

Accession number 10732, reel three.

Mr. Lauth, reel three.

Yes. I received a good thrash of 150 in one night, set by the people who were-- I was in a cave, and the people were upstairs. And they could hear the hang every time they struck me. The fellow named Naegelé went to see the Germans to say he had discovered the resistance, the French resistance movement in the camp. And he gave the Gestapo the names of the friends he had seen with me for three weeks.

He would pick up the number on their jacket. And then he gave this number to the-- well, there were some of them were of the resistance movement, but some others were not. So they were advised to say, we don't know why we are arrested.

They arrested them so, of course, Debeaumarché was very well known by Naegelé. And two other friends of mine who were, well, in the same movement. When I am asked, I must here say that, when I am asked, how could this resistance movement work in the camp, you must understand that there was no written paper. We couldn't write in paper. It was only oral communication.

We couldn't produce a paper saying, this is the head of the network, this is the assistants and so on. It's impossible. But Naegelé nevertheless, said this is-- it's either Lauth or Debeaumarché who is at the head of the resistance movement. I don't know what he said.

So one night, they struck both of us, Debeaumarché and myself, to make us say that we were the head of the movement. And Debeaumarché said no, and I said no. But they said, yes, one of them must be. I said, no. So they strike up until we were absolutely on our strike to death.

Was there an actual head of the resistance?

Debeaumarché. In fact, there were two movements, if I can precise the thing afterwards, what existed. But all the people were not arrested, you see? I can tell you a story, which is, as we say in French, rather grand Guignol.

Once I was called by the Gestapo. Because I was sent to Nordhausen, to the prison of Nordhausen camp, which is a small town not far from Dora. And the interpreter was a very beautiful woman, whom we knew after was the mistress of Sanders, very beautiful girl-- spoke a perfect French.

And I appeared then with blood on my face. Well, the eyes are black, and a very thick beard because nobody had nothing to shave, pitiful state. And this woman, this beautiful woman, look at me and said, we know that you are teaching literature. And we don't understand what you are doing as an engineer because the fraier Buring at the Arbeitsstatistik had put on my card "engineer," which I was not engineer. So it's very curious, do you see?

But are you really-- well, do you know something about literature? And she said, I can tell you that for three years I have been learning literature at the Sorbonne in Paris, so better don't lie. I will see first of all. Tell me, you were not in your kommando when Debeaumarché went to see you with news from the BBC?

I said, no, I was not in my kommando. Yeah, but this is what Debeaumarché said to Naegelé and what Naegelé wrote to tell you. You cannot say that you do not know the news from the BBC. I said, well, I said, I heard the news of the BBC, but I don't know where it comes from, through what channel. I don't know at all.

But where were you on that day? I said, I was-- I went to see my friend, Bourdier, who is working in another kommando. Said, what were you discussing about with Monsieur Bourdier? I said, French literature.

So she said, French literature. What literature? I say, he loves-- he loves French poetry, particularly of the last century, Parnassians and symbolists. It was true that I had spoken with Bourdier a few days before of

literature. And a friend of us came and asked me, Claude, if you could tell me a poem so that I could think of it so that it would enlighten my life for a few hours. And in presence of Bourdier, I told him Verlaine's poem about [FRENCH]

[SPEAKING FRENCH]

--in presence of Bourdier. But what I didn't know is that they had arrested Bourdier, asking him what he had to do with me. And Bourdier had said the same thing, that we were talking about French literature.

What kind of poets were you talking about? she said. Oh, he said, the Parnassians. You see, in the Gestapo you see me full of blood and all. But I couldn't see with my eyes. Speaking of French literature, particularly poetry, to this German girl, with Sanders, the head of the Gestapo by her side, who didn't understand a single word of what I was saying. Frankly, he couldn't speak French.

She said, Parnassians and what else? I said, symbolists. Ha ha, she said. For example? Oh, I said, for instance, Verlaine.

Ah, she said. What poem? Oh, I said, the other day I was telling them a poem by Verlaine. And I was looking at her. And she said one time, why are you looking at me like that? I said, because you remind me of a woman I was much in love with.

She looked at me. She said a few words to Sanders. I was taken out of the room and to a fellow who was, from time to time, shaving the people. And he shaved me with-- had some crust of blood everywhere. But he shaved me.

I was taken back to the bureau of the Gestapo. And she said, now you can say the poem, if you know it, of course. She wanted to see me, what I was like without my beard. And you see, I had to say this poem to Sanders, who did not understand, and to the girl. [SPEAKING FRENCH]

--and so on, in the Gestapo, in the bureau of the Gestapo.

She was the mistress of whom?

