



BBC FEATURES

Edited by Laurence Gilliam



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B.B.C. FEATURES

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LAURENCE GILLIAM

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THE MAN FROM BELSEN

by LEONARD COTTRELL

Thirty-four. Born Wolverhampton, educated Birmingham. Graduated from motor industry to free-lance feature writing for B.B.C. Joined Features Department 1940. Specialises in industrial, commonwealth and aviation themes. Combines passion for Egyptology with unlimited curiosity about his contemporaries. Has flown many thousands of miles in search of feature material to Canada, U.S.A., Kenya, Tanganyika, Egypt, the West Indies, Australia, Italy and Holland. Expert in extracting essence of the story from unfamiliar scenes and peoples. His "The Man from Belsen" was the first radio documentary on Nazi concentration camp life as seen and experienced by a prisoner.

ONE of the very few British subjects to survive imprisonment in Belsen was Harold Le Druillenec. This programme, which I wrote in January 1946, was an attempt to re-create his experiences in the form of a dramatic radio feature, in which Mr. Le Druillenec himself read the narrative passages, while the dramatised scenes were played by actors. At the time this was an unusual experiment, as he could not be expected to act in scenes with experienced players, and each scene had therefore to be written in such a way that he was always there by implication, though he did not speak himself. The feature was written after I had spent several weeks with Mr. Le Druillenec, listening to his story and absorbing the details as fully as possible. Though the words are mine, the experiences, the incidents, the character-sketches were all his, and they are all true.

My name is Harold Le Druillenec. I'm a schoolmaster, and I've lived most of my life in Jersey. I'm married, with a seven-year-old daughter, and at the beginning of the war we lived very comfortably in a house overlooking St. Aubin's Bay.

Then, in 1940, France fell, and the Germans occupied the Channel Islands. When I speak of the Occupation, don't think of the Germans occupying a small half-foreign group of islands a long

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way away. Imagine them walking down your street. Imagine their Headquarters in your local Town Hall. Imagine their principal Court-house in a big residential house like the one in which, with two of my sisters, I was court-martialled in June 1944.

It was June 22nd, a fortnight after D-Day. We were in good spirits as we stood in the dock, for the sound of your guns rattled the windows of the Court-house during the sentences as they were read out to us by the Presiding Officer:

"Louisa Gould—we find you guilty of harbouring a Russian prisoner of war in your house; also of possessing a radio receiver and permitting communal listening. We hereby sentence you to two years' imprisonment."

"Ivy Forster—we find you guilty of communal listening to enemy news, in contravention of the law which forbids you to do so. We sentence you to five months' simple imprisonment."

"Harold Le Druillenec—we find you guilty of communal listening, in contravention of the law which forbids you to do so. We sentence you to five months' simple imprisonment."

Le Druillenec was taken first to Belfort in France, which turned out to be a camp where the prisoners were selected for various other camps. Later, in the company of many French and Belgian prisoners, he began his journey into Germany in a closed cattle-truck. With him travelled Frank le Villio, another Jerseyman, and a young French Resistance man named Bernard Dupuy.

As we travelled north, it grew colder, and the guards, who had formerly been fairly decent to us, became harsher. We knew we could expect friendship from no one, and no help from the French Red Cross. Even so, it never occurred to me that I was to endure anything more severe than a few months' simple imprisonment. Besides, the war must be nearly over—all the way into Germany we had seen battered and broken towns, and heard rumours of the Allies' advance. And then, as the train slowed down, I heard a word being passed round among the prisoners.

"It's a concentration camp! It's not a stalag."

And one prisoner said, "I know this type of place. It's one of the worst German camps. A very bad camp."

I looked out through a ventilation slit. The train was pulling into a siding. Then I saw, standing in bleak, desolate, windswept country, long rows of gaunt wooden buildings, interspersed with

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muddy roads, and surrounded by high fences of barbed wire. And I also saw, trudging along those roads, flanked by armed German guards, long files of men, some wearing striped pyjama-type suits, others in ragged, dirty civilian clothes, splashed with paint. This was not an internment camp. It was the great Central Concentration Camp of Neuengamme. Harsh German voices harangued the prisoners as they were tumbled from the wagon.

