Charles Odic

# "STEPCHILDREN" of FRANCE

*Translated from the French by*
HENRY NOBLE HALL

ROY PUBLISHERS · NEW YORK

PRINTED AND BOUND IN THE U. S. A. BY
KINGSPORT PRESS, INC., KINGSPORT, TENN.

# *Publisher's Note*

THE author of this book is a distinguished French physician, member of an old Catholic family of Brittany. At the time his manuscript was scheduled for publication it was the intention of the Publisher—at the request of the author's family—that it be issued under a pseudonym concealing the author's true identity. This was necessary because the author had been seized by the Germans and interned as a hostage in the infamous concentration camp of Buchenwald. He knew too much and had seen too much of the blessings of Nazi *kultur* in his native Paris to be allowed at large by Hitler and his collaborationists.

Now Dr. Odic is back in Paris, his safety and the safety of his family no longer require the shield of anonymity.

Here then, seen through the compassionate eyes of a distinguished practitioner, is a record which presents the naked and shameful truth of a black chapter in the history of mankind.

# "STEPCHILDREN"
# of
# FRANCE

# Contents

# "STEPCHILDREN"
# of
# FRANCE

CHAPTER

I

# *How the Truck Driver Felt*

WHEN I STARTED to investigate the persecution of the Jews in Paris, chance threw me across Allanet, a truck driver. It was not the racial problem that led us into conversation. Allanet, in front of my door, was struggling with his truck which refused to budge. They were no mean opponents. The truck—a huge and ancient American lorry—obstinately silent, blocked half the street. In front of it an enormous pair of shoulders rose and fell with the rhythm of a dance. In vain. The truck would not come to life. It did so at last and so suddenly that the pair of shoulders was sent hurtling through space. I went to render aid.

A kickback of the crank had broken the truck driver's arm. This accident, which did not seem to bother him very much, was what led to our acquaintance.

"I work for the Boches," he said, just as simply as he might have told me he was working at Renault's. "Their money doesn't cost them much."

That was all. Later on, with some misgiving, I asked the truck driver how he liked working for the Boches. He was the kind of man who has little use for sentiment. Powerful, a nose like a doorknob, a round and ruddy face with small, sharp eyes,

all neck and torso and fists, he was evidently not one of those Frenchmen that defeat had hit hard.

"One has got to know them," he answered, "there are no worse swine!"

"Have they treated you badly?"

"Are you joking? Just look at me." He bunched up the muscles of his uninjured arm.

"Then don't they pay you well?"

"One can't complain. No one is more thick-headed than a Boche, but there is no worse grafter. I make a good living."

"Well?"

The truck driver looked at me with an almost painful stare, and mastering the anger that shook his bulky frame, said:

"What disgusts me is to have to eat their bread. One has to have an empty belly. I'm not talking about the war. The Boches live by it—that's the truth. So much the worse for us. We were blind. We were beaten. There's nothing to say. One had to get along somehow, but . . ."

"What?"

"There are things that open your eyes."

After a moment's silence, the truck driver went on.

"I was on duty with my truck at the Velodrome d'Hiver."

I was struck by the curiously solemn way Allanet said "Velodrome d'Hiver." If he had been talking of bicycle races, he would have said "Vel. d'Hiv."

"To have seen that was plenty. D'you hear. There's no worse vermin than the Boches. That day I said to myself 'You're in it. You're wise to them. They'll lose nothing by waiting for what's coming to them.' "

"Was it as bad as that?"

"Bad! . . . (he pointed to his plaster cast). Better twenty

little things like this than to see such a beastly sight again. Just imagine. Women and kiddies, people like you see in the street, brought up by carloads, in bunches. Even if they had done wrong one would have felt for them, just seeing them. There they were, half awake, knowing nothing, crowded together like sardines in a can. And they were being driven forward with kicks on their backsides, with punches in the ribs. And the place was filling up, like a rising tide. With a sound like dirty linen. They were sweating all they knew. Not that it was warm! So much suffering before one's eyes. I couldn't stand looking at them. It was too awful. They came in droves. Shoving each other like sheep, not quite sure what was happening to them. Knocked silly by such brutality. There were all kinds, poor devils who looked like nothing on earth, others, too, who had never known want. The Boches, they took no notice, they did their job as a matter of course, as if they were cleaning their nails. Then they left the Jews herded close together, without anything, no facilities, no decency. Had to crap under each others' noses. Their teeth rattled. Suffered a thousand deaths. Some of them just died on the track. Their carcasses lay where they fell. Even the kids didn't want to play. All day long we drove them in by truck loads. 'Move on faster. There's one for you on the jaw.' They bent their backs. They didn't know what it was all about. Nor did the Boches. That was the worst of it. One had more than enough. I had to hold my head. You think a man can stand seeing things like that? No! The Boche is worse than a beast. A beast wouldn't do such things. As we were saying with my pal, ' 'Tisn't over yet. Tomorrow's another day. They'll hear from us. They have the nerve to do that in front of Frenchmen? Might as well give us guns, while they're about it.' "

CHAPTER

II

# *Sammy*

WHAT THE truck driver, Allanet, had said gave me food for thought. His reaction to the frightful scenes he had witnessed was to say to his friend, "Might as well give us guns, while they're about it." That was no thought-up phrase. It came from the heart out. Was I glad of it? Certainly not. All Frenchmen are capable of such reactions and such words. The patriot within me is happy to see such reactions and to hear such words. Failing something more subtle, everything that arouses the virtue of a people, everything that arms it for the war of liberty, everything that causes it to rise amid its moral values and the tasks that await it, can but please me. And then a Frenchman never measures better the insurmountable abyss that separates him from his neighbor across the Rhine than when he is revolted by some barbarous deed that the latter finds quite natural and even commendable. Are we not the trustees of humanity, periodically devastated by the *furor teutonicus*?

But it costs so little to pity the Jews, or even to avenge them when one has an account to settle with their oppressors. The open wound is there, it bleeds, it threatens.

Who will bend over those wounds? Who will dress them?

Who will stanch the blood? Who will bandage and unbandage? Who will find the soothing words, that console and make one forget? Who will push back a lock of hair from a damp brow? Who will make the wounds smile? Who will return the children to their playthings and the old people to their ways? Who will heal these and bury those? Who will restore each day to each heart its magic?

Hands are needed, the softness and the care of hands.

Pious hands, joyous hands, soothing and sunny hands, graceful and attentive hands!

Always those hands follow the herd of deportees who have no other help. The Germans may wall-in pain to make it more atrocious, strike down their victims, murder them, violate their corpses, do away with even the semblance of a human being, of the peace it loved, of the form it took; they may extinguish all the torches whose smoky flames gave to our fetes an air of gaiety, pious hands, joyous hands, sometimes caught sight of but often only sensed, will continue their humane task, will wreath the tortured and the doomed with garlands ever green and ever flowering. Hands that eyes about to close will see. Hands that will close those eyes despite the oppressor.

Some women had a clear conception of their duty. I am sorry that among them I met no German. Some women took up their combat posts at the doors of prisons, in the neighborhood of camps, beside hospital beds in which come to die, without being left in peace, those of the deported who have fallen.

The man is no longer alone; the Jew has a shelter. The man is no longer accursed; the Jew has an ear that listens and a voice that exhorts. The man is no longer miserable; the Jew has a package he can open, a letter he can read and he knows

that the child he left behind is being taken care of, is warm and plays. There is something on the other side of the barbed wire, outside the cattle car that rolls filled with human refuse toward an unknown and fearful destination, a grave, a Polish salt mine, or the last spasm of a shot animal. The soul of the doomed resumes its luster. Humanity heavily takes flight again over death. It resuscitates.

The Jew! Even if in his distress he has nothing but the thought that someone thinks of him, that some stranger of his own free will thinks of him not as an entity, a symbol, a dogma, an emotion, a screed, but as him, Henri, Samuel, James, Moses, furrier, bellboy, jeweler, tax collector or carpet salesman, he lives again. He emerges from his pauper's grave.

Is it surprising that in this work of rescue, fervent Christian women took part? To them it was as gratifying as to look upon some ancient image that they love. When He fell, the Jews helped Him to bear His cross. The cross will not be allowed to press down on Jewish shoulders alone. I have known slender shoulders that bore it with all the grace of a pearl necklace.

Sammy made me understand how much has to be done to perfect a rescue.

Sammy is four years old. He is a Jew. So I am told. The nest "made in Paris" that housed him, the little hothouse where he flourished, is destroyed. Father deported. No news of him. In Poland? Beneath the sod. No one knows. No one ever found the heap of flesh or the pool of blood the Nazi left of him. In turn the mother was deported. There remains of her but an offering. When leaving she gave to an unknown woman the most precious thing she had, and then buried her head in her hands. The Germans had torn her from her only joy, she has but one hope that her joy may survive her. Not

entirely. A little girl just a few years older than Sammy was deported, too. Another one was able to escape and has been hidden in the country like the wheat, like the pig, like hope beneath the mask of everyday life.

Samuel, the little animal that answers to the name of Sammy when he is called, lives with the unknown woman while she tries to find a better hiding place for him. The unknown spoils him. In her heart beat the hearts of all women. That heart of love and pity is a source that is never dry, a fountain open to all who are defenseless. The child has its share.

I watch the child. The first day he upsets me. He has learned terrible things. It is damnable to think that a child of four has been able to make such discoveries. First he has learned to be silent. People are silent. People must be silent. Some animal prowls around you. One does not know what it is like, but it exists and is very wicked. It must not be allowed to hear you. Other children prattle to their hearts' content, but they are not Jews. Sammy has learned something even more terrible. At four years one must have no longings, one must let oneself drift.

"Jew" is a word that Sammy hears with mouth agape. He will say it later on but rarely, without appearing to do so, pretending not to dwell upon it. One day he will say in great secrecy to a grownup who is everything to him: "Say, you are quite sure I'm not a Jew?" and when he is told, "Of course not. You are not a Jew. Don't you see that you don't wear a star," he will sigh, "Thank God."

But at first Sammy did not carry his feelings on his sleeve. Danger—Drancy—is perhaps on the stairs, perhaps even behind a smile.

The child is so much on his guard, tries to make himself so inconspicuous that in a spacious apartment where everything amazes him, he looks around with unseeing eyes for fear his astonishment will betray him. With grownups, whose presence should frighten or excite him, he assumes an attitude of dull docility, making believe that all the little world within him has disappeared. He will come running like a well-trained animal when his name is called, but one hears nothing but the patter of his little feet, a soft and padding sound. He is particularly attentive to the call of the kitchen. He will eat and eat and eat, politely, patiently, gluttonously with silent application.

After all, since it pleases one's host and gives you pleasure, eating is not likely to be compromising.

I thought what a pretty picture he made with his blue eyes and golden hair, with his plump little body, but how dumb.

I ought to have thought, "How deeply he is wounded and how lonely with his wound, this *bambino* one could so easily imagine smiling to eternity in the arms of the Virgin of Ombria."

In a few days the knot untied, giving free rein to the treasury of childhood. Everyone around him was so calm, so happy, so far from raids, so far from Drancy. Hour followed hour, as game followed game. The unknown woman knitted and, without dropping a stitch, gave him a look, a caress of the eye, as quick as a wink. A look that made him feel so good.

Besides Sammy had found a real pal, a big boy who could work a little auto that had everything, and the little auto wasted its energy on the thick carpet, and could even run backward. One day it was yellow, and the next red. In no

time, one could play garage owner, repair man or have a smashup.

Above all, the unknown woman was careful to prevent any echo of the whirlwind, in which he had been caught up, from reaching Sammy, anything that might recall that nightmare. It was not without difficulty that the bad dream was dispelled. It took a real illness to get rid of it. Sammy fell sick, an attack of tonsillitis like so many children. I saw him in his cot, with his playthings that he treasured so, with his temperature that left his temper unruffled, with his placid acceptance of a trial that he met with calm and open eyes, a mouth resigned to the injunctions of the medicine spoon, a little soul still locked up. It is in sickness that the child belongs to the woman. It is then that she takes possession of what is hers, and that it gives itself to her. She opens it like a book and the letters appear on the white page. I remember once that in his fevered sleep Sammy called out. The unknown who was talking to me in the next room dashed out to him. The world is motionless compared to that movement. The unknown was fulfilling her mission. In the black void left by a mother, the other woman rushed in with a compelling sense of predestination: childhood was being reborn.