Sanders, the head of the Gestapo, who didn't understand a single word of French. But that saved Bourdier. He was arrested. He stayed with us in prison. But they never-- they never struck him or he had no other questions about them. They was finished with him because I could-- I proceed, I said a poem. Funny, funny, [LAUGHS] [INAUDIBLE] in this story.

Now, Naegelé one day said, you want my masters say that I lied to them because you are the head of the movement. I said but there is no movement, no resistance movement. Yes. He was interested because if it was proved it was not true, it would be, of course, Naegelé would have been, well, convinced to have lied to the Germans.

And the fact is that as many people were not in the resistance movement. When they were questioned by the Gestapo, they didn't know what it was about. And the Gestapo realized that they were especially-- it was not very clear. You see? Some, of course, yes-- Debeaumarché, [PERSONAL NAME] and myself, yes, of course. But the others, what are they doing in this affair?

And then on the 11th of November, I was called by the Gestapo, who told me that I was sentenced to death together with Debeaumarché and [PERSONAL NAME]. Because it was an order coming from Himmler, much [INAUDIBLE]. And they said, I suppose this will be a great date for you. It was the 11th of November.

This is something, I mean, I can't understand why they were-- I know that the system obliged them to be so cruel, so sadistic. But up to then, choosing the 11th of November to tell me that I was going to be hanged, I didn't appreciate at all-- of course, not the other fellows. So we were put together in the same cell, waiting for being hanged.

We didn't know when. And as a matter of fact, we knew a lot of things afterwards because Brother Alfred, I told you before, had been arrested too. And Naegelé thought the friar was a priest and that he could confess him to this priest. And there's a secret of course, from [INAUDIBLE].

We were sent back to the camp of Dora to be hanged, from the prison of Nordhausen. I can now remember exactly the date. We were sent back to the camp of Dora to be hanged. Yes. And then the kapo, Naegelé, have been put in a cell in Nordhausen because he had pinched a watch from two Polish girls, who were imprisoned in the camp of Nordhausen. Up to then, Naegelé was free inside the prison. He could go from one place to another.

And what he did with the two Polish girls, we do not know. But they complained, the two girls complained that he had a stolen their watch. They went to the Gestapo. And so the Gestapo took the famous Naegelé and put him in a cell, just as we were. And he was sent back with us to the camp of Dora and, in Dora, put in the same cell as Brother Alfred.

But he thought the brother was a priest, a [SPEAKING FRENCH]. So he said-- one day he said, Alfred, can you hear me in confession? Because I think that we have come here to die, to be hanged. And I would like you to confess me and to pardon me.

So that Alfred have known all the story, all this falsification of [INAUDIBLE] made by the so-called Naegelé. That's why we have known, for instance, that for Easter 1947, because we are in 1947, our cards have been taken away from the statistics bureau because we were going to be hanged for Easter 1945.

Why? The question is why they did not kill us before? Most probably because they wanted to know if there was a Russian resistance movement in the camp, or maybe a German resistance movement, because there were some German inmates. And the French resistance-- and if the different Russians will fall, and if we were in contact with each other for upsetting for, well, trying to kill the SS of the camp because we were 1,000 and so. That's why they were waiting to know that, whilst always beating us.

We were, at that moment-- can you stop just a minute? So, on the 15th of March, 1945, at [PERSONAL NAME], Debeaumarché, Nicholas Ornstein, and myself were sent back to the bunker, that is the prison of Dora, to be executed. We were put in a cell of 1 meter 80 by 2 meter 20.

We were 16 in that cell. You can see the room we were disposing of. You could not lie nor sleep. We had no air because there was no window. We would get up one minute in the morning to go to the lavabo, to the toilet, and take [? diction. ?] We were not allowed to drink in the toilets.

And we tried to drink, what that was there. The people of the prison took this opportunity to beat us. We were lacking water badly. On the 4th of April 1945, Sanders, the head of the Gestapo, came to the bunker with a motorcycle and shot down set communists, seven German communists-- no need to give you the names. You want their names?

Yes, if you have them.

Yes. Well, lageralteste 1, Josef Garmisch; lageralteste zwei-- 2, sorry, Christian Berne. I was in a jail with Christian Berne for three months. Kapo Arbeitsstatistik, Ludwig Schipschack; kapo infirmary, Hans Schneider; kapo [NON-ENGLISH], George Toma; kapo [NON-ENGLISH], Paul Lucius; kapo [GERMAN], Otto Runge.

We were in a pitiful state. We were nearly naked in this cell, as I said, 16. And I gave you the idea of the-- on the 5th of April, the Allies were coming nearer and nearer. So the SS began to evacuate the camp.

