

# ALAN HEUSAFF AND BEZEN PERROT

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## 1. Introduction

In recent years much research work has been conducted on the activities of the Breton Movement during the German occupation of Brittany 1940-44, which has resulted in a number of publications<sup>1</sup>.

Participating in the Breton Movement at that time was a certain Pierre-Alain Heussaff (Lan Heussaff, or Alan Heusaff (1921-1999), co-founder of the Celtic League in 1961<sup>2</sup>). He was born in Saint Yvi (Sant Ivi) parish, east of Quimper (Kemper), on 23 July 1921. His nickname was *Mab Ivi* 'son of (Sant) Ivi'<sup>3</sup>. His family came from Toulgoat in the same parish near La Forêt-Fouesnant. He had a brother Jerome (Jerm) who was not involved in any political activity (pc: Gary German, St. Yvi, 02.03.04; see also Bridson 1999: 2). In an interview with Hervé Person of *Le Peuple breton*, organ of the UDB (*Union démocratique bretonne*), in 1992 Alan Heusaff himself adds (Person 1992: 20):

Mes parents étaient des petits fermiers, qui possédaient trois vaches vivant sur cinq journaux. Mon père a fait la première guerre mondiale. Il fut aussi domestique. Ma mère faisait des journées par ci, par là (Person 1992: 20).

Concerning his schooling he adds (Person *ibid.*):

Je suis arrivé à l'école sans savoir un mot de français. Puis, j'ai eu une bourse pour aller à l'école primaire supérieure à Concarneau. Après avoir décroché le Brevet élémentaire, puis l'École normale, je suis devenu instituteur[...] (Person 1992: 20).

It was while he was at Concarneau, he tells us, that he first became interested in nationalist politics (Person 1992: 20):

À Concarneau, des copains m'avaient donné „Breiz Atao“<sup>4</sup> à lire (c'étaient des articles sur la guerre d'indépendance irlandaise). J'ai rencontré Jean Bourhis<sup>5</sup> à l'École normale. On s'est fait remarquer par nos idées... (Person 1992: 20).

Heusaff joined the Breton National Party (*Parti national breton* (PNB) - *Strollad Broadel Breiz* (SBB)) in 1938 at the age of seventeen<sup>6</sup>. In the interview with Person (1992: 20) Heusaff explains that his main function was to disseminate propaganda for the movement:

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<sup>1</sup> Prominent among which are Caerléon (1974), Leroux (1975), Frélaut (1985), Fréville (1985), Fournis (1995), and more recently Hamon (2001, 2004), Fouéré (2002), Giolitto (2002).

<sup>2</sup> At Rhosllanerchrugog, near Wrexham, North Wales, on 9 August during the Welsh National Eisteddfod (Mac Aonghusa 1999: 5, Bridson 1999: 2). For details of his work for Breton see Bridson 1999.

<sup>3</sup> He wrote articles under this nickname for the Breton magazine *Galv* in 1941/42.

<sup>4</sup> organ of the PNB, for which see below.

<sup>5</sup> Later a member along with Heusaff of Neven Hénaff's *Service Spécial*, then commander of the Bezen Perrot group Dahut. See below.

J'ai rejoint le PNB en 1938. J'ai suivi des cours de breton (pour le lire et écrire) avec Karlann<sup>7</sup> (Ar Falz<sup>8</sup>) et Ober. Lainé<sup>9</sup> nous a recrutés et nous a donné des séances d'entraînement. La guerre est venue et, graduellement, on a repris la propagande. J'ai fait de la propagande à "l'Heure Bretonne" et à "Arvor"<sup>10</sup> avec Yann Ar Beg<sup>11</sup>. On a fait beaucoup de propagande (Person 1992: 20).

In late 1943 he became party to the activities of the Breton paramilitary grouping *Bezen Perrot* 'Perrot Army', also known as *La Formation Perrot*, *Perrot Gruppe* and more informally *Der bretonische Waffenverband der SS* or *Die bretonische SS*<sup>12</sup>. But before looking at the activities of Bezen Perrot and Alan Heusaff's association with that organisation, it may perhaps be pertinent here to sketch briefly the reasons for Heusaff's involvement with the Breton Movement altogether.

According to Gary German (pc: 02.03.04), whose mother originates from Keronsal in St. Yvi parish and who lives in St. Yvi today, Alan Heusaff's interest in Breton nationalist politics seemingly stems from his interest in and concern for the Breton language. He continues:

Heusaff's argument was basically that since the First World War the Breton of Saint Yvi had degenerated under French influence to the extent that it was barely intelligible to anyone who had spoken pre-war Saint Yvien. Although there can be no doubt that Saint Yvi Breton has evolved, particularly with regard to lexical borrowing from French (e.g. French *chagrin* [ʃa:grn] for Breton *glac'har*)<sup>13</sup>, the phonology, morphology and syntax have hardly changed among native speakers (although there is linguistic variation within the parish). It seems that Alan Heusaff has exaggerated this in his puristic attempts to portray Breton as a formerly normalised language. Having said that, some older people in the parish regarded younger people, such as Alan Heusaff, as different in their Breton speech, because they had had schooling. In his case his Breton was "not at all like ours", though his brother Jerm "spoke like everyone else", as it is said. Nevertheless, it is a fact that Saint Yvi Breton is much reduced phonologically (in comparison with that of Léonais, for example), and seems to have been so for quite some time (Gary German pc: 02.03.04).

This view is also largely echoed by Breton / Welsh historian Iwan Wmffre. In a recent personal communication to me (19.07.04) he noted:

Heusaff's Breton was undoubtedly not deficient, but his attitude from his exile in Ireland was purist and neologist and he subscribed to the [...] popular notion [...] that late twentieth century Breton was simply the language of "terminal speakers"[...] <sup>14</sup>. His articles for Carn<sup>15</sup> had appended to them glossaries with

<sup>6</sup> See his letter in *Al Liamm* (290/291 (1995): 283): *Me zo aet e-barzh Strollad Broadel Breizh e 1938 d'an oad a 17 vloaz* ('I joined Strollad Broadel Breizh in 1938 when I was 17 years old').

<sup>7</sup> or Kerlann, i.e. Jean Delalande (1910-1969), schoolmaster, member of *Ar Falz*, secretary of PNB for Finistère. Founded the first Breton school in Plestin-les-Grèves in 1942 (Hamon 2004: 58, fn. 15).

<sup>8</sup> seemingly a Breton pro-communist organisation (Gwendal Denis pc: 08.07.04).

<sup>9</sup> i.e. Célestin Lainé (Neven Hénaff). See below.

<sup>10</sup> Publications of the PNB.

<sup>11</sup> PNB chief for Quimper district (Hamon 2001: 257).

<sup>12</sup> Bezen Perrot was always regarded as a German military unit, never a "milice française", and its members always wore the uniform of the Waffen-SS (Hamon 2004: 13).

<sup>13</sup> In addition, Gary German notes (pc: 20.04.04), "Many words linked to outdated rural tasks, etc, are being forgotten by the last generation of speakers for whom Breton was truly a first language. My aunt (who died last year at the age of 95) used the word *prezen*, for instance, for the place under the hearth where firewood was placed to dry and so on. I would guess that most younger speakers (in their early 60s now) would not know what this means".