“Get out! Out, you filth! Quickly! Get into rank, you swine! . . . March! March!”

Now you may have imagined that these camps were run by the S.S. The S.S. were in charge, of course, but we hardly ever saw them. The camps were run by the Prisoner Chiefs, concentration-camp prisoners of long standing, some of whom had been in camps for ten or twelve years. Most of these Chiefs were Germans, originally anti-Nazis. One of them came among us now. He was a big, powerfully built man with strange staring eyes. He said:

“You have entered a new world, in which you will have no contact whatever with the world outside. I repeat that, no contact whatever. If you have wives, children, or relatives—forget them. You will never see them again, and it is best for your own peace of mind that you should forget. You are first of all to be thoroughly humiliated and humbled. From now on, for every second of the day, and if necessary of the night, you will have to occupy yourselves in furthering the interests of the Third Reich.”

We had our meal, a litre of turnip soup and some bread. Then we were marched to our huts and told to get into bed. I want to give you a picture of that hut, because it is very important. There were three hundred three-tiered bunks set out in straight lines, with absolutely even surfaces, perfectly made up. It was a rule that the beds had to be in the same immaculate state early next morning.

The punishment for the slightest crease in the surface of a bed was a severe beating, and more punishments were given for bad bed-making than anything else. There were a thousand men in each hut, and we slept three in a bed, two with heads one way, the other with his head at the foot of the bed. It was difficult to sleep without moving, but we learned.

The following morning, as we shuffled across that muddy compound in the bitter wind and driving rain, I was talking to Frank le Villio and Dupuy, when a very tall young man came over and

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introduced himself to us. His name was Jean de Frotté, and he was the second of a little band of friends I made during my imprisonment. The next day we were sent to another camp at Wilhelms-haven. De Frotté and Dupuy went with me. De Frotté was a charming and cultivated young Frenchman, the son of a Marquis. He was unusually tall, over six feet two, but pale and delicate. A member of the Maquis, he had been arrested when transferring money to another Maquis, under Colonel Reynaud, who was also with us in the camp. He was a last-war veteran, a man of fifty-five tall, erect, very much the old type of French Cavalry Officer. He had been a légionnaire, he remarked to me.

"You have heard of the Foreign Legion, Monsieur Le Druillenec. You have read books about it, seen plays and cinema films. You may have thought that the life was hard and brutal. Monsieur Le Druillenec, after what I have seen in these camps, the Foreign Legion seems like a school for children!"

Wilhelmshaven was a subsidiary camp to Neuen Gamme. It was here that I met my friend, Lloyd Gybels. I was talking to de Frotté when Dupuy came over to us, bursting with excitement.

"Harold, there is a man in Hut 6 who wants to meet you. He says he is a Belgian, but he speaks like an American. De Frotté, you must come too. And you, Colonel."

With Dupuy we went over to Hut 6. There we met one of the toughest and certainly one of the bravest men I knew during my term as a prisoner. Born in America, he had become a naturalised Belgian. Speaking with a strong American accent, he introduced us to his friend Dr. Moreau.

"Mind you," he added, "he's not really a doc. He's a medical student, but he plays the fiddle well. Which block are you in?"

We told him, Block One.

"One? So you've got Omar?"

"Omar?"

"Sure, the Block Chief. Big fellow. He's pretty bad," added Moreau, "but Emil is worse."

Gybels grimaced. "Emil's a beauty! He's beaten at least two hundred men to death. They're all homicidal maniacs. All mad!"

"Careful, Lloyd, not so loud."

"Anybody like half a loaf?" enquired Gybels. "I came across it in the Chief's kitchen this morning."

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"Lloyd! You know the penalty!"

In the distance we heard the shuffling tramp of feet and the harsh bark of the German guard. Gybels looked out of the window. "Last shift coming back from the factory," he said. Then turning to us: "Have any of you been to the factory yet?"

"No, we expect to go soon. We're non-specialists. They took the specialists first." Gybels bit off a large piece from the loaf. He chewed it deliberately, looking curiously at us newcomers.