Sammy remained good—it was probably his nature—but he babbled, he ran about, he came and went in the whirligig that animates the life of a four-year-old. He loved to play with the telephone. The voice that told the time intrigued him. To his questions it turned a deaf ear. He used to go to the Tuileries, hand in hand with his friend. He was interested in the merry-go-round, but even more in the Punch and Judy show.

Yes, Sammy had come to life.

Every evening he went down on his knees and prayed for his mother to the God of all men. A discreet prayer, cut by silence. His mother was his innermost soul, the secret garden. He thought of her more than he spoke of her. He would not give up his last secret.

The seal of the mother was upon the child, and the child felt it and felt that he belonged to her alone.

The forsaken, the imprisoned, the tortured woman whose offspring had been torn from her, the woman—dead perhaps —was always present and her presence cried not for vengeance but for life, and life responded.

It was vast as a church, the presence of the mother incarnated, like the child Christ, as human and as divine.

One day I caught a glimpse of the mother, her last life, her survival, as modest as the first kiss.

Sammy sitting alongside the phonograph was singing. He was accompanying a disk that his mother must often have sung to with her little brood. He was singing very simply, with his little four-year-old voice, with at times a trace of intensity in his diction, but with no intonation and happily with no intention. He sang without the modulation, the precise melody for which grownups strive, but within the syncopated range, in the plain song which four-year-olds achieve if they have ear. He sang gravely, his mouth pure, his look lost on the last rung of memory, with the pleasure of a child to whom his own are listening.

He sang of his mother's happy days. Like that, all alone, the ordinary happy days of a midinette, her heart moistened with a drop of wine, cuddled against her man on the last suburban train. He sang the latest hit whose cheap sentiment offered consolation to some luckless swain. How commonplace and

yet how harrowing it was. He sang the song his mother loved, he was picking up the crumbs of his destroyed home. He was merely singing the joys of peace in some forgotten street where a mother adores her children and strings out the happy days of her love for them, one by one.

There was one chorus into which the youngster swung with delight. It ran something like this:

It happened on a Sunday
On the river's mossy bank.

The child remembered, and the mother listened. We listened with the mother's ears, we listened for her. She had invited us into her home, she had nothing to hide from us now.

And everything came to life.

Blessed birth of joyous or sorrowful hours that take their wing from the dwelling of a Jew, alike in every way to all the dwellings wherein live the people of Paris.

Birth of Paris where all races have the same laughter, and all tongues the same accent.

Birth of a radiant phantom that stretches out its arms in love, and this phantom we see so white, so pure, is that of an unhappy mother who somewhere is all alone, torn by all the agony a human being can suffer.

Birth of a sacred right of the Jews to live like everybody else. That is the miracle wrought by the unknown woman with a child, a phonograph and the heart of a woman.

If God so ordains, Sammy will be a man like all other men. He will forget his mother and the unknown woman. What matter? Just as if without knowing it he had lived in a German prison and survived he would have carried the marks of violence and crime from which he could never have rid himself,

so now without knowing it he will carry within him his mother and the unknown woman. The better man he becomes the greater their influence will be.

By such means it is that mankind achieves its imperishable destiny.

CHAPTER

III

# *Suffer Little Children to Come Unto Me!*

PROPAGANDA PICTURES are among the most finished products of German industry.

This is not surprising if one remembers that the least lucid German holds the search for truth—so ardently pursued by man at the cost of cruel disillusion and foolish error—to be the most dangerous and reprehensible activity in which one can indulge, and that photography betrays truth with a maximum of security. A photographic document can be made to say anything, no matter how idiotic. The machine to warp men's minds has no smoother cog.

Photography cuts out of time and space a snapshot that appeals only to our senses, that impresses upon them a fact without head or tail. Not everyone can replace it in its true perspective. So the pages of German publications printed in French—*Signal, l'Illustration* and others of lesser ilk—are covered with pictures of carnage due to air bombardment, and the most prominently displayed are always those of dead children. How many little bodies have we seen pinned to the sidewalk, victims of war, whose innocence had not sufficed to shield them from a falling bomb, "victims of Anglo-American barbarity" as the pitiless German brutes say.

One can be sure, if one's mind is still working, that no airman ever aimed at those children, whose misfortune it was to be left near some war factory, some railroad junction, some antiaircraft battery. But the children of the Jews owed their tragic fate neither to chance nor to imprudence. Their parents dwelt in France. They had chosen our country to live in under the protection of French law. In vain! The conquering enemy spared the children no more than the parents, no more than anyone, no more than France whose law he violated, whose customs he trampled underfoot. He tortured, decimated, imprisoned the children of the Jews. The death of those children was not caused by a crumbling wall behind which they sheltered. Two-year-olds were deported like grownups, although rolling stock was scarce. Later on even newborn babes were deported. Yes, little children were deported, too. They were torn from the breasts and the lips of their mothers; they were packed into sealed cattle cars and carried for nights and nights —for there were no more days in their rolling prison—there were only nights, more or less gray, more or less silent, nights without any place to lay their head, nights that never ended. They died one on top of the other, died of hunger, of thirst, of exhaustion, of fright, of lonesomeness, of dirt, of disease, of abandonment.

It was enough if the first day they threw themselves upon their bucket of slops, for them to have nothing the next day and the next, for them never to need to eat again. It was enough if the bucket fell over from a bump of the train. It was enough if God took pity on those eyes, that stared so hard at him in the darkness, for him to close them. And when the train reached its destination and the doors were pushed back, there, on the putrid litter, little bodies were piled up that no

longer breathed, poor little worms that no longer moved. Since when? Who could say? Certainly not the staggering tots who leaned toward the light with renewed fear, who shrank from the faces of men.

Those dead! It was not a bomb that broke the spring of their life. Their agony was distilled drop by drop. They suffered to the last breath, nothing was spared them. In a few days they unwound all the pessimism that men take a long life to discover, their light failed when they could go on no longer. Suddenly torture had broken the fragile container in which it had been enclosed. The child had no longer been able to bear the curse, the meaning of which he did not know. He had passed from the mirage of fairyland and of play to the death throes of a wild animal.

He had escaped from Hitler, but how much better if it had been through a British or an American bomb. For days longer than centuries on the calendar of humanity, his features had expressed things they were never meant to express. No one was there to watch and smooth out that expression, no woman, not even a Nazi nurse, one of those gray mice, without grace or beauty who are so proud to show the women of Paris, who despise them, that they still wear silk stockings.

For a Jewish child to escape Hitler seems almost a blessing of heaven, for we do not dare to think of what happens to those who do not die. We know the Nazi well enough to be sure that if they had put them in model crèches, if they had given them good food, if they had taught them hymns or war songs, if they had ceased to torture them, we should have been told about it. We should have been flooded with photographs. But the German is silent. When our workmen deported to forced labor are brutalized only half a dozen times a day, when

starving they are still able to stand up, their fervor and their Eden-like bliss is described to us in dithyrambic terms, but nothing is ever said about the Jews carried off into captivity. Nothing but the silence that falls upon them, as spadefuls of earth fall upon an open grave, nothing but the cruelty, the savagery, the inhumanity of those deportations, so many details of which are nauseating. We understand. If the executioners remain silent, it is that they have overstepped the limits of the admissible.

In France, in miserable and conquered France, whose principal reason for rebirth derives from the disdain inspired by an enemy without dignity, mothers did not remain insensible to the anguish of mothers. The Jewish child found as many mothers as there were French women to witness its distress. Each of those women felt herself immensely a mother, the mother of Samuel, of Isaac, of Sara, of Eli, of Simon, of Susanah, the mother of all children without protection on earth. Children cannot live without the care and caresses of women! Face to face with crime, there rose a conspiracy of motherhood.

No tortured Jewess stretched forth her hands in vain for someone to take her burden. As she passed on without her offspring, other arms were nursing her fruit.

Go ask those improvised mothers, go ask those women who were mothers before they were born, if the child they adopted, that they hide with the fury of a tigress, is perchance of another race, an accursed, rotten and maleficent race. It is a child, as the mother is a cradle.

This unknown woman never sought Monsieur Gobineau's advice. She became the mother of Sammy before another woman could take over from her, for she had shouldered the

task of saving the threatened children, the Jewish children. She saved them every week, sometimes every day. Thus in her resplendent haste she had become the mother of a regular ghetto, a ghetto that looked like a well-kept nursery, with cries and laughter refound. She would like to draw to it all Jewish children, those who have already left, those who no one has thought to protect. But above all she is the portal, the portal of motherly love, and behind her women she had never known before come one after the other to take a child and leave. Each of them takes a little hand in her hand, presses a little heart upon her heart, listens to a little voice, unlocks a little soul. Each of them will pass sleepless nights watching over a child to which she is bound only by its misfortune. She could not let it suffer without suffering. She will deny herself bread that it may have its fill. She will wait long hours to get milk for it. She will sew and knit all day, dreaming dreams, that it may be pretty and well kept. With lavish hands she will give what another can no longer give, and when she effaces the memory of the other woman it will be to relieve the anxiety she reads at times in the eyes of the child. Meanwhile the other woman joins her hands in prayer and trusts that it is so. She will survive because her child will live.

As I go over my files, two letters fall out, two brief notes from the other woman to the new mother, to she who was unknown to her yesterday, to the mother of the endless chain of mothers, and a second note to her child.

One of the doomed, a Mrs. Segal, wrote from Drancy.

> "A mother in tears begs you to do what you can for her little boy. Do your best to make him happy. Please give him this note. Pardon my troubling you. I thank you."

The note is not effusive. It ignores the charming virtue of words. But it suffices. It suffices for she who writes it and she who reads it, to understand each other. The little note enclosed is sober, too. It is addressed to Gilles Segal, eleven years old.

"My darling pet.

"I hasten to write you this note which I hope will reach you. Be good and courageous . . . We do not know whether we leave today. In any case I know you will be well taken care of. I am so sorry about your second helping of chicken. But I hope we shall have a real feast when we get back. Have courage. Words fail me, but we always think of you. Think of us too. Many kisses from mother. A good kiss."

Words fail her. That is true. But a good kiss, the last kiss of a mother, signs this testamentary letter. For the Germans there was but the body of a woman from which life was to be extracted, as one extracts a decayed tooth, the tooth and the caries together; but for the child there was a kiss, a good kiss that floated through space before dying on its lips.

In this letter of a mother, so short, so complete, so unskilled, so pudic, one phrase moves me: "You will be well taken care of." It is an act of faith. It is a tragedy.

Not quite. In the thoughts of the mother about her departure mingles a regret, the memory of a domestic comedy that suddenly becomes important, of another helping of chicken that Gilles wanted and didn't get. They were so upset with the police car waiting downstairs. It was a misunderstanding. From the treasury of a mother's conscience, this final consolation, "I hope we shall have a real feast when we get back."

Should I have become an unfortunate shade hidden beneath the sod, I will prepare for you the feast of myself.

"Words fail me."

A little girl, Gilles's sister, had thought to add a few words to the letter:

"Our thoughts are with you especially at night. Mother is afraid you feel bad because she forgot to give you another helping of chicken when we were leaving. But I am sure you never thought about it. Be courageous and strong.

"Sonia.

"P. S. Daddy says to add, 'Have a will to win.'"

Daddy had to appear ridiculous, to transpose his suffering and his emotion for trumpets and drums. What was the use of talking about the "will to win" to an eleven-year-old Jew, persecuted and beaten and abandoned to fate.