<sup>14</sup> It is not unusual for nationalists to attribute "defects", as they see them, in their home or national language to the intrusion and influence of an outside dominant language. The "defects" may well be internal developments. A case in point is Manx Gaelic (cf. Broderick 1999a).

‘rare and not commonly known words’ (translation of the Breton original if my memory serves me right). My own interpretation is that, not able to mix with many native speakers due to his political choices, he [Alan Heusaff] latched on to [Roparz] Hemon’s version of the literary language [...] (Iwan Wmffre pc: 19.07.04)<sup>16</sup>.

Alan Heusaff’s involvement with Breton nationalism and co-operation with the Germans allegedly brought much anguish, disappointment and shame on his own family. Gary German (pc: 02.03.04) notes:

The people I have spoken to in Saint Yvi who have known the Heussaff family have told me, without exception, that they were all extremely kind, wonderful people. This is why Alan Heussaff’s adherence to the Breiz Atao [i.e. *Strollad Broadel Breiz*] came as such a shock and disturbed the people of Saint Yvi so much! I heard people say that after the fall of France, he arrived with the Germans dressed in a German uniform!<sup>17</sup> I don’t know if it is true, however, but I have heard it said on more than one occasion. People felt especially badly about this considering the shame it placed on his family [...]. All the World War I veterans - including my grandfather - were understandably horrified by this. In his own defense (*sic*) Heussaff said he was only 19 when he joined the B.A. and he attributed it to the folly of youth. One old friend told me that Heussaff [had] been involved in the torture and killing of resistance people, but I am very wary about such rumours and one must be very cautious with regard to such talk in small villages (Gary German pc. 02.03.04)<sup>18</sup>.

However, in an interview with Ronan Caerl on in Dublin in 1970 (Caerl on 1974: 142) Alan Heusaff in a “D claration” makes unequivocally clear his stance vis- -vis the Breton Movement and Bezen Perrot:

D s 1938 je partageais les convictions que la Bretagne ne pourrait pas regagner sa libert  “dre gae” (de gr ); l’Etat fran ais s’y opposerait de toutes ses forces. J’ tais d’accord pour que nous recherchions des appuis   l’ext rieur o  qu’ils soient, puisque nous n’ tions pas assez forts pour atteindre notre but seuls. Pourquoi ne ferrions-nous pas ce que font tous les pays libres dont la libert  est menac e : rechercher des alliances? En le faisant, nous t moignons que nous-m mes, nous  tions libres d j .

Pour  tre libres, il faut accepter de payer un bon prix: rupture avec la famille (qui craint pour notre avenir), avec les voisins (qui ne veulent pas que l’on sorte de son rang), avec la majorit  de ses compatriotes qui n’ont pas encore vu qu’on les traite pire que des n gres et se veulent deux fois fran ais. Au bout du chemin, il y avait de fortes chances de trouver la prison ou la mort.

Je m’engageai donc pour l’insurrection arm e sous la direction de Lain , celui des leaders nationalistes qui accordait le mieux ses actes avec l’id e nationale. Lorsqu’il m’apparut que l’Eglise catholique en Bretagne s’abaissait   coop rer avec l’Etat fran ais pour poursuivre la politique d’extermination du breton et d’opposition au mouvement national, je rejetai son autorit  et, finalement ses dogmes, pour chercher une base philosophique en accord avec ma volont  bretonne en particulier, dans les meilleures oeuvres de la culture celtique de l’Irlande.

Peu m’importent les accusations telles que celles contenues dans des articles de journaux fran ais et dans certains ouvrages m me  crits par des Bretons que “le Bezen Perrot se couvrit d’autant de crimes que la milice Darnand”<sup>19</sup>...D’un c t , les combattants seraient donc des saints et de l’autre des brutes?

Pour moi, ce que j’ai vu de l’action du Bezen Perrot se compare avec les actes des combattants d’autres guerres et c’est un lieu commun de dire que la guerre n’est pas un jeu.

<sup>15</sup> magazine of the Celtic League.

<sup>16</sup> In the time that I knew Alan Heusaff (1975-1999), he was always insistent that the national language was essential to a country’s national identity. He thought very little of Celtic nationalists who did not take seriously their respective home language(s).

<sup>17</sup> The memory of his wearing a German uniform may possibly derive from his activities with Bezen Perrot after December 1943 (see below).

<sup>18</sup> But see below. Gary German (*ibid.*) adds: “[...] As for the nationalists, the expression people use around here [Saint Yvi] for a laugh is: *Breiz atao, mad da lao* (‘(members of ) Breiz Atao good to kill’). Beneath the surface though...!”. For this slogan see also Hamon (2004: 169).

<sup>19</sup> i.e. Joseph Darnand, head of the PPF militia. See below.

Je fus blessé assez grièvement pour devoir rester l'hôpital plus de quatre mois et ceci, dans un combat à découvert, au cours duquel Larnikol de Plovanaleg et Lezet de Sant-Malo tombèrent pour la Bretagne (Caerléon 1974: 142).

In addition in a letter to the Breton magazine *Al Liamm* 290/291 (1995: 284-85) Alan Heusaff himself tells us why he was prepared to collaborate with the Germans:

[...] Klask harp ur galloud bennak o stourm a-enep unan all ne dalvez ket e vezer a-du gant kerment tra a ra hennezh. Evidon-me e oa ar gudenn zifraeüsan en em zizober eus ar galloud gall e Breizh araok ma teufe ar brezhoneg da verzan) re wan, rak n'eus nemet ur Stad vreizhat a c'hall e harpan) da adsevel. D'ar gudenn-se e tleemp gouestlan) hon holl nerzh<sup>20</sup>  
(‘To seek to help a foreign power in a war against another does not mean that one agrees with every act carried out by this régime. For me the compelling motivation in co-operating with a foreign power [Germany] in Brittany was to arrest the decline in the Breton language, which risked becoming so weak that only the establishment of a Breton state could ensure its survival: to this problem we had to devote all our strength’) (Heusaff 1995: 284-85).

Frañsez Debauvais, president of Conseil National Breton (CNB), always believing in a German victory, also saw the Breton cause allied to the Germans. In his testament published in *Breiz Atao* in May 1944 he notes:

Camarades de la Formation Perrot. Je vous salue. Je salue en vous la première formation bretonne armée, depuis la disparition de l’armée chouanne [...]. Vous luttez, d’abord et avant tout pour notre patrie la Bretagne, en pleine et loyale collaboration avec l’allié allemand [...]. (after Hamon 2004 : 63).

The received view passed on down through the years is that Bezen Perrot served the interests of the Breton Movement in its fight for independence for Brittany and against actions from the French government, the Resistance<sup>21</sup> and the Breton maquis, that activists like Alan Heusaff fought for the Breton cause within this unit, etc<sup>22</sup>. This view is reiterated by P. A. Bridson, editor of *Carn*, in her obituary to Alan Heusaff in 1999:

[...] In 1943 Alan, aged twenty-two, joined the Bezen Perrot, a Breton military unit, to fight for Breton independence. Alan, like many other youthful Bretons at that time, saw an opportunity to end the French occupation of Brittany once and for all (Bridson 1999: 2).