"Have any of you people been in a Konzentrationslager before?" he said. "No? Well, there're one or two things worth knowing. The first is to recognise that your Block Alteste is God. And, barring escape, which is pretty hopeless, the only chance you've got of staying alive for long is to get on the right side of him."

"Block Alteste?"

"Block Chief. A Block Chief is responsible for each of the huts. You've got Omar. I've got Emil. And there's Alfred, and one or two others. They're all prisoners, you see, but privileged prisoners, and they're responsible to the S.S. for camp discipline. They've got powers of life and death. The second thing to remember is that they're all mad, and when I say mad, I mean mad. You'll see things going on here that'll drive you nuts if you try to figure them out—guys beaten to death for stealing a potato. Don't worry about it. Don't judge it by the standards of a sane world."

Gybels explained that the prisoners were marched each day to the Kriegsmarine Arsenal. The long hours, the fatigue and starvation diets caused a high death-rate. This, Gybels explained, was part of the system. As prisoners were worked to death, they were replaced by fresh men from Neuen Gamme. The camp was always kept up to strength.

So it began. For a time we managed to dodge going to the factory, but eventually they got round to us, Dupuy, the delicate de Frotté, myself, and many other of my friends. Day after day the same unvarying routine. At 4.30 in the morning we were roused with shouts and blows. We washed in cold water without soap. At 5 a.m. a dish of watery soup. Then a long wait in the yard in freezing cold, in six inches of snow, until 6.20 a.m., when the S.S. guards arrived. Then the long march in the darkness to the factory, splashing, stumbling through mud and filth, a long column of marching men, guarded on each side by S.S. men with Tommy-guns, a search-light shone along each column to guard against attempted escape.

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Anyone breaking into the beam was shot. March . . . march . . . march. . . . Then the factory. Working in a haze of blue sparks from the welding arcs, deafened by the clatter of riveting machines. At noon a half-hour break and another dish of thin soup. Then another five and a half hours' work and back to the camp again, in darkness. Always the hoarse, inhuman bellowing of the guards.

Day after day, week after week, month after month.

After the first few weeks, the deliberate starvation began to have its effect. Illness broke out, pneumonia, blood poisoning. One man became a mass of sores which spread until he died. Our blood was the colour and consistency of red ink. Gybels and Dr. Moreau tried to help us.

"When you walk,"

a sort of convict's shuffle. Use as little energy as possible. When you are told to do anything, go about it very slowly. When the guard isn't looking, sit down, even if it's only for a few minutes. Remember, try to conserve your strength."

Jean de Frotté was one of the first to fall ill. Every day we marched together to the factory. Every night we marched back to the camp, Jean coughing with T.B., his feet torn and bleeding, but he never complained. One night, as we were marched back from the factory, he said to me:

"Did I ever tell you how I learned English?" he asked. "I think I told you of our home at Couterne. It's one of those lovely sixteenth century châteaux—you know, battlements, little pointed roofs, a moat, like a castle in a fairy-tale. As a child I had an English governess. She used to read me nursery rhymes in English. (Do you mind if I lean on you a bit—thanks.) And it used to puzzle me to think we had so few French nursery rhymes. You know, Harold, when I come out of this camp, I'm going to translate your nursery rhymes and publish them, perhaps invent some new ones. . . . There's one about a little lamb—now don't prompt me!

"Mary had a little lamb,
Its feet were white as snow,
And everywhere that Mary went . . ."

But the last line was drowned by the bellow of the guard ordering us to stop talking and keep in step.

Now, you may ask why the prisoners endured all these sufferings.

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Why was no attempt made to escape? That brings me to a subject which so far I have avoided—camp discipline.

Later Le Druillenec saw an example of this camp discipline. An Alsatian boy had been caught stealing scraps of food from the patients' plates in the infirmary. Omar, the dreaded Block Chief, addressed the boy in front of the assembled prisoners.

"You have committed the unforgivable crime," cold deliberate way. "You have stolen from your comrades. Not only from your comrades, but from your sick comrades. For this you will be punished. You will be punished in such a way that you will finally be driven mad. And only after that will you die."