When the first deportations began the children were not forgotten. At that time the Germans carried off only men. The women watched over their brood even more passionately. Many who had only what they could make to live on felt the pinch of want but they never neglected their little ones. Soon it was the turn of the women to be deported. The children had to be abandoned. The concierge, a neighbor, a parent, an elder sister took care of the little ones, but often these people were very poor, anxious for themselves, already on the threshold of hell. Finally Moloch grew hungry for tender flesh. He became interested in the tiny tots as soon as they could walk, and treated them as if they had arrived at the age of expiation. The defense began to organize.

Defense could only be private. Vichy was busy satisfying the demands and justifying the abuses of its masters. Vichy dilapidated the heritage of the nation with an obscure passion. One might have thought it was anxious for France to disappear. From the outset it had given up our prisoners and aban-

doned our rights, with the fastidiousness of a heavy father. Vichy thought that Germany would not believe in its disinterestedness, in its detachment. Vichy was not going to protect the Jews, it was not going to respect the blood of Jews who died in the service of their country. It even made up its mind to seize this opportunity to show Berlin how zealous it was, make an indecent exposure of itself, striking at the Jews without reason, without dignity, for the mere pleasure of collaborating and besmirching itself. The secretariat, the ministry, the office of Jewish affairs, were all speakeasies where crooks and adventurers who lived by their wits indulged in lucrative anti-Semitism, where they made the most out of conditions, battened on the loot of Jewish fortunes, of Jewish picture galleries, of Jewish art collections, of Jewish business, but treated with even greater severity the poor Jews who could not even afford a bribe.

As a Frenchman, I cannot deny my underlying a-Semitism. Pro-Semitism is a fable or a conspiracy. All Jews are not praiseworthy citizens. There is no reason that in our French nation they should enjoy favored treatment or a special status, overt or covert. They are either French or they are not. It is France that is injured when they are hurt, and exactly to the extent that they are part of her. To all French people, without distinction of class or creed or origin, belonged the honor to protect Jewish children, a right no Jew could deny us.

The unknown woman in whose house I met Sammy, the great French woman who succeeded in grouping around her an ardent team of Parisiennes, united for a national purpose, so understood it. Born in a country where there are no Jews she had no difficulty in seeing her wards as human beings, bad more often than good, middling more often than bad, but

cloaked in a peculiar and intangible dignity, men the worst of whom were worth the sacrifices of the best among us, and the children of those men as what they meant to their mothers.

Her co-workers, Jewesses or Gentiles at will, showed themselves equal in their devotion, their audacity, their activity. It was comforting to see those wonderful women coming in from some outlying district difficult of access, muddy, unkempt, but happy in their fatigue to which a human creature owed being still a child.

Her program was simple. Action without delay, without allowing herself to be hindered by scruples or doctrines, without arguing, to snatch as many children as she could from the clutches of the enemy, to hide them, camouflage them, feed them, clothe them, give them back to life and joy. There was never any question whether they were Christians or Jews. It was up to God to recognize his own. At every kidnaping a battle was won against death and suffering, a victory in the service of soldierless France.

I saw strange things, strange enough to give an orthodox rabbi apoplexy: among others a Christmas with a tree all lighted up and surrounded with playthings. The children had been brought from their hiding places and hospital cots. They romped around; their tongues untied. Martyrdom may do its best to bring forth children who have lived in the camp at Drancy or only in its shadow, and are wise, thoughtful and secretive. Children's parties belong to all children and come to them from all the Gods of creation. They never say no. Nobody said no. Arms stretched out, hands made shadows from the flame of candles. The little Jews had their little Christmas of mystic joy. Everybody was happy, everybody had his or her share of presents and of childhood.

Those little Jews should have been at Drancy under the wing of the Vichy police. Defeat was a touchstone for the valets of authority, police in uniform or in mufti. When they maintained order and order appeared essential to our safety, no one excused their brutality, but we blamed it on their lack of intelligence and tact, on their heavy-handedness. But when France was conquered and the one and only thing to do was to defend the fatherland, or to betray it, the violence used against the victims of the enemy became loathsome crimes. They were legion. The anthology of crime swelled prodigiously. The "we only do what we're told" men have no excuse. If they needed the money of Vichy, they could have earned it more decently. The reborn nation owes them a few volleys. Gendarmes, police of the Rue Greffuhle and of the Quai des Orfevres, furnished the bestial record of crime with some of its most repugnant figures.

Yes those children might have been at Drancy, exposed to the insults and blows of the police. In the camp were barracks for children accompanied by their mothers and barracks for children alone. No one knows which was the more atrocious. Ignominy rapidly reaches a ceiling that cannot be exceeded.

In a place filled with thousands upon thousands of human beings so different in aspect, class, manners, tastes, language, that the name of Jew which covered them all seemed as much a generality as if they had been called men, the *genus homo* of this earth, in such a place there reigns complete misery and ferocious hate; misery unknown even to those who have never been blessed with anything, side by side with unjust hate. Misery and hate whet each other. Each blames his neighbor for their common lot. The French blame the foreigners for belonging to the country whence they came, and for not hav-

ing stayed there; the foreigners blame the French for despising them and remaining aloof, being indignant at being confused with them. The poor blame the rich for their wealth that excited the cupidity of the Nazi. The rich cannot forgive the poor their manners. The intellectuals cannot bear the merchants, who understand them no better than if they spoke Sanskrit.

If the Jews were really Jews they would be less miserable. Each of them belongs to another tribe, to another little country. Side by side they have been chained together, the builders of the tower of Babel, and they fight among themselves. They almost forget the Germans and their valets who try to change them from place to place, sometimes every week to prevent those friendships that even galley slaves form for each other, taking habits, to prevent them seeing each other, feeding each other off the hunger share of others. So the enemy is the Pole who spits on your feet, the writer who does not even speak to you; in the turnover of slavery, the enemy is always the face that replaces the face of yesterday. Man ever delays giving his friendship and the Nazi who is well aware of that fact does not give them time to love one another. He makes them live on the antipathy of first contacts.

As regards degradation and bestiality the barracks of women with children surpassed all others. There were almost as many tigresses ready to devour the young of others as there were mothers. Maternity is a windowless cell. Crazed by the fear of coming separation, these women whose sole possession was the sordid child they never left for a moment, the child they saw sinking into a stupor more horrible than death, a stupor that neither their arms nor their lamentations could alter, hated everything that might deprive their offspring of air,

bread, milk, or even make it smile. The child of the woman next to her would be allowed to die without even a glance, she might almost have stolen its bedding, but if it were replaced an hour later by the child of another and if that other managed by some motherly miracle to bring laughter to her infant's lips, she would rise up ready to bite, to scratch, to kill.

One day I was questioning a woman who had escaped from Drancy, and she described a scene she had witnessed the week before.

When the hour for soup arrives, a washtub filled with a brownish liquid called cocoa is placed in the center of the barracks on a bed of dung and dirt. Like so many hungry and snarling animals, the mothers throw themselves upon it shoving the others aside. Each brandishes her half pint, uses it as a weapon to beat her neighbor and when at last by dint of hips and elbows and nails she succeeds in plunging it into the hot liquid, she has difficulty in withdrawing from the melee and often does not escape the violence of the others. Then there is a new struggle, more vicious than before. In such a scene one would be put to it to find a single gesture that was not revolting.

At last the thing so greatly feared happens. During a special roll call she hears her name. The tigress rises. That name. Her name. The tigress is on the list. She is to be deported alone. The child is not to follow. He remains abandoned here or elsewhere. She leaves for another cage, a cage whence none has ever returned, charnel house or salt mine, but she leaves alone, they do not even give her time to kill her little one. Where she is going, people dig their own graves if ever they get there, that is a detail. The last blow is hard enough to make

one forget even Drancy, but it is nothing. In camp everyone trembles at the idea of leaving. One feels oneself suspended over an even darker abyss. That is the masterstroke of the Nazis, but the tigress wouldn't care if only she didn't have to go alone, to live on alone. She is to be separated from the fruit of her womb. An hour before she had some reason to live a little longer. That reason is torn from her. For it alone she had lived. All day long, all night long, she bore that child again. She shut her heart so that nothing else could enter it. Was she miserable? She never even felt it when he was with her. But now she is to suffer all alone on her own account, her womb unclosed. And she screams. Her little one is torn from her. They are taking off a wild beast. She claws, she bites, they knock her unconscious, they bind her! Next please. Hitler's will has been done. The woman, carried off bound and thrown behind the barbed wire where she will wait for hours before being searched and thrown into the cattle car, is nothing but mangled flesh.

A dazed child follows a man with a gun; a discolored blanket on the floor in a corner of the room; a mother watching for the coming of soup, she takes her half pint and turns watching the door. Summer is ending? Spring is near? No one knows. Only dung rising higher and higher, no one can still make out in the mass of faces, things that can still be called a face.

A ten-year-old boy, nicknamed "Would you believe, Madame," is talking with a prisoner. A sociable kid. Whenever anybody stops he draws near so nicely and tells a little story, his own. He doesn't seek an answer. From time to time he raises his eyes and when he has finished he just stays there.

He waits to be driven off or for people to go away. He begins by apologizing for using a name that is not his own, or for not using his own name. He is not quite sure which.

"I lost my papers, would you believe, Madame? Then they told me my name wasn't my name, so I no longer know. I have no name."

But he had a family, and takes stock of it. He tosses his little head.

"They deported my daddy."

With calm eyes he follows the howling wake of a mother carried off screaming, and in even tones continues:

"They also took away my mother, would you believe, Madame? She was only sixteen, my sister, when they took her, would you believe, Madame?"

The nameless family was a large one.

"But you, little man, are still here?"

"Oh," he answers doubtingly, and he dreams as he picks his little nose.

He just reaches your waist. He looks all around him. He follows scenes which have been familiar to him for months. He waits.

The barracks for children without mothers are kept by volunteers. These improvised mothers love their task and give themselves to it. They no longer feel prisoners but if one of them dares, overcoming her apathy, to do a little cleaning or arranging she is at once replaced by another or thrown into a cell. Her joy in well-doing was bolshevist-capitalist propaganda.

As a rule the children who are given over to volunteers are the most miserable. Little children crucified on the swastika. "Mother, why did you abandon me?" They have nothing to

lose but their lives. They have been dragged from one camp to another. They have known all sorts of raids, successive evictions, capture. If they left in a group, brothers and sisters together, they have lost each other on the way. They have been separated from everything till there is nothing to separate them from but themselves. They lose their little belongings, these tiny bundle carriers who only just toddle and were so suddenly awakened in the dark that they could not find the kerchief that within its four knotted corners held all their worldly belongings. They would be almost naked if in various ways people had not come to their aid; if on the passage of these conscripts of martyrdom, pity had not forged a shield of love.

Yet they help each other, they console each other, they amuse each other. The oldest and cleverest lend a willing hand to the others. But there is the crowding. A witness counted one hundred and forty children in a single shelter at Drancy. There is the mud, the filth, the uncleanliness of the straw pallets that are never changed, there is the lack of air and of light. There is the vermin. Bugs and lice abound and nothing is done to destroy them. German magnanimity has deprived us of soap, and prisoners are far from being treated as well as people at liberty. Above all, there is disease. All the children are ill. When they are not in bed they are recovering from this or catching that, they are constantly at odds with the thermometer. With measles they hoist their colors; with whooping cough they bark; between two doors infection pounces upon them.

A child some morning does not leave its bed; by evening it is delirious. It still breathes, it breathes too hard, its little carcass wriggles on the straw, but its mind gallops afar on the swift coursers of fever. It has broken its halter and has escaped.

Jews of all kinds are at Drancy, and many Jews are doctors. Medicine is traditionally a Jewish profession. The Greeks learned it in Egypt. The School of Salerno taught it to our Middle Ages. From Avicenne to Fernand Widal, the thread is unbroken. So there are many doctors at Drancy and failing medical attention the little prisoners get advice. They are told to go to the infirmary, and from the infirmary to the hospital. The doors of their prison open before them. They either die —which is a kind of deliverance—or get well and perhaps, in some round about way, return to a life of freedom. In those round about ways they are eagerly watched for by the conspiracy of mothers of which I have already spoken.