Bríd Heusaff, Alan’s widow (Heusaff 2001: 23), gives a similar account:

[...] He [Alan Heusaff] joined Bezon (*sic*) Perrot after its formation at the end of December 1943, shortly after the assassination of Father Perrot on Dec. 6<sup>th</sup> [i.e. 12<sup>th</sup>] 1943 and of a number of other Breton patriots in the previous months<sup>23</sup>. One of the conditions established by the Bezon Perrot was that its members would not be involved in any actions beyond the borders of Brittany and this condition was maintained until the Bezon was disbanded. They were not fighting as Nazis, but as Breton patriots whose sole concern was to oppose the French in Brittany (Heusaff 2001: 23).

As a result of his activities in the Breton Movement and Bezen Perrot Heusaff was allegedly one of a number sentenced to death (in his case *in absentia*) by the French authorities after the war for collaborative activity with the Germans. This finds expression in Bridson’s obituary:

Alan was sentenced to death *in absentia* [Bridson’s italics] by the French state. Nearly thirty years after, he was to benefit from an amnesty from the French government, but like many of the other Breton

<sup>20</sup> Gary German notes (pc. 15.07.04) that the Breton here is “literary”.

<sup>21</sup> which seemingly contained a substantial communist as well as a small Breton element.

<sup>22</sup> cf. also HTV *Y Byd arBedwar: Llydaw* 1989 (Part I).

<sup>23</sup> For details of the killing of other Breton nationalists, cf. also Frélaud (1985: 115, 215).

refugees, Alan did not return to Brittany to live because the French state was still as repressive as ever to the Breton national movement (Bridson 1999: 2)<sup>24</sup>.

However, what is the reality of the situation and how much does the received view correspond with it?

## 2. Bezen Perrot

In the light of recent research (see above) the situation regarding Bezen Perrot seems to be as follows: The unit, which later became Bezen Perrot, was initially the brainchild of a certain Célestin Lainé (1908-1983 Nantes<sup>25</sup>), better known perhaps by his Breton name Neven Hénaff, as his *Kadervenn* ('Sillon de Combat' or 'Service Spécial')<sup>26</sup>, a paramilitary unit modelled on the IRA set up in 1936 comprising some dozen or so members engaged in military manoeuvres (Hamon 2004: 28). It was intended as an embryo Breton army to serve the envisaged new Breton state<sup>27</sup>, but in reality functioned as Hénaff's private army<sup>28</sup>. On 11 November 1943 Neven Hénaff transformed the *Kadervenn* into the *Compagnie Bretonne en guerre contre la France* under the name of Bezen Kadoudal in a formal signing with the head of the Gestapo / SD<sup>29</sup> in Rennes<sup>30</sup>, thereby throwing in his lot with the Germans (see also below). This decision followed on from a bitter complaint by Hitler to Pétain on 4 December 1943 about the 'intolerable' situation in France emanating from Resistance activity, whereupon it was decided to extend counter-resistance activity to the northern part of the country. In November 1943 the Germans also armed the *Milice Darnand* (Darnand Militia, under one Joseph Darnand), the paramilitary wing of the PPF (*Parti populaire français*; Hamon 2004: 54)<sup>31</sup>. On 15 December 1943 Bezen Kadoudal, at the suggestion of one of its leaders Ange Péresse and backed by its 33 "premiers volontaires" (Hamon 2004: 54), was

<sup>24</sup> However, to date there seems to be no evidence of any condemnation of Alan Heusaff by the French courts post-1944. So far we only have hearsay evidence of his death sentence and amnesty. There was, however, also the real possibility that he could, or would, have been killed by former Breton maquis activists.

<sup>25</sup> For details of his life and times, see Frélaud 1985: 133-35.

<sup>26</sup> The formula *Service Spécial* is found for various developments of Hénaff's paramilitary group from the mid-1930s to November 1943. Heusaff's involvement with the *Service Spécial* appears to have begun in the late 1930s.

<sup>27</sup> « *L'Heure de la race bretonne sonnera bientôt au cadran de l'histoire [...]. L'État breton n'est pas loin* » Breiz Atao 301 (1 May 1938).

<sup>28</sup> In May 1938 Hénaff was arrested following a slogan-daubing campaign on public monuments. He refused to speak French at the tribunal. He was given a three-month prison sentence (Frélaud 1985: 134).

<sup>29</sup> *Sicherheitsdienst der SS*, the SS security police. The SD was responsible *inter alia* for round-ups, detentions and deportations to concentration camps (cf. Höhne 1996: 183-209).

<sup>30</sup> This action led to a temporary split within the Breton Movement, involving the creation of a second PNB, which lasted some four years, and the "Néo-Breiz Atao", which lasted a few months in 1944 (cf. Frélaud 1985: 116-21, Heusaff 1995: 283). It is evident that Hénaff was desperate to curry favour with the Germans. It is also clear that he was in full charge of this unit.

<sup>31</sup> This unit was evidently particularly brutal in the discharge of its duties with the SS/SD. In this respect Bezen Perrot became associated with this unit in the eyes of many Bretons (Hamon 2001: 203, fn. 22, see also Heusaff's comment in this respect in his "Déclaration" above).

officially renamed Bezen Perrot<sup>32</sup> following the shooting of Breton activist Father Yann-Vari Perrot on 12 December 1943<sup>33</sup>.

As expected, Bezen Perrot was headed by Neven Hénaff (Frélaut 1985: 114-16)<sup>34</sup>. Accompanying Hénaff as leaders were Jean Chanteau (alias Mabinog), responsible for intelligence, and Ange Péresse (alias Carcal or Cocal) (Hamon 2001:197, 209). On entering Bezen Perrot on 15 December 1943 Alan Heusaff was immediately appointed commander of Section 2 of that unit as its *kerrenour* (lieutenant) and had four groups under his charge: Dixmude<sup>35</sup>, Cadoudal, Dahut<sup>36</sup>, and Budoc (Hamon 2004: 59, 68)<sup>37</sup>. According to Caerlén (1974: 141):

La Formation [Perrot] fut ensuite dirigée par un triumvirat: Heussaf, Guiriec et Péresse, qui gardait la haute-main sur les opérations militaires. En fait, Péresse prenait toutes les décisions et les autres s'inclinaient (Caerlén 1974: 141).

Heusaff clearly held a senior position within Bezen Perrot. He belonged to Hénaff's inner circle and remained a close friend until the latter's death in Ireland in 1983.