The punishment was duly carried out. They beat him and tortured him. At night they would wet his blankets under the pump and make him sleep in them. They starved him, then gave him salted food and no water. At the end of the first week he was a walking skeleton, with a skull for a head. He had a horror of spoons. They had probably made him eat with a heated spoon. He would not eat, and so we held him down and tried to force food down his throat. When he left the gaol he was raving mad, and died two weeks later.

Punishments like that became an everyday occurrence, and usually they were carried out, not by the S.S., but by Omar and the other Prisoner Chiefs. Who were these men, and why were they capable of such brutalities? Well, some were congenital criminals, but not all. To explain this, let me show you another picture of Omar himself.

Sometimes he would take a fancy to certain prisoners, and for those who enjoyed this doubtful privilege, a special room was reserved—Stube 9. At one time Gybels, de Frotté, Moreau and myself belonged to this élite, though we could never be sure how long we should remain in favour, for Omar's temper was uncertain. So it was a very uneasy little party which met in Stube 9 to hear Moreau play the violin for Omar. Moreau began by playing the violin part of Mozart's F Major Sonata. Omar applauded enthusiastically at the end.

"Enchanting,"

"I'm glad you enjoyed it,"
practice."

"Not at all, dear friend, not at all. It was charming. Lloyd, don't you love the Allegro—that exquisite Mozartian grace and melody? And the first movement, like the first sunshine of spring. You like Mozart, don't you, Lloyd?"

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Gybels, who had been briefed by Moreau, surprised us by replying: "Yes, Omar, of course. But I prefer the B Flat Sonata personally."

"Ah, the B Flat? Yes, it's superb, but it has a much bigger piano part and we've no piano here. Do you play, Lloyd?"

"No, I'm afraid not."

"Lend me your violin, Moreau, will you?"

Omar played a few notes of the *Caprice Viennoise*.

"You know,"

becoming a musician. There was a time when I could attempt the Bach Chaconne. But, instead, I became a writer. . . ."

In Gybels'

"I had dreams of becoming a musician, instead I became a writer."

"What did he mean by that?" asked Dupuy.

"Just what he said,"

"Only that he's been twelve years in concentration camps."

"Yes, but do you know how he got here? He was a free-lance journalist, and a good one, I'm told. A Progressive, a Radical."

"Well?" I asked.

"He was arrested in nineteen-thirty-three for working against the Nazis. Imagine it—twelve years ago, he'd be in his thirties, young, keen, perhaps idealistic."

"Impossible!"

"Wait a minute—think of twelve years in places like this—places worse than this, Dachau, Auschwitz. At first he fights it. He resists the beating and torture and degradation. Perhaps in time the Nazis will be overthrown, he thinks. Then he'll get out. But they aren't overthrown and he doesn't get out. Year after year of this atmosphere—death, suffering and brutality. In time he becomes insensitive to normal, human feelings. The camps are his life. He's still an intelligent man, mind you. He's learned the ropes. He's learned how to dodge things, how to get on the right side of the S.S. Then one day they come to him and offer him, not freedom, but a state which is *almost* freedom compared with what's gone before. 'Be a Chief,' they say; 'we'll give you a room and furniture, books, a piano if you want it. You can have other prisoners to wait on you. All we demand in return is that you maintain discipline. You'll be responsible to no one but us.' So he takes the job."