Thanks to these secret activities, I was able to take the evidence of many of these children. Behind their feeble voices rises the great voice of humanity that no one defies in vain.

At the hospital, Henri Krasnopolski is able to stand up. He is thirty months old and has no more fever. In a near-by ward newborn babies are crying. Henri Krasnopolski knows that at every age one must account for oneself. He explains that "the children are not crying about the cocoa but because they want their mommies who have been taken away." How could he fail to know, he whose parents had been obliterated by Hitler, that mothers are more precious than cocoa.

It was because they had taken his mother that Simon Falatycka had no resource but death. He was three years old. One of those defective and abnormal children that a mother loves doubly because she alone is able to love him and that without her love he would not live. Simon would not eat and did not know how. His mother had found a way of making him eat, it must have been divinely simple or curiously complicated.

In any case no one rediscovered the mother's secret and the child died of hunger in the hospital.

On the other hand, Leon Ickowicz is full of wisdom. At the age of twelve he has reached a serenity that many grownups, after years of trial and reflection, might envy him. But how sad to have reached that stage at his age. His father and mother had been deported and he left alone. He forced back his tears, a man does not cry. The Ickowicz family was reduced to a lad of twelve, but it earned its living and learned what weight of responsibility and honesty earning one's living entails. Perhaps he was hard put to it to pay the rent. Unfortunately Leon was caught in the memorable raid of the Velodrome d'Hiver and thrown into that place of pain. The trial was becoming more severe, it was up to him to meet it. Quietly the child sat down in a corner. He did not cry, tried to think. It was hard to make a new effort to do the right thing after so short an interval. As he pondered, a woman threw herself upon him and injured him so cruelly that he is a cripple for life. He is confined to bed. Moved by such misfortune, a nurse pities the boy, but proudly and in a clear voice already detached from his tortured body, he explains that "It wasn't the woman's fault. Her suffering had driven her crazy."

Paulette Rosenberg is a cripple, too, but she explains nothing. What good would it do? She is no longer able to build up a decent personality for herself, she has been too long on her bed of anguish. She waits as birds wait when at night they hear the flapping of the wings of the owl over their nest. This girl of sixteen is not French. Born in some ghetto of Poland, she came to us when she was only a year old. In that first year of her life she acquired a nationality that the fifteen

following years could not efface. She would have no rights in a narrow-hearted France, if she were not the last of a large family. Her six brothers enlisted for the war and fought under our flag; one was wounded and taken prisoner. He lost a hand. He gave a hand for the defense of our soil. Does that entitle him to our gratitude? The Germans sent him back home and then caught him in a raid and deported him with his five brothers. Paulette was struck down by infantile paralysis when she was only three, and has been confined to bed ever since. Abandoned, so poor that she doesn't even own a nightgown of her own, resigned, suffering, she awaits deportation and welcomes death.

Danielle Gradstein, twelve years old, was too young to react. Interned at Drancy, she was literally devoured by vermin. The lice had left her almost slate colored. When she had scarlet fever, complicated by otitis, she was sent to the hospital. She reached it looking like a skeleton. She had lost the power of speech, she could no longer smile, she could not even cry when she was hurt.

And then there is the crowd of tuberculous children: Diana is fifteen, Lillian nine, Charley the same age.

As I leaf over the entry book there is a T.B. mark against almost every name on every page and almost as many dead as there are names. They were sent to the camp. They suffered from cold and hunger. Their spirits were low. In ordinary times they did fairly well, people just said they were delicate. Tuberculosis attacks in silence at first. Everyone was too preoccupied to notice a change in one's neighbor. Everybody got thin, everybody coughed, everybody spent bad nights. When at last a doctor had an opportunity to listen, the child was lost. It could not be sent anywhere for a change of air. If Jews pay

taxes even when the State has deprived them of all means of livelihood, they have no right to sanatoriums. Vichy drove out all who were patients in such places, something new in its laws. So it was. Tuberculous children who did not facilitate matters by dying on the putrid pallets of the camp found their way to the hospital, their last halt before the grave. Death is easy in such cases. One has no strength to move; one passes weeks and even months between sheets; one no longer suffers hunger as all appetite has disappeared; one does away with time; one does away with oneself. Some day one coughs up a little patch of poppies, and then one arrives at the end of a journey so ill-begun, a journey that might have ended differently in horror at the bottom of a pit of hate.

Smothered beneath their distress, resigned, at times curled up like a worm cut in two by a spade, organic, sweating anxiety and suffering, at times almost extinct like a heap of cold cinders or haunted by some unreal and maladive dream, in any case damning evidence of a change that can never be allowed to occur in the children of men; such is the picture that Jewish children presented to our eyes. These bits of wreckage torn from the family skiff are reduced to the mere throbbing of their flesh. They move us by the vision of what they were, of what they might have been.

But it was not thus that Bertha Fraidrach wanted to be seen. She demanded that she be saved whole. Whether she was a Jewess or not Bertha cared but little. First and foremost she was a little girl, a little girl and nothing but a little girl. She stood up for her rights as a little girl against hell and high water. Men might kill each other, proclaim that white was black, that the virtue of yesterday was now vice; that was their business and nobody else's. It was a game for old peo-

ple, like backgammon or telling stories. When one is three years old one has other fish to fry, other needs to satisfy, one's own. If men do not understand that a little girl does not in the least see things as they do, so much the worse for them. They must give way, they must understand it is their duty to give way. As St. Paul on his way to Damascus, they must "see the light and harken to the voice" . . . of a child.

The Fraidrachs lived in the Rue Pierre Dupont, named for a charming nineteenth-century poet who sang of a farmer loving his oxen better than his wife. Fraidrach, a Pole, had not asked whether he loved his wife more than France, but had enlisted in our ranks at the outbreak of war. That did not prevent him, like others, from being interned at Beaume-la-Rolande on May 14, among the first Jews arrested and then deported. More than a year afterward his wife was interned at Drancy with her little Bertha. That was on September 4, 1942. Most opportunely disease came to the rescue of mother and daughter and they were sent to a hospital. A brief surcease indeed, for they remained only a short while. A few days later they had to leave for the camp. The mother understood that she was marked for deportation and that she would drag down her daughter in the disaster. She did not flinch at separation. This is what she did. She got in touch with those who could save Bertha, and entrusted her child to them. In secret she made her last recommendations, her last confidences, her last prayers, she made them to human kindness and to providence, to that hope and those illusions by which we are daily reborn from our ashes. The hour of parting came. She was resplendent. One would have thought that she had prepared for a celebration and wanted all to take part in the rejoicings. She dressed the child gaily, she chatted with her neighbors and

she managed to hide the terror that grips all who leave for that journey from which there is no return.

It is hard to hide the truth from a young heart. She managed to do it. Bertha was in skittish mood but, when the car was there, as they herded those Jewish bitches to their gas-chamber fate and the mother had to go, she rose and stepped by her child without a trace of emotion. She was going out to buy a toy. Bertha must be a good little girl, always good, good enough to deserve a shopful of toys. She did not kiss her child, she would have done it with too much feeling, she would have betrayed her agony. No, she would not be gone long. She was coming back and coming back at once, hardly the time to say "Bye" and she would be back with a fine toy. Then as a frown formed on little Bertha's forehead, the mother began to sing carelessly, began to sing without a tremor the Polish lullaby of happier days, the song that summons slumber, and she passed out without losing her gaiety of better days, without her voice breaking, with herself breaking down over her broken heart. The cops pulled the visors of their caps down over their eyes. Those who were to take the mother's place stood agape, unable to say a word. The child went back to its toys.

Later on Bertha saw that her mother did not return and passed at once from impatience to violence. Truth to Bertha was shorter even than truth itself, it was less atrocious. She did not see that her unfortunate mother had only stopped off at Drancy, that deported with empty arms she was rolling in the night of a cattle car, but Bertha was so built that she could not bear that a mother should be torn from her motherhood. The child did not know, did not want to know. The child has its own mother, and no one has a right to touch her. Can't they

understand even a thing as simple as that? Bertha, turn by turn, menacing and supplicating would allow no one to be deaf to her complaints and her threats. Fixing hard eyes on whoever came near, she cried, "My mother, I want my mother, give me back my mother." Unceasingly she demanded her mother; her mother who had been taken from her; her mother who must be given back to her no matter what happened. "Give me back my mamman. I want my mamman." Ferociously she demanded her rights. She rejected her toys, refused candies or caresses. It would have been a mistake to think we should get off so cheaply. "My mamman and my mamman."

She had discovered the guilty parties. The fear everyone had of them was proof enough. Brushing aside the women, Bertha went after the police. No doubt but they were the masters, the blind masters. It was they who carried off mothers at will. They would be made to yield. Standing naked on her little cot, pathetic in her clear intent, she ordered them in a rush of words: "Monsieur l'Agent, dress me, dress me, dress me." When she was out of breath she started off again in clear cut syllables: *"Ha-bil-lez-moi-Mon-sieur-l'Agent."* What she wanted, she intoned, she forced it into one's ears, "To my home. To my home. I want to go to my home." Policemen, who had never been so ashamed when they obeyed Hitler, left.

Bertha cried from impotency. She was up against a wall of strangers. She would have moved mountains. She defended the inalienable rights of three-year-olds. No ideology, no sword had the right to suppress their mothers. Bertha's personality, happily in this case the personality of a child, was without tolerance. If behind her she had century upon century of

persecution, she threw them off as one might push aside a coffin or a shroud. Hers was the right note, the note of harmonious humanity, the note to which we must attune our voices. It is because society allows the first breach to be made, that an evil tyrant can accomplish his deeds. It is because one man surrenders but an inch of his height, that all men can be beheaded. The Jews, beaten and miserable, may excite pity, which is neither enough nor very dignified, but it is outraged childhood that forces justice with its back to the wall. Thanks to them, the rights of children are in the vanguard of the rights of men.

We do not know why we allow children to deafen our ears, but we let them do it and we should be disappointed if they did not think they had a right to do so. Let no one mistake our attitude for weakness, it is far more subtle. We forgive children for being unbearable, not because they are unbearable but because they are children. We do not think it wrong to spank them at times. We feel we have no other way of showing that we are grownups. But no matter how diabolical Bertha was, no one thought of spanking her. By her mouth, with unparalleled severity, universal conscience spoke. No matter how stupid the police, they understood.

The poor mother had hardly got to Drancy before she wrote to the matron, Madame E.

"Dear Madame,

"I should so like to have news of my daughter Bertha. Is she taken care of? Is her health good? Doesn't she cry too much? As far as I am concerned, I have courage and hope to see my daughter again. I place all my hope in you for the safekeeping of my child. I trust too that some day I shall be able to thank you for all the devotion you have shown and

that I shall never forget. I say so from the depth of my heart and do believe that I am sincere. There is nothing else I can add except to thank you for whatever you can do for my child, please kiss her with all my heart. And you dear Madame, I kiss you too.

"Fraidrach"

Miss H., who with Madame E. shares the honor and the responsibility of saving Bertha, answers at once.

"Your little Bertha is always so good and such a little darling. She hardly cries any more, often talks of her mamman, eats, sleeps and plays happily. She has a new doll that she adores. I kissed her for you with all my heart.

"Cl"

Too late! When the letter arrived at Drancy the mother had been deported. "Left without leaving an address." The post office still used the old formula. It ought to have written, "Destroyed by the Germans without leaving a trace," or "Victim of the greatest murder gang in history."

A few weeks later in an envelope addressed by an unknown hand Madame E. received a note that Madame Fraidrach had thrown out on the railroad line through the sliding door which closes all cattle cars. Pious hands had picked it up. Many French people collected such messages and sent them to their destination. It was quite common and more eloquent than all of Hitler's organization. The mother repeated the few words she had written before.

Bertha will have lots of new dolls. That is not enough. Bertha must have justice, implacable justice. Otherwise we shall all have had to disappear in a vast cloaca, our time will have come, our roots be dead.

Nowhere does the position of the mother appear so tenuous as in the case of young Poug.

