by a trio of Nazi appointed judges, who played prosecutors, judges and jury.

During the trial the judges produced Peter's photograph album of German war materiel, as well as the chart made by the sea Captain - Fortunately, the fortification map had been torn up as Peter emerged from the sea on 3 May, 1942.

Peter was obliged to defend himself against the three judges. The trial was conducted in German, as there was no interpreter, but fortunately, Peter's German was fluent at the time. Throughout the trial, he made use of his dead companions by placing as much blame on them as possible. He frequently reminded the judges that he was the youngest of the trio, and had been influenced by his older friends. After a two hour trial, the judges left the courtroom to deliberate. They returned a short time later, and pronounced Peter guilty on all charges. The death sentence was called for, however, because of his youth it was suspended, and he was given a four year prison term.

After his trial, Peter was attached to a group of NN who were to be moved to the notorious concentration camp of Gross Rosen, however, a German industrial firm needed thirty young men to make tools and dies in a factory which operated in the prison of Schweidnitz (now Swidnica, Poland). In July, 1944, Peter and his young French friends were taken to Schweidnitz, where they were put to work. The work was a blessing in disguise, as it sheltered the surviving NN from the harsh winter of 1944/45.

In January, 1945, countless thousands of German refugees passed through the town of Schweidnitz, fleeing ahead of the advancing Red Army. It was a bitterly cruel winter, and despite the shelter of the prison walls, many more young NN died of starvation and TB. News of the war was scarce, however, in February, 1945, the sound of artillery fire was finally heard - The Red Army was only ten miles away! Unfortunately, the young NN's liberation was thwarted when they were moved to the prison of Hirschberg (now Jelenia Gora, Poland), thirty miles west of Schweidnitz.

For three days, the surviving NN moved along roads clogged with German refugees, political

prisoners, concentration camp inmates and vicious SS, and as there was no shelter, they slept in open fields during raging snowstorms, in the clothes in which they had been arrested, which meant that hardly any had overcoats.

They were finally incarcerated in the prison of Hirschberg until 8 May, 1945, on which date, the lone warder simply opened the door and let them out, after giving each one a piece of bread and five Reichsmarks. The French NN were fortunate to fall in with a group of former French prisoners-of-war, who assumed responsibility for them, but could not represent Peter, who was no longer a French NN, but a liberated, emaciated, unwanted eighty-pound Jerseyman.

Because of his fluent German, a Soviet Political Commissar decided to detain Peter until he properly identified himself. Such a demand was impossible to meet as Peter had no papers. He was forewarned of his impending arrest by a friendly Soviet officer, who suggested that he flee. Finally, after many adventures and illnesses he arrived in Torgau, where he was arrested by the Soviets, then thrown into a former Nazi concentration camp, filled with former Soviet prisoners of war.

Peter escaped the next day by hiding in a Russian military truck which took him to the Town of Eilenburg, where a Soviet/United States prisoner of war exchange point was set up. Taking advantage of the playing of the Russian and American National Anthems and everyone standing at attention, Peter gathered his remaining strength, and sprinted across a small, unguarded bridge to safety.

He was interrogated by a United States Counter Intelligence unit, then driven to Halle, from where he was flown to the Belgian capital. In Brussels he was again interrogated, this time by British Field Security, who ordered him to stay in Brussels until he could establish his identity, however, they would do nothing for his worsening TB.

In an office, used by the Channel Island Refugee Committee in Brussels, Peter recognized a friend of his father, who vouched for his identity, and it was there that Peter first learned that Jersey had remained occupied by the Germans until 8 May, 1945 - The war had by passed the Channel Islands, as the Allies had decided to get on with the war, and deal with the Channel Islands after Germany's surrender.

Peter was later flown to London, where he was interrogated by the British Police, who again confirmed his identity. He was not allowed to return to Jersey, because of ill health and travel priorities. Consequently, he went to live with a paternal aunt in Staffordshire, where he was told to register with the Labour Exchange - A few weeks later, Peter was surprised to his call-up papers for the Royal Navy on 20 August, 1945 - This despite his ailing health!

When Peter finally returned to Jersey, he found that his mother had "eloped" with a Spanish labourer, who had previously helped build Hitler's fortifications in Jersey - She had "left" her family before the American Army sealed off the Cotentin Peninsular in August, 1944.

The Epilogue of the book sets out short summaries concerning the post-war lives of several of the main players, including Petty Officer Walter Linde, who confirmed, in 1946, that Peter's mother was responsible for his denunciation. Linde also told Peter that Emma had given him the exact location of the escape. Other people mentioned in the Epilogue are: the SS guards from Hinzert, who were tried after the war; the French Anglophobe Kapo, who was sentenced to life imprisonment with hard labour; Peter's best friends among the NN; the fine Wittlich prison Director, the devoted Wittlich prison priest. The Epilogue also includes a short summary of the author's post-war life.

The Addendum deals with the trio's denunciation to the Germans on the night of 3 May, 1942. It had been crystal clear that the boys were denounced by Emma, but when Peter returned home, Ted was reluctant to discuss the matter, therefore it was not pursued. Peter still believed that his mother had denounced them through maternal intentions of wanting her son back without him running foul of the German authorities, and that was why she had turned to Petty Officer Walter Linde of the German Water Police, her close friend and black market accomplice, and believing this, Peter had forgiven her, although he did not know where she was or if she was even alive.

In 1991, when Peter began the final research into his book, he wrote and asked his brother what had occurred in Winchester House on the night of his arrest on 3 May, 1942. Peter's brother wrote back that Emma became aware that he was not in his bedroom after curfew, " She put two and two together and guessed that you were escaping."

Peter was shocked to read that his mother had only cared about herself, her lucrative black market business and her bank account. His brother wrote that on the night of 3 May, 1942, Emma said, "That little wretch is not going to threaten our future. If I go to the Water Police and tell them that he is escaping, they (the Germans) may go easier on us." With that, Emma left Winchester House and went to the Pomme d'Or Hotel, where she denounced Peter and his companions to Walter Linde, giving him the exact location of the escape - Which is, today, still puzzling, as only one person outside the trio, knew the escape location and timing, and that person was not Emma!

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Peter D Hassall

Wallaceburg, Ontario

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