In organisational terms during the German occupation Bezen Perrot came directly under the responsibility of SS-Obersturmbannführer Hartmut Pulmer, head of the Gestapo / SD in Rennes (see also above), and under the military command of SS-Hauptscharführer Hans Grimm, and was attached to the SD in that town. At the end of January 1944 it was based at 7, rue de Vincennes in Rennes<sup>38</sup>. It wore the uniform of the Waffen-SS<sup>39</sup>, and comprised some 80 personnel, of whom the pseudonyms of some 65 activists have thus far been identified (Hamon 2001: 208-09). As with the Resistance, such pseudonyms served to protect them

<sup>32</sup> For its flag Bezen Perrot adopted that of the Breton combatants of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, namely a black cross on a white background (Caerlén 1974: 38).

<sup>33</sup> According to police reports and statements from other interested parties quoted by Hamon (2001:211ff.), Perrot was killed by a certain Jean Thépot of Morlaix who was never arrested (he ended up in the French army). He appears to have acted alone. Perrot was evidently shot on suspicion of collaborating too closely with the Germans (cf. HTV *Y Byd ar Bedwar: Llydaw* 1989 (Part I)). Perrot's death occasioned much emotion and sympathy among Breton nationalists and activists, but evidently also had the effect of doubling the membership of Bezen Kadoudal / Bezen Perrot (Frélaut 1985: 116).

<sup>34</sup> In 1938 Hénaff established contacts with the IRA and tried to join the German secret services. He also sought to procure guns for the Breton Movement (Frélaut 1985: 134).

<sup>35</sup> A First World War battle (1914) in which two regiments of fusilliers (mainly Bretons) held off a force of some 50,000 Germans for over a month (Gary German pc: 15.07.04). This, if correct, is a rather curious name to choose for a Bezen Perrot unit of Bezen Perrot, given Bezen's pro-German stance.

<sup>36</sup> commanded by Jean Bourhis (Hamon 2001: 198). See also above.

<sup>37</sup> According to Hamon (2001: 198), Bezen Perrot below the level of General Staff (*l'état major*) was divided into two sections, each section comprising four groups of five men each. As noted, Heusaff commanded the second of these sections.

<sup>38</sup> For other addresses used see Hamon (2001: 197). The General Staff was seemingly installed in 29, quai d'Ille-et-Rance in Rennes (cf Hamon *ibid.*).

<sup>39</sup> For the first three months Bezen Perrot members wore civilian clothes. It was not until the end of March 1944 that they began to wear SS uniforms (Hamon 2004: 57). In his reminiscences former Bezen Perrot activist Maudit notes: *Nous portions donc l'uniforme vert, avec le calot à tête de mort, épauettes noires avec liséré vert, chemise brune, cravate noire, ceinturon SS avec la devise: Meine Ehre heisst Treue (Mon Honneur s'appelle Fidélité). Nous étions appelés: SS man, nous les volontaires de la Bretonische Waffnenverband der SS !* (Caerlén 1974: 140).

from possible assassination. Alan Heusaff's cover names were "Professeur" (Hamon 2001: 209, 268) and "Rouat" (Hamon 2004: 68). Bezen Perrot was composed of a motley crew drawn from various nationalist organisations; most of its members were quite young, some very young (Frélaud 1985: 116-21, Hamon 2001: 197-98).

Some had also served in anti-partisan activity for the Germans in the LVF (*Légion des Volontaires français contre le Bolchévisme*), a French right-wing collaborationist organisation active at the time. The LVF was set up on 8 July 1941 with a view that its members serve on the Russian Front<sup>40</sup>. It comprised ca. 12,000 men, of whom some 110 were Bretons. A recent trawl of LVF archives in Rennes has revealed that Breton nationalists Yves Le Négaret, Taldir Jaffrennou and Alan Heusaff were associated with this organisation as "Amis de la LVF" (Kristian Hamon, *Le Peuple breton*, 460 (June 2002): 11-12)<sup>41</sup>.

Right from its inception in December 1943 Bezen Perrot, according to available evidence, solely served German interests. During the first three months of 1944 it was deployed either to guard or to keep under surveillance German installations. In addition, it took part in

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<sup>40</sup> This was its main purpose. The LVF was set up in response to a German request for military support from the occupied territories to fight on the Russian Front "against bolshevism", as it was put. Many French and Bretons took up the cause with the LVF (Hamon 2004: 13-15; see also fn. 27 below). In July 1944 the LVF was reorganised as the *Sturmbrigade der SS Frankreich*, from September to November of the same year as the *Waffen-Grenadier-Division der SS "Charlemagne"* (franz. Nr. 1), and from November 1944 to May 1945 as the *33. Waffen-Grenadier-Division der SS "Charlemagne"* (franz. Nr. 1). Between February and April 1945 *SS-Charlemagne* saw action in Pomerania, but was decimated in the area of Hammerstein-Neustettin, near Danzig. What was left went into action around Belgard-Körlin but suffered heavy casualties. Reorganised into *Kampfgruppen* around Kolberg, Greifenberg, they then moved westwards to Neustrelitz, finally defending the centre of Berlin in the area of the Führerbunker in April 1945. They were taken prisoner by the Russians on 2 May 1945 (Hock 1986, Hamon 2004: 14-17).

Former Manx Language Officer with the Isle of Man Government, Dr. Brian Stowell, recently informed me that he was present at an address delivered by Alan Heusaff to the seemingly short-lived Celtic League Youth in Dublin in 1966 on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Easter Rising of 1916. In speaking about the activities of the Breton Movement during the Second World War, Alan Heusaff alleged that he and other Breton nationalists had fought on the Russian Front where they had been wounded. Thereafter they were taken to Ireland on a coal boat. However, it seems that at this time Heusaff was involved with Hénaff's *Service Spécial*, (see above and below; see also Person 2001: 20).

<sup>41</sup> According to Hamon (2001: 130, 199), Yves Le Négaret, a young PNB activist, served on the Russian Front with the LVF between 16 June 1943 and May 1944 when he seemingly went absent without leave and returned to Brittany, joining the ranks of Bezen Perrot on 6 June 1944. This, if so, would seem to strengthen the case that Heusaff had also served in the LVF. If he did, then this would most likely have been 1942-43, as he was a primary teacher at Querrien (Kerrien) near his home area until 1942 (cf. Person 1992: 20, also Heusaff 2001: 23). He took part in the 1942 Breton summer-school for children at Beg-meil, near Fouesnant. Any experience on the Eastern Front would likely have brought him into prominence with Bezen Perrot as an officer in 1943.

For his part, Heusaff tells us that after Querrien he took part in military service: [...] *on m'a appelé pour faire des manoeuvres à Gouezeg. C'étaient des instructions de Service Spécial [...]* (Person 1992: 20). Later, after running a Breton school in Quimper with Jean Bourhis, [...] *on m'a demandé si je pouvais venir à Rennes pour être instructeur du Service Spécial* (Person *ibid.*). The *Service Spécial* would be Hénaff's paramilitary group referred to above. Nevertheless, any presence on the Russian Front would likely have taken place at this time (late 1942-late 1943).

arrests<sup>42</sup>, including those of Jews<sup>43</sup>. As D-Day came and went the increase in Resistance activity led to mass shootings by the SD/SS of what were termed “anti-German elements”, and Bezen Perrot according to accounts took part in some of these<sup>44</sup>. In a personal communication to me dated 20.04.04 Gary German noted that Heusaff

[...] was active with the local milice [militia] and that he had even been present and participated in the interrogation and execution of captured resistance fighters [...] (Gary German pc: 20.04.04)<sup>45</sup>.