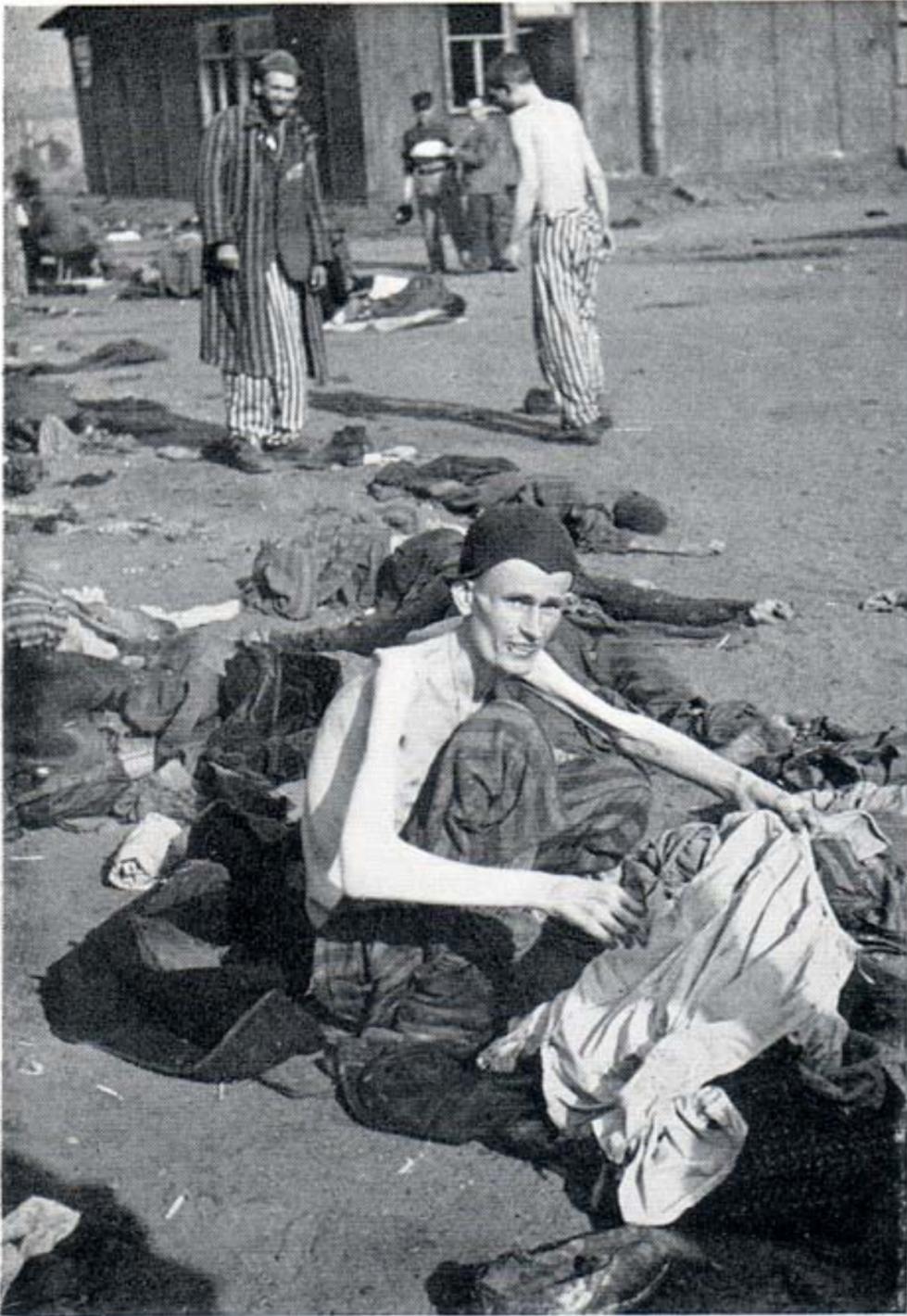
"But that doesn't explain his love of brutality, his sadism."



(LEFT) FAMILY REUNION: H. O. LE DRUILLIENEC, AFTER LIBERATION AND REHABILITATION, WITH HIS WIFE AND DAUGHTER MARY

(BELOW) EX-KZ. WITNESSES ON THE CAMP SITE AT BANTERWEG ('BANDITS' WAY'), WILHELMSHAVEN, NOTORIOUS FOR ITS 'VARIETY' OF SADISTIC TREATMENT





(LEFT) BELSEN: A LIVING SKELETON DE-LOUSING HIS CLOTHES

(BELOW) A GROUP OF FORMER WILHELMSHAVEN PRISONERS IN SWEDEN AFTER LIBERATION. THE PHOTOGRAPH SHOWS THE TYPICAL 'CONCENTRATION CAMP' EYES