She was eighteen and what is called a pretty girl, as charming as a dewy nosegay picked in a suburban garden. She was loved. She loved. It was her destiny. She never showed herself cruel to her admirer, a young Italian of good family. She gave him all she had to give: a body beautiful and ardently coveted. She was so well loved and loved so well in return that she became pregnant. An everyday occurrence. Nothing prevented their getting married.

But France is under the heel of the enemy. Mlle. Poug is a Jewess. The Italian wants to marry her. He is threatened with a concentration camp. An Aryan cannot marry a Jewess! But when the snow flies the girl will give birth to a child conceived at lilac-blossom time. Then she will be deported.

During that winter of 1942–43 there was not much snow. A beautiful boy was born. The mother was full of joy, but time was running short.

What was to be done. The Poug girl had committed the crime of loving a twenty-year-old Aryan and he had lost his head over the charms of an eighteen-year-old Jewess. Her case was clear. She was doubly guilty. She cannot escape deportation and the newborn baby will be deported too, unless the father who cannot marry the mother recognizes the child as his own, in which case the Aryanized child cannot be left with its Jewish mother. All had to be settled without the two seeing each other. The mother was in hospital guarded by French police. She could receive no one. She hesitated. It was inconceivable that a babe at the breast could be taken from its mother, it was as much hers as the very pains of labor. However, the Poug girl gave up her child. Her child will live under

an Italian name. The paternal grandparents were waiting at the hospital to receive the little bundle of Jewish flesh that has been Aryanized and would no longer have a mother. The ties were broken. The mother would be childless, the child motherless. She was able to cuddle her baby one last time and . . . she handed it over. The moments she had lived through had dulled all her senses; she no longer knew. Her fingers still retraced the joy of recent gestures, but when she found herself alone in the night she was crushed by the full extent of her sacrifice.

They found her next morning, holding in her hands a little picture of her five-month-old child and when the nurse came near, raising a harrowed face and showing the picture, she asked in a voice that froze her where she stood:

"Is that all I have left. Is it possible? Tell me . . . tell me, I am dreaming."

Distressful days indeed that enabled us to be present at the scene on February 11, 1943, at the orphanage of the Rue Lamblardie, and at that other scene, a comedy, of which two months later the orphanage of the Rue Lamarck at Montmartre was the theater.

Adults had been separated and children as well, but not all. There remained some without father or mother, without roof or board, abandoned. A certain number had been sheltered at the Rue Lamblardie. A professor, driven out of the lycée because he was a Jew, after thirty years' service, decorated on the field of battle in the last war, interned, then released, was in charge of the orphanage. He had a child. Now he has a hundred and fifty children of all ages and conditions. He has his hands full. The orphanage is quiet and in a well-

aired quarter. One might imagine oneself forgotten there. In the middle of winter before daybreak, on February 11, 1943, French policemen forced their way in. They are five and belonged to the vice squad. One of them drew a list from his pocket. They had come to fetch five children for deportation.

The director was flabbergasted.

"Children? What have they done?"

"That's none of your business."

"It seems to me that it is."

He undertakes to wake up the five unfortunates who are on the list. Thus they will not learn the news too brutally. He will prepare them for it. He will do his best to create an atmosphere of relaxation. Besides there are the others. Precautions must be taken with them.

"We know all about that," said one of the police; "you're just trying to get some from under. Nothing doing!"

The director became indignant.

"My word as a veteran ought to be enough for . . ."

"We'll do it all alone. We are in a hurry. We can't help it, sir, we are doing our duty."

"Don't talk about duty, you are doing your job. That is something else again."

The policemen of the vice squad called back to a sense of decency changed their tone, but were none the less inhuman. Perhaps the children were spared a few superfluous cuffs, but awakened all of a sudden, making their way docile and frozen along the icy halls amid the noise of heavy voices and equally heavy boots that surrounded the departure of the children with a sonorous halo, they disappeared in the car before daybreak and the building remained with this vision of silent

flight, of shivering phantoms, of little shadows disappearing in the cold and the darkness, never to return. The youngest of those recruits of death was five years old.

These raids left such an impression on the minds of the children that two months later in another orphanage, in the Rue Lamarck, which had been visited regularly and each time emptied of part of its inmates, some of the children happened one fine afternoon to look out of the window and saw a policeman walking up and down on the sidewalk. It threw them into such a terror that someone was sent out to ask the policeman if by chance his presence was the prelude to another raid.

"No," he consented to say, "I'm watching a black market outfit just opposite you."

But when bedtime came a number of the children had fled. Putting together all their feeble means, the resources of their minds and muscles, climbing down each other's legs they had improvised a by no means easy escape and had dispersed in the surrounding streets. It took the whole night and most of the next morning to find them all.

I want to emphasize here that, as in the preceding chapters, I am only recording minor events, taking care not to distort them. When, for instance, I say that little Danielle had lost the use of speech and laughter and attribute it to the ill-treatments she had received, I am all the more certain because after six months of decent treatment she became a normal child again, apparently cured of the harm that had been done her. What I want to emphasize about Nazi persecution is less its profusion and violence than its character and the spiritual depth of its criminality; it is less the excesses to which they lead—that may be the fault of individual sadists—than the

reactions that follow even their commonest forms on all kinds of natures; it is less the exception, however frequent, than the rule. There will be many other investigations when Germany has been beaten and Nazism is nothing but an abject memory. Things we have only suspected will be brought to light. Reports will be written. We shall be buried beneath a Himalaya of facts, to make one's hair stand on end. The victims will be counted in hundreds of thousands. A great host from beyond the grave will reveal part of the tortures it endured. The earth will appear as a legendary charnel house. Crimes will be proved, so monstrous, so revolting, so foreign to human nature that their authors will appear to be figments of the imagination.

I thought that what really mattered was the reaction upon our consciences of an undertaking planned on an enormous scale but carried out in a very mean manner. It is important for people to know that Hitler and his lackeys sought to destroy an entire generation in childhood, and how they went about it. One must have lived for a few moments with some of those children, have watched them, have seen what in them was killed, what was only wounded, what private initiative was able to save, and alone tried to save. For the old fogy of Vichy and his panders furnished only executioners; they made themselves the tools of the enemy, the hand the enemy stained with the blood of his victims.

We must mourn all the children of the Jews, who born in our land of France or having sought refuge there, suffered and died without any of ours being present to console them even for an hour. We must mourn them as we mourn our own children.

CHAPTER

IV

# *The Ethics of Hate*

THE GERMAN hates man! That is all there is to it.

Those four words are not mere words. They are pregnant with meaning. They shed light upon the life of a nation, upon its thoughts, its actions, its sayings. They even go so far as to reveal to us the nature of the accomplices that nation has found beyond its frontiers.

It is not any man in particular that the German hates, his cunning, his strength, his insolence, his aspect; it is in every man that which makes him like unto his fellow men, it is Man.

It seems impossible that the German can have nothing but hate for man, yet if this assumption be rejected, the German remains inexplicable. The whole Nazi structure sweats hate. It is with this putrid mortar that its builders bound it together.

And as one cannot hate everybody with the same intensity, one has to choose, one has to begin somewhere. One has to try it out on somebody, and whet upon him the weapons at one's disposal. That somebody the Germans used was the Jew.

Far from me the idea that the Jew is the only victim of the *furor teutonicus*. He is the one who has suffered most; but the Poles, the Danes, the Norwegians, the Dutch, the Belgians,

the French, the Serbs, the Greeks, the Russians have known the effects of German hate and only the vicissitudes of war prevented others from feeling the same effects in the same degree. If the Reich had allies, it owed it only to fear and to cunctation; but those very allies the Italians, the Rumanians, the Hungarians, the Finns, without forgetting the Slovak and Croat agitators, whom Hitler induced to take up statesmanship for a living, have now learned about their comrade in arms and the love he bears them. Even the German himself is one of his own victims. But the prime victim, the one who bleeds from every wound at once, remains the Jew. It is when Germans speak of Jews that the words "hostage" and "reprisal" take on their clearest and most obscure meaning: clear as to the deed, obscure as to motive.

If one opens a dictionary one learns that a hostage is "an inhabitant of an invaded country seized or surrendered and held to guarantee the carrying out of an agreement," or even "a person arrested and held as a pledge." So unless I am mistaken there can be no hostage unless there is an agreement and a signatory thereto and someone to guarantee it. But when there is neither an agreement nor anyone qualified to guarantee it, and that people chosen haphazard are arrested and tortured and shot, they are not properly speaking hostages in the French meaning of the word.

For the German a hostage is only a victim, to be taken as a drunken man breaks a branch off a garden shrub. After a crime the German does not take the trouble to discover the guilty party or his accomplices if any; he takes it out on the innocent bystander. Likewise, any witness of a British or Russian victory, no matter how far removed from the theater of operations, is in principle a hostage. He pays for the crime

he did not commit, for the victory in which he took no part.

No attempt is made to weigh responsibilities. The German takes pride in being blind, deaf, obscure, he is systematically blunt-minded, he arrests and kills the other man. The hostage of a German is always the other man, the innocent, the one who is not guilty. It is with the blood of the innocent that Germany intends to smear the world. This deed is even given a name in the *Kriegs Universität,* it is catalogued and held in high esteem.

When angry, the German wants beneath his fists, his boots, his bludgeon a white page, virgin wax, a man who is down, not a soldier, never a soldier.

The hostage who falls is the Son of God crucified again. The tribute of blood and suffering is paid by the man in the street and by the weakest, those who have the most difficulty in bearing their cross.

What a magnificent herd of hostages the mass of the Jews would provide. It would not be allowed to disperse. It would be subjected to reprisals that the French have defined thus: "the harm done to an enemy to compensate for damage caused," or "in revenge for acts of violence." In war there is but one valid sanction: Victory. Reprisals are but the accompaniment of fury held at bay. Is it because they are accustomed to defeat in war, that the Germans have codified reprisals in infinite detail? One might almost think so, for with them it is almost a way of life, the most obvious aspect of their personality. The German needs neither that others should do him harm nor resort to violence; he lives on reprisals; he wades in with both hands. Everything living under German occupation expects reprisals, and no one knows what they will be nor under what pretext exercised.

It is only when he feels that he is the underdog that the German no longer thinks of reprisals.

In the eyes of the Germans, the Jew is the natural hostage to be submitted to the whole gamut of reprisals. They do it with much method and a keen sense of observation.

There are minor means of reprisal: insult, robbery, murder. There is but one major means: to make of a man—a man—a human thing more degraded than an animal. When the German succeeds he is rewarded for his labor. When he has cut the strings of the marionette, broken the transmission shaft of the human machine, quenched its flame, dispersed its ashes, when he has left only an empty shell he has succeeded indeed.

But what art he must display in the use of torture, what a gift for chemistry and mechanics, what a knowledge of pain in its every aspect.

The old time Germans were simple enough to believe that pillage and murder sufficed, that such warlike sports gave all the joys of a binge, all the profits of a black market. They saw no farther. In preceding wars the Prussians had shown themselves expert furniture removers, carrying their professional pride so far as not even to leave the walls of the houses they looted. Often, too, they treated the unfortunates who fell into their hands with a brutality bordering upon insanity. But that was only healthy muscular exercise, the inciting rhythm of which led them, not without a certain admixture of fear, to overstep the bounds of decency. In brief, it was only recreation, and the kings of Prussia, in common with their kinglet neighbors, could rejoice in the activity that existed in their armies. Contrary to what would have happened with Latins, discipline in their armies never suffered. The land of the

Junkers gave its peculiar harvests. Failing other signs, they might be taken for symptoms of national spirit.

With Hitler, what was only a tendency became a science and an art, with its theorists and its virtuosi. It was taught and learned.