It was during the summer of 1944 that Bezen Perrot evidently took part in some quite vicious activity<sup>46</sup>. On 7 July 1944 Hitler ordered the “liquidation of all terrorists and suspects”, i.e. partisan and resistance fighters, and this quickly became a matter of routine, particularly after the attempt on Hitler’s life on 20 July of that year (Hamon 2004: 131). Hamon (2001: 206ff.) lists a number of actions involving SS/SD with Bezen Perrot support from archive sources. These include the following:

1. 19 June 1944 arrest of three Resistance members, all of whom “disappeared”.
2. 3 July 1944 some 31 people from Locminé were killed, many of whose bodies were later found in a ditch. Five were deported to Germany and four sent to Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria where they were killed.
3. 14 July 1944 a massacre of 57 partisan fighters in the town of Saint-Hilaire. This was followed a few days later by the shooting of six partisan women in a chapel in Quistinic.
4. Additional activity of this sort involving Bezen Perrot took place in various villages in Brittany on the following dates: 16-17 & 30 May, 22, 27 & 29 June, 2, 11 & 23 July.
5. 15 August execution of 49 alleged Resistance prisoners at Créney<sup>47</sup>, etc.

<sup>42</sup> On 7 February 1944 at 3am members of Bezen Perrot accompanied the SD in an arrest of 37 people regarded as “anti-German” from several of villages, of whom 12 were deported (to concentration camps) (cf. Leroux 1975: 270, Hamon 2001: 201). For details of other sorties of this sort, see Hamon (2001: 202).

<sup>43</sup> Rounding up of Jews was evidently part of Bezen Perrot’s duties with the SD. Hamon (2001: 200) quotes the following from former Bezen Perrot activist Jégou: [...] *En janvier 1944 j’ai été commandé pour aller chercher une vieille dame israélite à Rennes avec Konval et P.C., emmenée au SD [...]*. As a senior member of Bezen Perrot Alan Heusaff’s participation in arrests of this sort is very plausible. He would almost certainly have known of such actions whatever the case.

<sup>44</sup> In an interview with Alan Heusaff in Ramsey, Isle of Man, on 24 July 1993, he was quite tight-lipped about the actions of Bezen Perrot. When I asked him, for instance, what rank he had held he refused to say. However, he did tell me that there was a sort of *quid pro quo* arrangement with the Germans, i.e. they had helped us promote Breton, we would help them on the military side (see also above).

<sup>45</sup> But added: “it is terribly hard to get to the real facts, mainly because the subject is still a very emotional one and the feelings against collaborators intense” (Gary German pc: 20.04.04).

<sup>46</sup> After his arrest in Colombey-les-deux-Églises Bezen Perrot activist Cadoudal said at his interrogation: [...] *Péresse, qui était une véritable brute, était accompagné d’officiers de la SD. Comme papiers militaires, les Allemands nous avaient donnés des Ausweiss. Les atrocités consistaient en exécutions sommaires et sans jugement, quelquefois sans interrogatoire par coup de pistolet dans la nuque [...]* (Hamon 2001: 198).

<sup>47</sup> See also Hamon (2004: 130-46). For details of Bezen Perrot action against the Breton maquis see Hamon (2004: 146-51). Heusaff tells us he was badly wounded in the upper left arm in operations against the Resistance on 13 June 1944 in Ploërdut, Morbihan, and hospitalised altogether for some three months. In the



After the D-Day landings Bezen Perrot evidently took part in the retreat of the German army across France, arriving in Strasbourg in October, and then into Germany, ending up in Tübingen in south-western Germany in December 1944 (Frélaut 1985: 222-25, Lerchenmüller 1994, II: 219ff, Hamon 2004: 157). On 16 December 1944, on the first anniversary of Bezen Perrot, Alan Heusaff with others received the German wounded medal. A number of members received promotion in the Waffen-SS. Neven Hénaff was promoted to *Untersturmführer* (sub-lieutenant), Ange Péresse to *Sturmscharführer* (major), Alan Heusaff to *Hauptscharführer* (chief adjutant). Six were promoted to *Unterscharführer* (sergeant) and eleven others to *Rottenführer* (corporal) (Hamon 2004: 157).

On 29 December Hénaff totally reorganised Bezen Perrot, dividing it into four groups of eight to ten men each. Group 1 went with the Waffen-SS, Group 2 set up a school for sabotage and Group 3 a school for radio. Groups 2 and 3 were then sent to the Black Forest for instruction. Group 4 was to be the *Propaganda-Staffel* (propaganda unit). The rest would remain with Hénaff in Tübingen. However, on 25 April 1945, with the Allied advance, Groups 2 and 3 moved out of the Black Forest and into a boys' school at Fürstenfeldbruck, near Munich. However, with the advance of the Americans, the groups were ordered to return to Brittany as best they could and to continue the work of the PNB, but not in places where they might be known, and to seek work on farms after their arrival. The order was to keep in contact and await Hénaff's return for the reconstitution of Bezen Perrot (Hamon 2004: 159)<sup>48</sup>. However, Hénaff went to Ireland in 1947/48<sup>49</sup>.

Professors Leo Weisgerber (Bonn) and Ludwig Mühlhausen (Berlin), who led the promotion of matters Breton for the German authorities during the war years in Brittany, were charged in 1944 by the SS in Germany to look after Breton nationalists and activists till the end of the war. Some were seemingly brought to Marburg in western Germany (Weisgerber had been Professor of Celtic and Comparative Philology there 1939-41; cf. Lerchenmüller 1997: 408-09). Heusaff had evidently been in Germany since before September 1944 (see fn. 31 above). In the Ramsey interview Heusaff told me he had studied maths and physics at the University of Marburg after the war (cf. also Heusaff 2001: 23). Later he met Mühlhausen in

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same action Bezen Perrot activists Laizet and Larnicol were killed (cf. Appendix 2 and Heusaff's "Déclaration" above). Heusaff's widow Bríd (Heusaff 2001: 23) notes "In June 1944 [...] Alan Heusaff was seriously wounded in an encounter in which two other member[s] were killed. Later he was moved to a hospital in Montabaur in Alsace-Lorraine where he remained for three months until late September in 1944". Montabaur, if correct, is in fact near Koblenz in western Germany. According to Hamon (2004: 129), Heusaff, after two weeks in hospital at Pontivy, was transferred with other wounded to Rennes, thereafter to Paris, then into Germany (?to Montabaur).

<sup>48</sup> For details of what became of other members of Bezen Perrot, see Hamon (2004: 160-66). Bezen Perrot in total sustained six dead and three seriously wounded, including Heusaff (Hamon 2004: 164).

<sup>49</sup> cf. *Y Byd ar Bedwar: Llydaw* 1989 (Part II).