(RIGHT) S.S. HAUPTSTURMFÜH-
RER JOSEF KRAMER, COMMAN-
DANT OF BELSEN CAMP



(BELOW) A 'WARD' IN THE
HOSPITAL AT BELSEN. MOST OF
THE INMATES WERE DYING OF
STARVATION, TYPHUS, OR DYSEN-
TERY





H. O. LE DRUILLENEC (LEFT) RE-UNITED WITH BERNARD DUPUY IN JERSEY

H. O. LE DRUILLENEC (RIGHT) WITH LLOYD GYBELS, THE MOTOR ENGINEER FROM BRUSSELS, BACK AT NEUEN GAMME CONCENTRATION CAMP

Note : All the illustrations in this section are reproduced from photographs taken after liberation. Where the ex-prisoners are obviously rehabilitated, the photographs were taken some years after the liberation of the various camps



THE MAN FROM BELSEN

"Doesn't it? Isn't it true that there exists in all people a certain sadistic element? The desire to dominate, the love of power—in civilised life these instincts are usually sublimated. They're satisfied by the normal rewards of a successful life—a position of authority, the regard of other men, possessions and so on. Now look at Omar. His faith in humanity is broken. He's seen how men behave when they're herded together like cattle, how easy it is to degrade them, to control them by playing on their fears. First he has become inured to suffering—thinks nothing of it. Then he begins to feel a pleasure in inflicting it. There's nothing to stop him, no social inhibitions, no qualms of conscience. Every crime makes the next one easier. He's encouraged to exert his power. So he does exert it, first in order to keep his job, afterwards because he enjoys it. And there's your Omar for you."

One of the younger prisoners, whose name was Martin, spoke angrily to Gybels.

"I wish I could share your understanding of the Block Alteste, Gybels,"

"Why? What happened?"

"I tried to get some extra food, that's all. I couldn't help it."

"You mustn't, Martin,"

Every beating you get weakens your resistance."

"I can't help it. I *must* have food!"

Gybels produced some bread and handed it to Martin.

"Here, kid, take some of this."

"Lloyd,"

"I think I told you it pays to keep in with the Chiefs."

"But they wouldn't give you food. Not all that much."

"Omar's made me night watchman. Very convenient being a night watchman. I have made a skeleton key. And with that key I can get into the kitchens."

"Lloyd, you know what will happen to you if this is discovered?"

Suddenly a German voice barked outside the hut. "No talking in the huts! Quiet there!"

Tensely we all waited as his footsteps faded.

"Aw, shucks, it won't be discovered,"

bread out of sight, for Pete's sake!"

Martin died not long afterwards, beaten to death for his repeated attempts to get extra food. De Frotté's tubercular cough

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grew worse. Moreau tried to cope with the increasing number of sick and dying men who crowded the Infirmary, but could do little.

Then came Christmas Day, 1944, and an experience I will never forget. We were assembled in the main hut. Every bench was crowded with prisoners, except for the two front rows of seats, which were empty. The stage was decorated. On the right, in front, was a large Christmas tree with lighted candles.

Then on to the stage marched eight men. They were the eight Prisoner Chiefs, Omar amongst them. Each man was a brutal homicide, responsible for the deaths and torture of many. In their hands were song sheets. The accordions struck up, and the Prisoner Chiefs sang:

"Stille nacht; Heilige nacht,
Alles Schlaft, einsam wacht,
Nur das traute hoch heilige Parr. . . ."

Silent Night; Holy Night: the ancient German carol. . . .

That was my last, abiding memory of Wilhelmshaven.

Alarmed by the intensified Allied bombing, the Germans decided to take the prisoners back to Neuen Gamme. Lloyd Gybels, Dupuy and Moreau went on foot. Le Druillenec, with de Frotté and Reynaud, went by train.

There were 450 of us in the column as we marched towards the waiting train. Those 450 men were forced into four wagons, approximately 120 men per wagon. We were in those wagons for five days and five nights, without food, without water, without sanitation. It would be impossible to convey to you the full horror of those five days and nights. You would have to hear the cries. You would have to smell the stench. You would have to experience the suffocating heat. Some men died of suffocation, others were killed in the struggle to get to the air-vents, many went mad before our eyes. There was a crisis when everyone got completely out of hand, clawing and tearing at each other to reach the ventilation, trampling the sick underfoot. Then an old French professor, who lay dying in one corner of the wagon, summoned up his last strength and raised his voice above the outcry.