The human soul was studied more and more thoroughly that it might be made to suffer more. Although it was studied with the patience of an entomologist, the point of view of the engineer was adopted. The human soul was treated as a mass of rock to be blasted. If all its hidden recesses were explored, it was to discover the amount of explosive to be used and how best to place it, for one no longer trusted to the old instinct. Every violence was permitted so long as it served its purpose, but the velvet glove was not forbidden if more efficacious. The aim was always the same: to destroy and loot, but the best ways had to be chosen. The old cult of war loot subsisted, but it had been transformed into a state religion whose priests wore many vestments. Thus a few days after the collapse, the walls of Paris were covered with a poster showing a soldier of the Reich offering bread and smiles to the children and women of France. Some, scarce removed from their fright, imagined they would meet this soldier on the streets, and he might have made the mistake himself if he was not on murder duty or on devastation bent.

The conqueror had to be able to take advantage of the weaknesses of the conquered and to exploit them so as to perfect his work of annihilation. As there are courses of salesmanship in great corporations, Nazi Germany created courses in war-psychology in the various branches of the army. In dealing with civilians, any officer or official had to be able to use at

will the insinuating graces of the drummer or the intimidation natural to a real warrior. Even the most bestial of the soldiers knew how to show himself more forbearing and more respectful of the reason of state than his father in 1914 or his great grandfather in 1870.

It can be asserted that at the height of his power, the German of 1940, no matter how brilliant and brave a fighter he showed himself, waged war better against the civilian population than on the field of battle. Convinced that it was the civilians who held the soil and the surface, that it was they that had to be dominated, enslaved, ransomed, demoralized, cut to pieces, that no weapon was to be left untried, that the weak are more sensible to blows than the strong, that the full advantage of violence can be reaped only if it is well-ordered, that the confusion of the conquered and their cowardice are the best return the victors can have, that human suffering may become a mine as precious as any in the Ruhr, the German endeavored in his struggle against the soul to attain virtuosity and cold objectivity. In that he succeeded.

The German sometimes engages in free exercise for pleasure. That is how he keeps in practice and learns. But it is rare, because it is free. In this connection a little story that seems of no importance comes to mind. There are in Paris a number of old Jewish families that have played an important part in our national development, and, in those old families a number of distinguished and benevolent old gentlemen who symbolize the tutelary power of the past. They are amiable, discreet, rather out-of-date. Rich from the finest crumbs of a century of prosperity, there is but one fault to be found with this real aristocracy of gold, its members live at ease while poor people

die of misery, but this is forgiven for they obey the ritual of a new chivalry that passes the best of its time bent over misfortune. They do good as others work, by habit, by inclination, almost always by vocation. They do good in silence; they almost seem to seek pardon; they are fragile old men, quietly obstinate. One of them is chairman of a charitable institution. He is very old, he must be in his eighties. One day he is summoned at an early hour by Lieutenant Dannecker. This Dannecker whose exploits bring to mind in less kindly, the drownings of Carrier at Nantes, is a young and handsome boy in whose hands Hitler has placed the protection of Jews in Paris. He does his job by wiping out forever their pride of living. Ten times a day he goes into a tantrum, inflicts some irreparable wound on the souls or bodies of his wards. His hate kills more surely than the ax. It drives from place to place, near corpses for whom death would be a deliverance.

Accompanied by his colleagues of the institution, the old gentleman arrived promptly at the appointed time. These men, none of whom are young, remain standing for a whole morning in the office of their protector. Jews are not entitled to seats. They wait first for the master of the place to arrive, then for him to deign to notice them. Dannecker comes in, goes out, signs documents, toys with his riding whip, orders his staff about. He does not see the Jews. When at last he rises to go to lunch with a friend, Luchaire perhaps or Sacha Guitry, his eyes rest negligently on the pitiful knot of quaking old men, and they sparkle. This gentleman of Nazi power, this tall, pimp-faced youth gets up and seizing his riding whip in his clenched hand passes his "protected" in review. The close review of a penal squad. He laughs with an ugly sneer,

he grimaces, he is about to spit on these faces of inexpressible lassitude; no, he raises his riding whip and pointing to the door, cries:

"Dirty Jews, you are only dirty Jews, out with you!"

On the stairs, at the end of his strength, the old Jew sits down, his face running with perspiration. He is too polite to die there in the midst of these Germans hurrying to a good meal, to allow his corpse to give them so much trouble.

It was not thus that Napoleon III received his grandfather, but then both were French.

Dannecker was a virtuoso. I shall have a lot to tell about him when I go into details, but he was only one cog in the machine, one of the masks good Germany assumes to go out in society.

To go back to my study of how the Boche tortured the Jews, of how he carried out against the Jews the wider assault he had planned against Man.

First of all, it is not only your life that you cling to. At times you are capable of sacrificing it to save the life of another. Other lives may seem indispensable to you. You can be made to speak if you are shown that those lives hang but by a hair, the hair of your silence or of your admissions. That is what is known as blackmail. Often your admissions will not save you nor save them, but they will have been torn from you.

A child is taken away from a mother to make her reveal the hiding place of her husband, or to give information that will cost him his head. Thus at every step the oppressor starts up Cornelian tragedies, and shoots them like partridges. The woman betrays her husband to save her child, her husband who was serving France in one way or another. It is too easy

and too well done. The German licks his chops and admires himself. Nine times out of ten the Cornelian tragedy does not go beyond the first act: the womb speaks. It does not even receive its guerdon because the child, too, is sacrificed for full measure.

One time in ten, little folk whose social role was rather dull, become heroes. They do not give way to blackmail. More, their will is steeled instantaneously, and without effort they attain the highest degree of the sublime.

I hear ringing in my ears, in other tones than the Germans wished to hear, the terrible words of joy torn from unfortunates by the sacrifice of all they held dearest. By refusing to speak they had given more than their life and suddenly they found themselves overcome by almost indecent joy, an irresistible orgasm from the total sacrifice they had made.

The executioner will never again reach them, those transfigured common people that France has made hers, even if they were born in Lodz or Poznan.

I find something of that joy, the first stage in their transfiguration, in two letters that a little Feld girl wrote to her mother who was interned at the Rothschild hospital.

All the Felds had been arrested, some held as Jews make their way by stages toward deportation. The young couple having been mixed up in one of those splendid national efforts of resistance labeled bolshevist-Gaullist was about to be tried. Theresa Heria, the woman, prisoner No. 5,942, was at the Petite Roquette; Georges, her husband, at the Sante.

The woman had with her Gaby, her daughter, who fell ill. The child died on May 10, 1943, and the following day the mother was able to smuggle this letter to the grandmother. I give only extracts.

"I received your letter of the 4th and it is with deep sorrow that I give you bad news. My little Gaby is very ill. They fear she has bronchopneumonia and the doctors are not sure they can save her. I am very miserable, mother darling, and it is the greatest misfortune that could happen to us but I should be still more miserable if I knew that it made you suffer. Promise me you will not grieve. That will be a consolation."

Then the mother of the little dead child wrote on about the family, about Mosek, and little Maurice who is such a pretty boy, about uncle Joseph, the hairdresser, and ended:

"And now I kiss you, and send you big kisses from Gaby."

However, on May 14 in a second letter she can no longer hide the truth.

"Darling mother,

"I am obliged to confess the great misfortune that has come to us. Gaby succumbed to her illness on May 10 at four o'clock in the afternoon. Pardon me if I did not tell you about it sooner but I didn't have the strength for fear it would cause you too much sorrow, but what good would that have done as I should have been obliged to tell you anyway because I am not staying in hospital.

"I was to have been tried on May 21, but it has been put off. I am very miserable and do not know why fate hammers at me so. Gaby was buried on Thursday morning in the graveyard of the prison.

"Darling mother, remember. I kissed your grandchild for you, I held her a long time in my arms and I cried a little, not much. Promise me you will not grieve. I am so afraid for your health. Show me again how courageous you are. That will give me courage, too, for at times I have none.

"She died of bronchopneumonia, but she did not suffer. She didn't cry once in the eight days she was ill.

"I should so have loved to be with you to console myself a little, for I know nothing will ever console me for having lost such an adorable creature as my little Gabrielle."

A noble and appeasing thought had risen in the tortured heart of the mother. Little Gaby as she disappears under the arches of Death becomes Gabrielle. Why? From the Sante, Georges, the father, less prudent, less master of himself, will tell us:

"My poor little Cesia,

"How far we were from expecting such a misfortune. When my lawyer brought me the news, and God knows the good man took every precaution, I could not get through my head the idea that never again shall I see my laughing little Gaby. It is true she grew up separated from her daddy who only caught fleeting glimpses of her from behind prison bars. But is that any reason why adversity should fall so heavily upon me?

"I am courageous because my suffering goes hand in hand with revolt . . . My memory will exceed in hate the memory of some wild animals . . .

"I promise you I will avenge our little Gaby who died a martyr's death like that other sublime martyr whose name she bore."

The other martyr exalted by Georges was Gabriel Peri who died bravely for France. In contradistinction to Pétain, the dishonest professional patriot, this communist deputy, a remarkable man, knew how to plead a lost cause before a court-martial although its sentence was rendered before the trial began. He confessed with what joy, after having long been called a man without a country, he would die for France with the *Marseillaise* upon his lips.

In the eyes of some, the enemy of France had long been

Moscow. It was a thesis that could be maintained, but how superfluous it already seemed. Stalin was a long way off. Hitler was much nearer and no one who heard him could doubt that in one way or another he would undertake the conquest of our land and the destruction of our independence.

But what Hitler had not foreseen was that somewhere in France, a little Jewess, a little Feld, as humble as a violet in the woods, would perfume her adopted country with the odor of her suffering.

Just as they harvested treason even in the consciences of ostentatious patriots, the Germans enlarged the scope of guilt even to the inexplorable zones of cunning and stupidity. It was not only the deeds of those near to you that accounted for your security, the four-year-old child paid for its father, the passer-by for the man he had barely caught sight of, the farmer for the parachutist taken in by his neighbor, the people of a village for a stranger who had passed a few hours in the place without even speaking to them, someone who had the same name as another man, a dumb man for a word spoken, an unknown man for someone equally unknown, and the Jews for everybody. But further than that even. Some houses were at fault. All the Jews in 58 Rue Crozatier, a regular barracks, were deported because one of their fellow tenants had imprudently gone to the motion pictures. A whole block full of Jews were interned because a young Jew had gone out without his star. One day all the Langs in Drancy were sent to Poland on the spot, because a Mrs. Lang had interceded for her husband with Dannecker who had been ironically polite to her.

Here we are face to face with new ethics of guilt, with a new and particularly curious doctrine of who is guilty!

The guilty may be anybody. It matters not what he does or does not do, he is guilty. His punishment awaits only opportunity. The guilty is not the perpetrator of a crime, of a fault or of some untoward act, not even the possible or probable perpetrator, the hypothetical perpetrator, which would already be nonsense in law, as guilt must be proved. With a German you are guilty by reaction; guilty by reflection like a mirror that shows the grimaces of whoever looks at it. For a German, the guilty is never guilty in the real meaning of the word, because if he were guilty he would no longer satisfy the conditions of guilt, according to German ethics. His punishment would be useless.

The German lays down an assumption. Someone is born guilty: the Jew. Whatever happens he is to blame. Just as trees to be felled are marked by the forester, the Jews wear upon their breast a yellow star for everyone to see. They can never forget they are guilty. Their security is not threatened, it is already in danger.

Their liberty no longer exists. They are prisoners without a prison, afflicted with a mentality of prisoners. If they were only hunted they would breathe more freely. Besides certain rules with which they must comply, remind them of prison discipline and their prohibitions make the meanest rascal their warder, and a fine summer seem like a house without light.

The countries occupied by Hitler all participate with tired sadness in this vast imprisonment. Public opinion, although it no longer reacts, refuses by a kind of passive resistance to look upon the wearers of stars, otherwise than on the wearers of raincoats. During the first weeks it considered them attentively with a varied mixture of pity and curiosity, and then

paid no further attention to them. Without realizing it, the Jews were part of their national heritage.

There were in fact two kinds of Germans who appeared to share this indifference; the common people and men of a certain culture; one would think that they felt a certain consolation in forgetting the plans of their masters.