Marburg in 1949. Mühlhausen, he said, was still as enthusiastic as ever for matters Breton and added that he had got on very well with him in Brittany. The extent to which Breton was promoted in Brittany seems due more to the interest and enthusiasm of Weisgerber and Mühlhausen than might otherwise have been the case<sup>50</sup>. Alan Heusaff remained in Germany until 20 May 1950 when he came to Ireland (Person 1992: 20, Heusaff 2001: 23). He was evidently one of the last to arrive and first went to Galway where his comrade Neven Hénaff had worked as an engineer since 1948.

### 3. Anti-semitism within the Breton Movement

Anti-semitic sentiment seems to have been quite prevalent within the Breton Movement (in line with what was also rife in the right-wing press throughout France in general), even before the Second World War. These sentiments find expression in the following Breton publications: *Breiz Atao*<sup>51</sup> 20.11.1932 and 11.12.1932 (*Le Juif et «Notre Juif»*), 11.12.1938 (*La France aux Juifs, la Bretagne aux Bretons*); *L'Heure Bretonne* 05.07.1941 (*Comment la Bretagne se défendit contre les Juifs*) 18.07.1942 (*A la Porte: les juifs et les enjuivés*), 15.08.1942 (*Nous devons connaître nos ennemis...*), 19.09.1943 (*ar Iudeuion hag ar Franmasoned a oa da benn er Frans - les Juifs et les Francs-Masons étaient à la tête de la France*); *Dihunamb* Aug. 1943, pp. 265, 272 (concerning the excesses against the Jews of Duke Jean le Roux of Brittany in 1240), to give just a few examples<sup>52</sup>.

<sup>50</sup> German support for matters Breton, including any special political status and cultural autonomy, evidently had its price. In his report dated 17 May 1944 SS-Untersturmführer (F) Ludwig Mühlhausen (to give him his service title; he had been seconded to the SD in mid-May) outlined discussions with other SS personnel (Schröder) to encourage Bretons to join the ranks of the French Waffen-SS [either 33. Waffen-Grenadier-Division der SS *Charlemagne* or SS-Division *Karl der Große*; cf. Ailsby 1998: 224]; *verstärkte Werbung für die französische Waffen-SS* is how it was put. Mühlhausen wrote: [...] *dass man den Bretonen keinerlei Zusagen oder Versprechungen für die Zukunft machen kann, weder in Richtung auf eine politische Sonderstellung gegenüber Frankreich noch auch auf eine Art kultureller Autonomie (Schutz des bretonischen Volkstums vor der Französisierung). Ohne einen solchen Anreiz scheint aber eine erfolgversprechende Werbung unter den Bretonen von vornherein schwer möglich* (Bericht des SS-Untersturmführers (F) Mühlhausen, 05.-17.05.1944 Personalakte Ludwig Mühlhausen; cf. also Lerchenmüller 1997: 407).

In a letter to me dated 29 July 1993 Alan Heusaff comments on Mühlhausen's report as follows: *An t-eolas a thagann sa tuairisc sin ar an agallamh idir Mühlhausen agus Schröder (1944:1/5) réitionn sé leis an eolas a bhí againn cheana: ní raibh aon rud geallta dúinn, ach ní raibh siad ag casadh a ndruim linn ná i n-ár gcoinne Bhí siad ag fanacht go mbeadh an cogadh thart roimh aon rud a shocrú* ('the information given in the report of the discussion between Mühlhausen and Schröder agrees with the information we had already: nothing was promised us, but they weren't turning their back on us or against us either. They were waiting till the war was over before doing anything').

<sup>51</sup> Editions of this publication during the 1920s carried the swastika as its emblem on the title page (cf. the edition for 02.09.1928, for example). Pierrick Le Guennec (pc: 27.07.04) adds: *La croix gammée apparaît en 1925, dans le numéro ou Hémon et Mordrel fondent Gwalarn Cela est en conformité avec la reprise début 1924 de l'idéologie pangermaniste « nordiste » par Morvan Marchal, fondateur de Breiz Atao et de son drapeau Gwenn-ha-du. Elle réapparaît également début 1933, juste après la prise du pouvoir par Hitler*. For the use of this emblem in Manx cultural circles also during the 1920s, see Broderick 1999b.

<sup>52</sup> Even Father Perrot himself is recorded as having made anti-semitic comment in 1940, glorifying the systematic persecution and murder of Jews by Duke Jean le Roux of Brittany in 1240 (cf. *Feiz ha Breiz* Nov.-Dec. 1940). Whether or not he would have supported the Final Solution / Holocaust is quite another matter.

Alan Heusaff in his letter to *Al Liamm* (1995: 284) maintains he had nothing to do with anti-semitism and denies that he ever heard any anti-semitic comment from his associates in the Breton Movement or that it had played any part in their activities or in those of Bezen Perrot:

[...] E-pad ar bloavezhioù 1940-1944 en em ouestlis da gentan d'ar bruderezh evit degas tud a-du gant ar Strollad ha goude d'an aozadur milourel. N'he doa an enepsemitegezh perzh ebet en obererezh-se. E Roazhon ne oa ket anv eus ar Yuzevien gant ar re a oa en-diudin, ha heñ)vel e oa e Kernev-Izel evit ar vroadelourien a geien ganto  
(‘During the years 1940-44 my main concern was publicising the Strollad with a view to gaining popular support, and later with the military formation (Bezen Perrot). Anti-semitism had no part in any of this activity. Among my associates in Roazhan there was no mention of Jews, nor in Lower Cornwall among the nationalists’) (Heusaff 1995: 284).

Indeed, he makes clear he did not support the Final Solution or Holocaust at all:

[...]. Krediñ a ran koulskoude e kollas e-leizh a Yuzevien (ha re all) o buhez en trevvac'hoù. Ha n'eus digarez ebet, din da c'houzout, evit bezañ o lazhet pe lezet da vervel  
(...) ‘Yet I do believe that many Jews (and others) lost their lives in concentration camps. And there is no excuse - in my view - for having killed them or having let them die’) (Heusaff 1995: 284).

Nevertheless, as a member of PNB he would have come across anti-semitism within the Breton Movement, as well as in PNB publications at the time (such as the above). As a senior member of Bezen Perrot he would also have known of the arrest of Jews by members of that organisation, as noted above. His uncritical acceptance of a downward re-assessment of the Final Solution / Holocaust figures in his letter in *Al Liamm* (1995), if not injudicious, would seem to tar him with the anti-semitic brush:

[...] N'em eus lennet nemet daou levr gant Faurisson, anezho disoc'h enklaskoù graet gantañ) hag em eus kavet doare perverzh hag onest dezho. Ha dall e oan ouzh nammoù enno? [...]. N'em eus ket gwelet c'hoazh levr na danevellskrid ebet o tiskouez e oa faos an disc'hoù-se  
(‘I have only read two books by Faurisson containing the results of his research - which seemed meticulous and honest to me. Was I blind to errors in them? (...). I have not yet seen one book or article which would show that these results [re-assessment of the Holocaust figures] are wrong’) (Heusaff 1995: 284).

Faurisson is a known apologist for the Third Reich. Heusaff could have got to the truth of the matter had he or his agent visited the relevant archives. He seems to have been blind to matters he did not wish to see.