"Gentlemen!" he cried. "Stop! Listen to me . . . gentlemen. . . . I wish to address you, please. . . . Gentlemen!"

Gradually the cries died down, and we were able to hear the Professor's words above the rhythm of the wheels.

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"I am very close to death. I realise that. And because I realise that I can see more clearly than you. I see, gentlemen, that, under these conditions, your only hope of life is to keep still. If you struggle, if you fight one another, you use up the precious air. So, please, try to keep as still as possible. Remember, you are all civilised men, Europeans, whatever these brutes have done to degrade you. Do what I ask you, and you may yet live. That is all, gentlemen. . . ."

He died a few minutes afterwards, and everyone was silent, while one of us spoke a prayer over his body.

Two days later we arrived at Luneberg. The train waited in the station for several hours. Then at midday we were attacked by American bombers. While the frenzied prisoners battered on the doors, shouting in many languages, the Bostons swooped over the station and dropped a stick of bombs on and around the train.

The third bomb hit the next wagon to ours. The door of our wagon was blown off. As we recovered from the shock, and the smoke drifted away, we poured out on to the track. I fell straight into the crater made by the second bomb, and lay there until the last wave of bombers had passed. Then I got to my feet. Those who had escaped were already looting from another train in the station, shouting like madmen. I limped across to a wrecked wagon—the first thing I found was a carton of matches. I had not seen a box of matches for a year. I sat on the steps of the wagon, striking the matches one by one and throwing them on to the track. Then the S.S. guard returned. They had fanned out into the fields during the raid. Now they closed the net again, and not one prisoner escaped.

The prisoners were divided into two parties. De Frotté was in the party left at Luneberg. The other group was taken on a long and terrible journey by road. With Le Druillenec travelled Colonel Reynaud, now very ill, and another friend, Pierre Baudu, a cattle merchant from Brittany. They thought they were going to Neuen Gamme, but at the end of the journey:

It was not Neuen Gamme. It was Belsen.

You have heard so many general descriptions of Belsen that I will not bore you by repeating them. You know about the decay, the filth, the stench from the unburied dead, although you cannot imagine these things. All I will tell you now, very briefly, is what happened to my companions and me during those last terrible days.

Second morning. Driven out of the crowded noisome hut at 3.30 a.m. Standing in the cold and driving rain for hours, waiting

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for food; we'd had nothing but a few scraps since leaving Wilhelms-haven. Colonel Reynaud very weak.

"At least they might give us some coffee," he kept saying.

Baudu approached us and asked in a subdued voice. "Have you seen that hut over there—the brick one? Have you, Colonel?"

"No."

"Come over with me. I'll show you."

We followed him and looked through the windows of the hut. There were fifteen

in neat, systematic rows, the crown of each head touching the chin of the next. Maybe 700 corpses per room. Fifteen rooms. . . .

Second night. More convoys arrive, filling the already overcrowded hut. Cannot lie down. Have to sit with legs apart, the next man between your knees. Daren't try to rise, or your space will be filled. Overhead, lying on planks, the sick and dying, most of them with dysentery. No escape. Locked in every night. Colonel getting weaker. Baudu still keeps his strength and spirits. . . .

Fifth night. Still more men crammed into Hut 13. Every morning many are too weak to crawl out. Even if they are still alive, they are officially dead and are dragged to the mortuary. Colonel too weak to move. Baudu and I have to carry him out. They must not take Colonel Reynaud. . . .

Sixth day. The prisoners are called together and addressed by the Camp Guards.

The Crematorium has stopped working, they tell us. The corpses are to be buried in great pits at the far end of the camp. We are ordered to drag the dead from the mortuary to the pits, tying strips of blanket around their ankles. . . .

Seventh day. They're filling the fourth pit. The number of bodies seems endless. Ten thousand men are at this task all day, yet there seems no end to it. Getting very weak. So is Baudu. We left Colonel Reynaud outside our hut this morning. Then, as we're passing through the mortuary yard:

"Harold! Look! It's Colonel Reynaud!"