We were put in a convoy, who finally arrived after six days, in an open carriage without any-- nothing to eat, to Bergen-Belsen. In fact, for six days we have been going around to find a camp, a concentration camp, which could have enough fuel to burn us after being killed, being shot. And fortunately for us, all the camps where the train stopped were without fuel, which was Germany were going to be absolutely defeated.

That's why we could arrive at Bergen-Belsen. We stopped one night in Celle, the railway station of Celle, side by side with a German train full of ammunition. And the railway station was bombed by the British, who didn't know, of course, we were there. One bomb on the ammunition train would blow us-- would have blown us up.

And I remember, as we were in an open carriage, a German soldier on the other side, who was in ammunition train, gave me some bread and tell me, eat that. It's probably the last one you are going to eat. Me too, he said. [INAUDIBLE] it was-- the British were falling on the station. By chance, by chance we were not-- we didn't burst out. And that's why we arrive at Bergen-Belsen.

And there we were set-- as we were in a special carriage inside the train with all the people of the bunker, the prison, I decided to mix up with the other people of the train, the ordinary comrades who hadn't been in prison because it was-- everything was disorganized.

And we arrived at the SS barracks of Bergen-Belsen, which was not very far from the camp for women of Bergen-Belsen. We were-- the SS vanished, the German SS. They left us with the Hungarian SS. But of course, we couldn't get out of the camp.

Just will you stop a minute because I want-- it was a terrible lie because they had nothing to eat. There were quite a lot of kitchens arranged for the SS, but nothing in those kitchens except some rutabagas. I don't know what's the name of rutabaga in English because I've never seen them, so sort of potato. But it's not a potato, you see?

And we had one, big as a fist-- raw, no cooking-- a day per man. We lived on that for about a fortnight. And then, fortunately, came the advanced part of the Second British Army, and they liberated our camp.

It was joy, of course, but tempered by the fact that plenty of us were very ill. There were-- they had a-- well, they tell me, in a pitiful state. But there of them died. And there I met Major Hay of the Second British Army. [FRENCH], later a prefect in France, had been put at the head of the French people in the camp of Bergen-Belsen. He had asked me to be the interpreter with the Second British Army so that I met Major Hay very often.

And Major Hay was suspicious. He was right because some people who had been in the concentration camps, plenty of them were hadn't been in resistance movement. They were crooks or at time, well, dirty people. So he was suspicious. But we had a good reason to sympathize.

Accession number 10732, reel four.

Lauth, reel four.

Yeah. So I told him that I had been-- I was a French assistant master at the Manchester grammar school. So he asked me, in Manchester grammar school, who was headmaster by that time? I said, Mr. Douglas Miller. Did you know him? I said, yes. Very often he invited me to dinner, and we were very friendly. He said, he is one of my best friends.

So of course, afterward it was much easier to have. Our contacts were much friendly. And then I wrote a report, which I handed to him, in English, with the paper I could dispose of in this camp. And I don't know what the report-- where the we report came or went to and so on.

But our friends were ill, as I told you. The infirmary was full. I went to the SS infirmary barrack took to get some alcohol, some 90 degrees alcohol in order to try to stop the dysentaria of my friends. So we made alcohol of 30 degrees with that. But we gave them. But we had not enough to give to all those people who were ill.

And then we decided to leave the sad camp of Bergen-Belsen. But beforehand, I was asked by Major Hay to go to the camp of the women, the prisoners in Bergen-Belsen, because they had caught Kramer, who was the head, the commander of the camp of Bergen-Belsen. So I went there with my friend, Roger Latris, who

spoke good with English also, and who was-- who lived in England before the war, since his father was the head of the Savoy, for cooking and so on. See? Roger Latris, a very well known in London, the Savoy. He was the head of the Savoy.

And Roger, his son was educated in England first. So we went to question the Kramer with two soldiers, two British soldiers, with their guns were on each side of Kramer. And I have the deposition of Kramer at home. I could send you this deposition if you want to. It's absolutely frightful.

I can give you the names of those British soldiers who were there with me and with Roger Latry to interrogate Kramer. I'm very sorry. They are not very far from me, but I don't see where I put them. They are the name of three soldiers of the Second British Army. They gave them-- they gave me their photographs, which I have still with me. It was in '45 then. I should have been very glad to meet them again.

What kind of a man was Kramer?

Oh, a beast. A beast. It's terrifying, what he said. Well, asked to read this disposition. It's incredible. I could see the knuckles of these British soldiers becoming white by, you know, clutching their guns. So that they were-- they said, furious, one of them to me, why not to shoot him right now, particularly for what he did on British prisoners who were taken in the camp of Bergen-Belsen? Beforehand, he had been, for some time in Ravensbrück. He had been taken from Ravensbrück because he had done too much harm, even in Ravensbrück. He was displaced and put to Bergen-Belsen.