## 5. After 1945

It is not known whether Bezen Perrot survived the war<sup>53</sup>. But there was a group of Bretons in Ireland who had come there via Wales in 1947-48 to escape evident French government harassment in Brittany<sup>54</sup>, who had been through the same experiences and who were in the

<sup>53</sup> Apart from his position in Bezen Perrot, Alan Heusaff does not seem to have figured prominently in the Breton Movement until the mid-1950s when he was in Ireland.

<sup>54</sup> cf. HTV *Y Byd ar Bedwar: Llydaw* 1989 (Part II).

same situation of being exiles. The testimony from Jean le Dù<sup>55</sup> seems to demonstrate that Hénaff and Heusaff were still interested in conspiratorial politics in 1960. Hénaff had seemingly been involved in secretive conspiratorial activities since the early 1930s and Heusaff since 1938, as already noted. There does not seem to have been any “coercive movement” in Ireland, but it can hardly be doubted that these people were extremely circumspect with outsiders. It could possibly be argued that there was an “atmosphere of fear”, i.e. a fear of talking about people’s backgrounds and / or about what they did. However, a refusal to talk derives also from group interest and the natural desire not to upset people with whom one may have dealings.

## 5. Conclusion

As can be seen, if the foregoing is correct, Bezen Perrot in its entire short existence served the interests, not of the Breton Movement at all, but those of the German occupying power, essentially as an ancillary arm of the SD/SS, operating out of conviction in arresting “anti-German” elements, as well as Jews<sup>56</sup>, and in combating French resistance and Breton maquis activity. Alan Heusaff’s senior position in Bezen Perrot would indicate that his role in that organisation was not insignificant. In addition, his apparent association and that of other Breton nationalists with the LVF, i.e. with a French right-wing collaborationist organisation, would indicate that their main interest lay in promoting an “anti-bolshevist” ideology (however that may be interpreted) in which the Breton Movement would form part. In other words, the Breton cause for Heusaff and his colleagues seems to have played a subordinate role to their political philosophy<sup>57</sup>, which, if so, would go quite some way to explaining their conviction in supporting German interests.

However, as always, the problem is justification with hindsight. A number of Breton nationalists, including Hénaff and Heusaff, felt that an unequivocal alliance with the Germans was the only way to ensure that Breton independence would win respect (see also above). When I met Neven Hénaff (the only time) at Alan Heusaff’s home in Dublin in September 1975, he told me that for him and his Breton comrades “Hitler was the best thing that

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<sup>55</sup> In a personal communication to me dated 24.04.03 Dr. Jean le Dù, Emeritus Professor of Breton at the Université de Bretagne Occidentale, Brest, and a Breton native speaker, noted: “[...] Did I tell you I met the man [Heusaff] in Ireland? He came to visit me with Lainé and another activist a short time after I had arrived in Galway in 1960. I told him [Heusaff] he was a Nazi (by the way he addressed me in English!) and he corrected me [by saying he was] a National Socialist. Amazing. The other two remained in the car, as I did not seem to be a possible recruit. I met him later in Dublin. He spoke Irish at home, his wife was from Donegal [...]” (pc. Jean le Dù 24.04.03.). The PNB saw itself as playing a part in the “New Europe” under Nazi auspices (cf. *L’Heure Bretonne* for 18.10.1941).

<sup>56</sup> Once arrested Jews were then handed over to the SD for deportation to concentration camps (cf. Höhne 1996: 183-209). Given Heusaff’s senior rank in Bezen Perrot he would almost certainly have known that.

<sup>57</sup> This seems to be the reality of Heusaff’s new *base philosophique*, as alluded to in his “Déclaration” above.

happened to the Breton Movement” (his actual words). He added they were in no doubt they had done the right thing in co-operating with the Germans<sup>58</sup>. Alan Heusaff reinforces this view and justifies the stance that he and others had taken for the Breton cause:

[...]. Par le Bezen on a montré que des Bretons étaient prêts à tout endurer, la mort comme la diffamation parmi leurs concitoyens contemporains, afin que dure la nationalité bretonne. Grâce à cette occurrence la foi en la Bretagne sera renforcée. La Bretagne nationale a fait ce que fait tout peuple qui combat ses despotes : s’allier à ses ennemis [...]. Pour la première fois depuis La Rouërie (1791) des Bretons se sont groupés pour combattre avec des armes pour les droits de la Bretagne. Et le coup a été mené à terme. Nous n’avons pas lutté comme les Chouans de Cadoudal<sup>59</sup> dans le but de remplacer une classe de Français par une autre. Hénaff a toujours refusé d’avoir à faire avec des collaborateurs comme Doriot<sup>60</sup>, car jusqu’à preuve du contraire, toute la classe politique française est équivalente pour nous (Alan Heusaff, *Memoirs*, after Hamon 2004: 168-69).

However, in seeking refuge in Ireland<sup>61</sup> in 1947/48 Neven Hénaff had left the Breton Movement in ruins as a result of his political and military alliance with the Germans in 1944-45 (Frélaut 1985: 135; see also above). As Alan Heusaff held a senior position in Bezen Perrot, he was, intentionally or otherwise, also party to that débâcle, from which it seemingly took the Breton Movement some time to recover. An alliance with the Germans in the form that it took with Hénaff and colleagues was evidently not a requirement from the German side, but seems to have been an exercise in currying favour on Hénaff’s part. As we have already seen, the only known German military requirement to secure any political and cultural autonomy for Brittany was Breton recruitment into the French Waffen-SS. Hénaff’s alliance with the Germans, whilst it may have had different aims in mind, resulted in serving only German interests, as we have seen, with Bezen Perrot unnecessarily involving itself in SS excesses<sup>62</sup>. It is unfortunate that the actions of Neven Hénaff and his supporters led to Bretons taking up arms against Bretons. Alan Heusaff died in Galway, Ireland, on 3 November 1999.

<sup>58</sup> At the same meeting in 1975 Hénaff also told me that he was pagan and an adherent of Celtic religion and belief (see also Hamon 2001: 154 where this was used to engender a certain amount of religious mystique and fervour in his *Kadervenn*). This may have been partly responsible for his interest in the Nazis, among some of whom pagan belief was actively encouraged (cf. Lixfeld 1994). For details of Nazi overtones in the PNB, in its presentation, symbols and rallies, see Hamon (2001: 154-55).

<sup>59</sup> ? Joseph Cadoudal, PNB chief for Guingamp district (Hamon 2001: 105).

<sup>60</sup> i.e. Jaques Doriot, founder of the PPF (*Parti populaire français*), a right-wing organisation, was put in charge of the enforcement of the STO (*Service du travail obligatoire*), an edict introduced by the Germans in 1943 obliging French males to work in German factories in support of the (German) war effort (cf. Hamon 2004: 5, fn. 1). In addition Doriot was more interested in seeing a federal Europe rather than Breton autonomy (Hamon 2001: 76). In the 1920s/30s he had been a member of the central committee of the PCF, the French communist party (Gwendal Denis pc: 08.07.04).