Colonel Reynaud, lying in a stream of filth, among the dead.

The Colonel could only whisper. "I've been here all night. Can you get me some water?"

"We're going to get you out first," said Baudu.

"No use—the guard will stop you."

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"Will they? We'll see. Take his shoulders, Harold."

"It's no use, my friends. I'm finished anyway. . . ."

Both of us are so weak that we can hardly lift the Colonel, thin as he is. By luck we get him past the guard in a blanket and take him back to the hut. He is in great pain. Baudu has one cigarette. He tries to barter it for one litre of soup for Reynaud. He fails. Then the guards come with sticks and drive us back to the mortuary. When we get back that night, we find our friend has been taken back. He lies there all night and dies on the following day. . . .

Ninth day. I am finished. I've not eaten for five days, nor had a drink for six days. The work of filling the pits goes on, but we dodge it. Ostrich-like, we hide our heads under a blanket, perfectly convinced that even though the rest of our bodies are visible, the guards will not see us. They beat us and drive us out again. We get up and pretend to go. Then when they've gone we go back.

On the tenth day there is a murmur throughout the camp, and distant rifle shots. Baudu comes to me. He is excited. Says the British are near. But I can only think:

"What if the British *are* coming? They'll be too late. We shall die before they arrive, or be shot."

Later that day we hear heavy explosions in the distance. Again Baudu comes to me, trying to make my dulled mind realise what is happening.

"Harold, it's true! The British must be very near! Those are their guns! They must be all around the camp." Then, seeing the state I am in, he adds quietly: "There's some fresh grass outside Block 26. I've eaten some. It's good. Try it. It'll do you good."

"There are tanks on the Celle-Winsen road!" says Baudu. "Harold, I said tanks! British or American tanks with a white star on them! Wake up and listen! The guards have gone! People are looting the kitchens. Come with me! The gates are open! . . ."

With little Baudu by my side, I staggered to the compound gateway. It was open. Prisoners were pouring on to the central road of the camp. I saw, drawn up by the roadside, a British radio truck, with officers sitting in it. I *thought* I rushed up to them, but they told me afterwards that I crawled there. The car was just going to move.

"Wait . . . wait! Please! I am a British subject."

"What's your name?" asked an officer, Captain Sington.

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"Harold Le Druillenec. I'm from the Channel Islands."

"Harold Le Druillenec? Well, I'm not making a practice of this, but you'd better come with us. No, I think you'd better sit on the bonnet. That's better! No, I'm sorry I can't take your friend. He'll be seen to very soon. Drive on!"

"Good-bye, Harold," called Baudu. "You'll write to me, won't you?"

So, on April 16th, I left Belsen, sitting on the bonnet of a British radio truck because I was too lousy and dirty to be allowed inside. I weighed some ninety pounds, and when I saw myself in the mirror for the first time, I looked behind to see who was there. The Army treated me with infinite kindness, and in a few days I was in a hospital in England. Some months later, when I returned to give evidence at the Belsen trial, I went to Luneberg to discover what had happened to my 150 comrades who had been left behind, only to find their graves. We learned from a signalman whose box overlooked the field that after a fortnight the S.S. guards lined up the prisoners, then shot them in batches. Among those who perished was my dear friend Jean de Frotté, who had endured and suffered so much. Of the 450 men who left Wilhelmshaven, about twenty-five survived.

Such is my story.

Now why, you may ask, should we wish to recall these horrors? Why not forget? I can sympathise with such a viewpoint. I, too, often wish I could forget. And yet, at other times, I think that such stories should be remembered.

The concentration camp is a new weapon, new as gunpowder was in the fifteenth by which a totalitarian State can control millions through fear: not fear of death, but of a living death. I believe that wherever a State achieves total power, wherever free speech and criticism are denied, and power is not subject to democratic control, unscrupulous men will be tempted to use this weapon again. Surely, if civilisation is to survive, we must preserve at all costs a humane and liberal way of life.

Finally, may I ask you to regard this, not as a record of one man's personal sufferings, but as a memorial to all the millions who perished in that twentieth-century hell of man's creating, the Konzentrationslager.