However, the Jew makes no mistake about it. He savors by anticipation the luxury of the concentration camp, just as, long before he was forced to wear the Star of David, he had a foretaste of the amusements it would afford him.

For everything was not done in a day. At first, the Germans in the flush of their victory, could do anything without people crying scandal. The conquered, dazed by the Pétain armistice, were resigned to everything, ready to bear everything. In their distress they went so far as to believe that they would get off lightly. They would have accepted without criticism the most Draconian status for the Jews, no matter how unjust or severe. That status existed, every one of its regulations was in force. To establish it one had but to add up all the ill-treatment that the Jews of the Reich had had to bear in previous years, with amendments dictated by the cruelty and cupidity of the Nazi executioners. Nothing of the kind. The German waited till every fruit was ripe, till every season was golden, till every action brought in its train a full load of ruin and suffering. He was determined to exploit the frightful power of suspense, to give to each wound an hitherto unknown depth.

So the Germans began neither by the Star of David nor by wholesale internments. It cannot be denied that this procrastination was clever. Utility had to come before pleasure. The Jews of conquered countries were not to be frightened, were

not to export their capital or to transfer their assets before they could be seized. I, myself, saw Jews who allowed themselves to be snared. Eight days after the occupation of Paris I received the visit of a Jewish businessman I had known at school and had never set eyes on since. This know-nothing came to assure me that before the war we were headed for ruin while Hitler was performing miracles and that now, under his authority, order and prosperity were going to be restored. Doubtless if this Jew, a man called Netter, is spending time in a Silesian camp, he can reflect at leisure on the drawback of being so dumb.

However, when Jewish fortunes had been carefully pillaged, there was nothing to prevent the Nazi administration from enforcing on French soil a status for the Jews copied on the one they had instituted in Germany, but enriched by several years' experience gained inside and outside its frontiers. Germany did not do so.

Germany wanted to obtain from the Pétain government and the Jews all the perverse satisfaction it had counted upon.

Pétain had accepted the consequences of defeat with a light heart. In the eyes of the world he could only be the man of the collapse, the liquidator of French greatness. By a twist of his character, he liked this difficult role. He replaced the evidence of facts by words. His love of phrases was given free rein. This man, who had served in the army with a total lack of imagination, liked only ill-defined situations and all false ideas, but, utterly irresponsible, he had not foreseen that by giving himself over, bound hand and foot to the will of Hitler, he was forced to play not only the puppet king, but to be a Cinderella without beauty and a willing servant. When a German is odious, he likes his valet to be even more so. Pétain

learned that to his cost. His armistice had a moral scope which month by month was to eclipse its material consequences. To sign it with the hope of living off it, was to allow oneself to slip down the incline that led to the abyss without being able to stop for a moment. Reserving to himself the more immediately productive measures, the Nazi master launched the men of defeat on an anti-Semitic policy. Vichy created a Commissioner of Jewish Affairs who, without plan and without control, disorganized the country. He purged the army, he purged the administration, the treasury, the liberal profession, letters, the arts, dismissing men who protected by the laws of France and in some instances by formal contracts were none the less thrown out of their jobs, deprived of their lawful rights and dismissed without more ado.

If these men had done any wrong, however slight, no punishment could have been too great. Otherwise the blow dealt them was something more than an inelegant gesture, it was mean, clumsy and unjust, for it affected individuals, incidentally Jews, who had done their best to serve the cause of France, and there was nothing to show they had betrayed her.

By what right were they driven out?

Anti-Semitism? No!

There can be no real anti-Semitism in France. Apart from a few men of letters to whom this attitude lent substance, anti-Semitism appeared only in times of crisis. We are an old country, with a mild climate, polished manners, wide resources, and low birthrate because our manners are so polished. For all these various reasons we stand higher than any of the new nations in the list of immigrant countries. And many Jews emigrate to escape both their Jewish condition that weighs heavily upon them and persecution. No matter how great our

power of assimilation, they retain for a certain time their primitive personality. Should it happen that the incoming wave of foreigners is too great, that it causes unrest in one or another sphere of our activity, sudden changes of economic conditions, then a crisis breaks out. Xenophobia goes into high gear and certain of the foreigners are attacked, the wealthiest, the most insinuating or the most conspicuous, in a word the most marked. These unfortunates are to blame for everything that goes wrong: unemployment or corruption, the failure of the bank next door or the overcrowding of suburban trains, the off season or bad films. The Jews, 'tis said, get in everywhere and stick up for one another. Then anti-Semitism dies down in the same way as the crisis. Only maniacs or people behind the times continue to howl. The indigestion is over. The frontiers reopen like a hungry mouth. And the Jews cease to expiate the vague sins of Israel.

If the earliest Jews were not at Bouvines, they were at Jemmapes, at Austerlitz, at Reichshoffen, at Verdun and at Dunkirk, where they were joined by imported Jews. If they hadn't it would have been strange indeed. The tribute of blood in France is no mysterious myth. It is paid by all.

But Vichy, in its imposed anti-Semitism, which was but another surrender, drove out the Jews, veterans, war-wounded, pensioners, decorated, the widows of those who had died for France. By serving our cause in arms, had they not defied Germany, flouted the Nazi order that Jews are to receive blows but not to deal them? Vichy refused to meet our debt of honor. Jewish blood had not been shed. The Unknown Warrior at the Arc de Triomphe abandoned part of his anonymity. He was Aryanized. This betrayal—this cowardice, to call it by its name—was what Hitler wanted, but it was not enough.

Little by little the German raised the corner of the curtain that hid his anti-Jewish plans, took certain measures, then others. The Pétain police undertook to carry out those measures. Jews had to register; they did so with the French authorities; they saw themselves deprived one by one of their most ordinary liberties. Our police saw to it that they lost them. Then they were arrested, by our own police.

A German triumph far exceeding in gravity, in power, in abandonment and in humiliation of the vanquished, that of Sedan. Pétain lost more battles than he could have, had he fought.

Did Frenchmen have to perform the untoward task of erasing the very traces of France?

It was this work of destruction that interested Hitler. Pétain lent it his hand and lent Hitler his voice. He had already sold his sword. He, too, no longer had any reason to stop.

Nor had the Jew. If he had lost everything at first, he would have had nothing to lose. That would not have suited Hitler. Jewish suffering must find in every new day a source of renewal and, to achieve this aim, less importance had to be attached to the punishment inflicted than to that threatened. There had to be many and ingeniously spaced halts all along the road of suffering. Above all, hope had to be mingled with fear, the victim's fear wears out as does his suffering. That fear must not be awakened until after it has been put to sleep.

Here foreign Jews were in danger; there French Jews; here ordinary people, there the élite. Today men in the prime of life are interned; tomorrow it will be old men, women and five-year-olds. A home destroyed gathers its remains together? It is well that it should do so, for when it is done the flame can be definitely destroyed. When the French lifted up their

heads, it was Jews of old French families that were arrested. When an effort was made to flatter those same French to gain some advantage from their faltering, the Germans arrested Polish Jews to rid the country of them and congratulated themselves on the interest they bore us.

From the day of the armistice to May 14, 1941, the Jews were the objects of delicate attentions; in those days the Nazi had eyes only for wealth and pillage. Paris was full of removal trucks; the immense basements of the Quai de Tokio filled up with grand pianos. The zeal of collaborationists was rewarded with Jewish art collections. This did not prevent the prisons from filling up, but each arrival came handcuffed for his own account. With purring graces, the victor dug his claws into French blood. All Jews being suspect, and every suspect doomed to death, this blood was often Jewish. It was in this well-dyed red that French resistance was sealed.

A curious fate indeed for men without a country.

CHAPTER

V

# *Beaume-la-Rolande*

THE REGISTRATION of the Jews had been successfully completed, thanks to the zeal of Pucheu's officials. The time had come to make use of the lists.

On May 14, 1941, all Polish Jews were arrested and interned in the former prisoner-of-war camp at Beaume-la-Rolande.

The first raid in May took only men. The following, for there were many, included women and children.

Man-hunts were carried out in Paris by the French police and their scope and suddenness made necessary the use of considerable forces. They passed off without any noteworthy incidents. Carried out with surprising ease in an atmosphere of resignation and stupor.

There is nothing much to tell, except that the victims of the first mass internment felt that they were forgotten by God and man!

Later, perhaps, they understood, as did public opinion, that from the first complete solidarity existed between them and the civilized world, that they were already taking part in the victory-to-be of a true revolution.

Since the day of the armistice, all measures taken or

prompted by the Germans were unpopular. The operation of May 14 pleased a number of people. Welcomed with delight by professional anti-Semites in the pay of the enemy, with indifference by the bourgeois, with levity by the working classes, it moved only certain sections of the public, that always rally to any noble cause. The Polish Jews had impossible names, even for Beaume-la-Rolande! Of recent years they had been much in the public eye, and had provided French xenophobia with its favorite theme—not that they were lazy or criminal—but accustomed to a particularly low standard of living, industrious, willing to take any job. They fought their way into many small and easy trades, driving out less adaptable folk. Their assimilation followed no ordered rhythm. At a stage where neither their characters nor their customs had changed, their influence preceded their absorption into the French people, and this made their intrusion appear the more unpleasant. In a word, they were anything but popular in the places where they had infiltrated.

Settled first in the neighborhood of the Hotel de Ville, in the blocks between the Rue du Roi de Sicile and the Rue du Figuier, then in the Popincourt quarter which they transformed into a kind of unwalled ghetto, they spread out around the Bastille and the market quarter. They gave the impression that they were conquering Paris from beneath. They seemed to present a threat to the nation.

But if one studies the invasion of these East-European immigrants, the problem it presents loses the acute character attributed to it by ignorant scribblers. The Polish Jews conquered Paris far less than they were conquered by the City of Light. Our country, far more than the Americas, appears as

the promised land of tradition. I do not seek to explain or to comment. I merely record. I merely record what immigration figures show. Polish Jews, more than any other outsiders, flocked to it. They had found a new country to their liking, they attached themselves to it, loved it and did their best to understand it. One must take facts as they are. The atmosphere was favorable to their development. Not of course without some untoward incidents and conflicts. There was the Yiddish background, centuries of misery, of isolation, of muscular tenacity and of moral and physical woe. A type had been created that could not be effaced in a day. It was also necessary to get rid of a foreign accent, a false intonation, strange manners, to refashion a soul that did not lend itself easily to rechiseling. And this attentuation of original traits, or their adaptation, followed different rhythms even in the same family. The children did not react like their parents, did not change in the same way. The Yiddish background took on infinite shades according to the origin and age of the immigrants.

These Polish Jews, having acquired a country, long behaved like foreigners. Their manners were different. A strange accent, a certain verbal aggressiveness, an ill-concealed nervousness, a tint of murky exoticism remained their portion. Their thirst for success created jealousy. They contracted new vices before getting rid of the old. They were too much in a hurry. They were looking for injustice. Injustice was not stinted them, whereas we ought to have been amazed at their passionate evolution.

"All our troubles came from the Polish Jews. They corrupted us."

Few slogans were more popular, none was more untruthful.

A national danger existed, a crack in the wall where foreign looters could place a stick of dynamite, as they did.

What caused that crack in the nation's wall was not the influx of foreigners who were conspicuously and in very truth becoming French, but the loss of French spirit by elements that were ethnically irreproachable, by degenerates proud of their social standing. Without attracting too much attention, this abscess ran green with *bacillus teutonicus* over the conservative press that supplied mental nourishment daily to the grandsons of thrifty France, and infected them.

Paris had just expelled her Polish Jews. This stableless herd wandered where it was pushed. It arrived at Beaume-la-Rolande. It was heavy-hearted. Had it not left behind everything that it thought it had or was, a wife, children, a room and the quarter where it lived, a work table or a counter, its work, the dream it had pursued, the France it had loved, because it had breathed freely there, and still loved because it was happy there and, better than the French of old stock, felt all it had in common with them?

It is well before describing briefly the life that awaited this herd at the concentration camp, to define the title it had to our solicitude if not to our gratitude, to define its rights as Frenchmen.