<sup>61</sup> Of Hénaff’s refuge in Ireland it is said: [...] *Il vit dans un complet dénuement, exilé sur un roc celtique, dans un isolement mystique, foudroyé par la défaite qui anéantit ses projets d’indépendance bretonne. Vingt-cinq ans après sa chute, il justifie opiniâtement sa révolte: Plus tard, on s’apercevra que j’ai eu raison [...]. Mon temps viendra!* (Caerléon 1974: 50-52).

<sup>62</sup> Alan Heusaff sought to continue to promote the Breton cause after the war via involvement in Celtic organisations, such as the Celtic League. Whether or not there is any carry-over from the 1940s into such organisations is a matter that lies outside the scope of this investigation.

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<http://membres.lycos.fr/leguenne/etudes>

<sup>63</sup> I am also grateful to Pierrick Le Guennec for availing me of his websites.



*séparer sans perte ni fracas. Nous étions tous là, avec nos armes pointées vers le bas, nous demandant comment agir sans leur laisser l'occasion d'avoir le dessus, surveillant leurs gestes et leurs paroles, et eux, se demandant de quel côté nous étions, amis ou ennemis. « Le blond, là, est tout pâle », dit en me montrant celui qui semblait être le responsable. Et en vérité, nous jouions avec nos vies. Laizet s'était tout de suite avancé pour trouver une solution à l'amiable. Mais comment réussirait-il sans dire que nous étions du maquis nous aussi ? C'est lui qu'on interrogeait et ses réponses n'étaient pas convaincantes. L'Alsacien, qui d'abord était resté silencieux, participa lui aussi à la conversation. « Celui-ci ne parle pas comme un Français », dit l'ennemi qui menait la discussion. Sa voix était désagréable. Il devenait accusateur. Un peu plus et il nous demanderait des preuves précises ou bien il nous ordonnerait de lâcher nos armes, et alors nous serions à leur merci. Laizet avait échoué. Nous ne pouvions plus reculer, nous ne pouvions plus nous en sortir sans les affronter. Nous ne devons pas reculer. Il fallait frapper les premiers. « Feu! » criai-je. « Feu! » répondit Larnicol. « Ne tire pas ! Tu ne vois donc pas qu'ils sont du même côté que nous ! » cria Laizet. Il essayait encore de nous faire passer pour des Français, comme eux. Mais non ! Assez d'intrigues comme ça. Les dés sont jetés ! Les coups de feu calquaient. J'avais armé mon Sten, visé le questionneur casqué, et appuyé sur la détente. Quoi ? Le chien était resté bloqué. Je n'étais pas assez habitué à manier ce vieil engin, et je n'avais pas le temps de jouer avec pour le décoincer. Je me décidai rapidement à sauter dans le fossé, où je serais mieux abrité et d'où je pourrais alors tirer avec le pistolet que j'avais dans la poche arrière de mon pantalon. J'étais en train de me tourner quand une balle m'atteignit dans la partie supérieure du bras gauche, et j'eus l'impression d'en recevoir une autre dans le dos. Le choc me projeta au fond du fossé. J'étendis sûrement ce bras-là pour ne pas tomber à la renverse. Clac ! Je n'eus aucune douleur, mais quand j'essayai de m'appuyer dessus il était mou et tournait sur lui-même comme l'aurait fait un sac de farine pendu à une branche. L'humérus était cassé. Je ne pouvais pas armer mon pistolet avec une seule main. Quand je toussais, du sang me montait à la gorge. Le côté gauche de ma poitrine était très lourd et le sang, chaud, coulait le long de mon flanc. Je vis Larnicol tomber sur la route entre l'endroit où j'étais et la voiture. « Je suis fini », dit-il avec un sourire tranquille et un peu triste. L'Alsacien accourut par derrière du côté abrité de la voiture, ouvrit la portière et saisit deux grenades à manche. Il les lança vers la camionnette et se baissa pour ne pas recevoir d'éclats. Deux explosions. Les ennemis fuyaient. Je me rendis compte juste après que la camionnette avait disparu. Tandis que je perdais mon sang, je pensais que je ne pouvais plus rien faire, que j'allais bientôt partir. Fini les combats, les efforts, l'angoisse. Ni joie ni inquiétude. Pendant une seconde je me remémorai la chanson de Roparz Hemon, Kanenn Vrezel<sup>66</sup>. Les choses ne se passaient pas comme dans le poème, mais c'était une belle journée pour mourir. « Tu peux te lever ? » demanda l'Alsacien. « Il faut qu'on parte avant qu'ils n'aient le temps de revenir. Aide-moi à mettre les deux autres dans la voiture ». Je me levai, je n'étais pas trop faible. Le pauvre Larnicol était mort. Au milieu de la route gisait Laizet, la tête dans une mare sang, son bonnet noir et son pistolet à ses côtés : mort aussi.*

*Nous réussîmes à les transporter dans la voiture, sur la banquette arrière. «Voilà un Mauser, il est chargé et armé. Tu n'auras qu'à tirer s'ils reviennent». C'était un homme alerte et déterminé. La voiture démarra dans un bruit étrange. Quelque chose était cassé dans le moteur ou la direction, elle avançait en zigzag, pas moyen d'aller vite. Elle tomba en panne en bas d'une pente. Mon camarade descendit et arrête un clerc qui passait en vélo. «Occupez-vous de lui », ordonna-t-il, « pendant que je vais chercher de l'aide». Et il partit sur le vélo en direction de Guéméné, à une huitaine de kilomètres de là. Le clerc appela des paysans qui habitaient à côté et ils me dirent de venir chez eux. Ils demandèrent ce qui s'était passé. Je*

<sup>66</sup> War-song (Hamon 2004: 127, fn. 63).



*répondis en breton qu'il y avait eu une échauffourée entre Français et Bretons. non loin du Croisty. Apparemment ils ne me comprirent pas, et ne firent pas d'autres questions. Ils eurent la bonté de me préparer un grog. Un voile de lumière verdâtre et sombre se levait et tombait devant mes yeux. On m'invita à m'allonger dans un lit en on me laissa seul, avec cette lumière me sautillant dans le crâne. À présent j'étais inquiet, ne sachant pas si j'étais dans un état grave. Le sang ne me coulait plus aussi abondamment dans la gorge, mais mon flanc était aussi lourd qu'une grosse pierre. Au bout d'une heure l'Alsacien revint en voiture avec des Allemandes en uniforme. Nous nous rendîmes à toute allure à Guéméné, à l'hôpital du haut de la ville. À voir la tête des sœurs et des infirmières qui vinrent à occuper de moi, il était évident, qu'elles étaient embarrassées de m'avoir à leur charge. J'étais dans une grande salle. Un jeune homme fut amené dans le lit à côté du mien, peu après que je fus arrivé. Il avait été blessé par les Allemands à côté de Bubry. Mieux valait se taire. Le temps d'appeler Pontivy, qu'une ambulance vienne me chercher pour m'emmener au Kriegslazarett<sup>67</sup>, dans cette ville (Alan Heusaff, *Memoirs*, after Hamon 2004: 125-28).*

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<sup>67</sup> German military hospital.