I have not been able to consult the lists of the Prefecture, nor the records of the concentration camp, nor the documents of the German authorities. I shall be greatly surprised if these are not destroyed by interested parties before the day of liberation. Too many people will need whitewashing.

But by consulting hospital records I have been able to es-

tablish a cross section fairly comparable to the averages one might obtain if all the records were available.

Of one hundred eighty-eight cards of male hospital entries, adults or old men, one hundred fifty-five had seen armed service, something less than four out of every five. If one takes into account that I did not credit active service to those whose dying condition or lack of papers made definite proof impossible, nor to youths from nineteen to twenty-one who were underage when the armistice was signed, nor to tuberculous cases whose records dated back before the outbreak of the war, nor to cripples, nor to those who arrived in France after the last war and were too old to fight in 1939, it is clear that the number of available Polish Jews who were not mobilized was negligible.

Polish Jews called to the colors may be divided into two classes, those who had been naturalized and those who had retained their original nationality. The latter enlisted in the Foreign Legion, the former were called with their age-group when they had not already enlisted voluntarily, even after having been rejected as unfit for military service. Among the internees at Beaume-la-Rolande as well as those of Drancy—where the first internments took place on August 21, 1941—we counted as not having seen active service, a Rubin, who had been mobilized in the Polish army, a Jacobowitz, who had lived in France since 1920 and in 1914–18 had served in the Polish Legion, had been wounded and given a pension on a 50 per cent invalidity basis, a Roudenski, a Russian refugee who had escaped to France in 1924 but had fought in 1914 in the Czar's army, been wounded and was an invalid, a Fredkowski, naturalized in 1921, who had also served in the Rus-

sian army from 1914 to 1917 and had been taken prisoner by the Germans.

If these men had fought for the same cause that we did, they had not fought in our ranks and so they were not counted. But there were others.

There was Moses Milker, who had lived in France for seventeen years and whose two sons, both French soldiers, were prisoners in Germany, and Israelovitch, naturalized in 1925, whose son was also a prisoner of war. Michel Grosberg, an old man of seventy-one, was in much the same case, except that his son, severely wounded, was interned with him. A Greek, Eleazar Acher, in France since 1932, had a brother who was prisoner. Jacques Crispi, a Turkish subject, was too young to have fought but his father was a veteran of our Foreign Legion in 1914 and his brother-in-law a prisoner of war. Mathes Leddermann's young son of twenty-four was killed at the front in the brief 1939–40 campaign. Then there was sixty-five-year-old Zeraira Cohen who had thirteen brothers fighting at the front in 1914, four of whom fell under our colors. Finally, to close an already long list, Marco Akusabul, a boy of twenty, also too young to fight in 1939, was not a little proud that his father had been so grievously wounded in our ranks in the last war that he had been given a 65 per cent invalidity pension.

There for the non-mobilized a few titles to our national gratitude, some are not altogether negligible. If I add that a reference to the cards of the women and children interned shows a number of war widows and wards of the nation, it must be admitted that France, even the France of Vichyssitudes had a debt of blood and owed it to herself not to forget it. Let us note for good measure her unpaid debt to the little

Litwak girl, a war orphan, or to the Aglerski who—harbored by an aunt, herself a war widow—was deported at the age of ten, to the little Elisa and Anna Brandjes also deported at twelve and ten years of age although their father had fought in both wars, and to Paulette Rosenberg who unlike her companions in misery was Polish, as I have mentioned in another chapter, and whose six brothers, one now a cripple, had fought for us.

France's debt toward those who had fought was no less great.

I am not going to advance that the one hundred fifty-five men who had mobilized, and whose records I consulted, had all served in fighting units. Their records do not show it and I have no reason to gild the lily. The Jews are not reputed to be warriors, probably because time was when the calling of arms was closed to them. But they took to it well, if one can judge by the records.

It is quite possible that active service was distasteful to some of the one hundred fifty-five who were mobilized. It can even be shown that some of them did not refuse being transferred to the auxiliary forces or sent back to their homes on account of ill-health or because they were the fathers of five living children, before they even fired a shot—Jews do not act differently from Aryans—but in all my files I have only one case of desertion; and after all most of them had enlisted voluntarily and of their own free will.

In this short-lived war, some were killed and wounded. It was not possible to intern the dead; they appear in my files quite incidentally as widows, orphans, or an old mother without means of support, thrown into concentration camps or deported. If they are numerous, the wounded are more numer-

ous still, wounded of 1914, wounded of 1940, joining their trials in one long and faithful service. There was Torres of the Rue Popincourt, discharged as gassed in 1914–18 and given a 30 per cent invalidity pension; Youna Mimzan, who lost a limb in the last war and is father of five children; there was Szlama Ferszt, twenty-seven years old, naturalized in 1939, wounded in 1940, who lost a foot and received the Medaille Militaire, which did not save him from deportation. Jean Rotzgrinberg, naturalized in 1914, wounded in 1940 with an invalidity pension of 75 per cent (war cripple), who won the Croix de Guerre and the Medaille Militaire; Chaim Pak, an Austrian who enlisted in 1914 and was wounded; Maurice Golstein, wounded and Croix de Guerre; Isaac Marcovitz who won the Croix de Guerre in 1914 for conspicuous bravery; Veisbieb, a Russian, sixty-one years old, who volunteered for service in 1914 and whose son enlisted at sixteen in this war and is now a prisoner in Germany; Charles Mezericken, a fifty-year-old Lett, mobilized in 1914, twice wounded, who won the Croix de Guerre; Lentchitzkim, a T.B. case, fifty-three years old, who volunteered in 1914, was twice cited for bravery and naturalized in 1922; Raymond Dunsky, thirty years old, wounded in 1940, taken prisoner and trepanned in Germany, exchanged as too seriously wounded for further service and arrested in a raid; David Cohen, volunteered in 1914, won the Medaille Militaire, re-enlisted in the Colonial army, demobilized in 1935, managed to re-enlist in 1939, but was discharged on account of his health, who died in the camp. Those men were attached to France by something more subtle than whatever profits they may have made out of the country.

There were others. Acts of heroism. Things done that might

have been left undone, that appeal straight to the heart of the French people. One Libert, who came to France in 1930, was twice wounded on active service: he counted neither the risks he took nor the blood he shed. There was also Luzes Bagzman, a man no longer young: in 1914 he fought in the Polish Legion; he came to France in 1923 and in 1939 managed to enlist in the Foreign Legion. No one could have blamed him if at fifty-one he had stayed at home. Israel Koplevicz enlisted at eighteen and when he arrived at Beaume-la-Rolande still had two brothers prisoners in Germany. At eighteen he might have stayed at home as might Gourvitch for the same reason. Samuel Kornmeister, declared unfit for military service by one examining board after another, succeeded in getting into active service. Moszek Artmann, thirty-four, a Pole who came to France in 1931, enlisted and was discharged for illness, but was not to be denied and enlisted in the Foreign Legion. Max Banet, twenty-seven years old and naturalized, fought at the front and was wounded, won the Croix de Guerre and was discharged on account of his wounds. He was taken from his bed and thrown into this concentration camp. The symbolic value of Alexander Potchesik is even greater. This is no longer a case of a Jew who served France because he loved her but a long family attachment, a tradition of loyalty and affection. Potchesik fought in our ranks in 1914 and 1940, when his son was finishing his studies in a Paris lycée. But is it true that in 1870, his grandfather was one of the franc-tireurs of the Loire? Such a man is as much entitled to a coat of arms, as the best Frenchman of the best French family. Such continuity of service is not achieved by chance.

Such were the men, such the outsiders, who by common consent, the German authorities and the Vichy government

sent to Beaume-la-Rolande. By a curious coincidence, Potchesik, under close guard of Vichy's armed gendarmes, was interned at the very spot where his grandfather had fought on November 28, 1870, under the orders of Aurelles de Paladines against a German army freed by the surrender of Bazaine; I was going to say "of Pétain," for the specters of the past haunt us. Ever and ever the same men face each other in the same struggle: those who want France to live, those who pay little heed to her survival. Potchesik and the Marshal of Defeat were face to face. On which side flew the banners of Bouvines and of Valmy? Behind the barbed wire of the concentration camp, unless I am sorely mistaken.

The sordid camp was not prepared to receive its new inmates. In June, 1940, the Wehrmacht had chosen it to herd the prisoners of war that Pétain was surrendering, and then the prisoners had been sent to Germany. All they left at Beaume-la-Rolande was barbed wire, lice, vermin and wrecked shelters. Nothing was ready for occupation. Men suffered there and died. Later on little by little, things began to be organized. New raids brought in women, old men and children. From time to time, deportations emptied the shelters. Untiringly they filled up again.

Beaume-la-Rolande, used as a concentration camp ever since May 14, 1941, had the reputation of being one of the worst from three points of view, worse than Drancy, worse than Pithiviers, better than Royallieu as far as material conditions were concerned but with very different atmosphere.

Material conditions were execrable. At first merely straw, later replaced by straw mattresses. A few parcels were received, but Paris was a long way off and most of the internees belonged to low-income brackets in unfamiliar surroundings

in an unknown part of France. Literally they felt the ground giving way beneath them.

In the disorder, many factors of degradation accumulated. It was said that the inmates gambled. Morality sagged. People gave free rein to their instincts. The virtue of some of the women was anything but excessive. On the brink of the abyss the pangs of lust seized upon poor people who had never before thought of anything but earning their living and feeding their families.

In these barracks the average loss of weight at the end of three months was sixty-six pounds. But something more than weight was lost. That was a consequence of the Dannecker system. This brown-shirted Carrier insisted that in every family the men, women and children be separated and deported separately. What remained of the broken home was a prey to lust and lonesomeness. Later Brunner wanted to reunite the members of a same family, not for any honorable purpose, but to be sure that none escaped the clutches of the Nazis and that children, one or two years old, should not escape deportation.

The Nazi system conduces to something more than material devastation. It sows ruin in the consciences of men. That is its aim. It has no other.

In any case death did its work and the deportations did the rest. After two years one could count on one's fingers the survivors of the first arrivals. In 1943, the Germans began to regret the man power it had destroyed out of pure sadism, when they never imagined that some day they might need it.

During the years to which I look forward, France too will regret the most humble and the least cherished of her adopted children. They loved her more than she loved them; they un-

derstood her better than she understood them. They thought life better at the rhythm of her heart; they asked only to be left near to her heart and that she should pretend not to notice them. Furtively, shamefacedly, they approached her threshold, only to be met with cries of protest. But when they were gone, when they had died of her defeat, neither more nor less than the purest patriots, when she began to leaf over the faded records that still remain to bear witness for them, how could France fail to be moved.

She cannot, she will not look upon their memory with undimmed eyes.

CHAPTER

VI

# *Plain Tales of Hostages*

WHEN THE German made public his conception of "hostage" by announcing to all France, by communiqués and posters, that the obscure death of one even more obscure German soldier would be glorified by the shooting of fifty Frenchmen, chosen haphazardly, it created a sensation. Old Pétain, ever ready when opportunity offered to make an exhibition of himself, volunteered in a blare of publicity, to take the place of victims already shot, forgetting or pretending to forget, poor man, that he was not master of himself, that he was the indispensable hostage of his own policy, that France had marked him for her Great Days of Justice.

But this hostage story was nothing but bluff.

The hostage as understood by the Germans, and defined in a previous chapter, was the very instrument of German action. He reappeared in the unhandsome deeds of the enemy army in the first days of September, 1939. Not an insignificant *feldwebel,* but of his own authority put to the sword all the inhabitants of some tiny hamlet in Poland, where he was billeted under some vain pretext; the only reason being that a Lord of War, no matter how far down in the scale, owes it to himself to show the scope and strength of his authority. When

there were no incidents, they were created; when there were no heroes, their vocation was abusively incited.

From the moment he set foot in France the German killed. He killed a great deal, but in the past he had shown such avidity to kill, so much ardor and pleasure in boasting of it, that he seemed if not moderate at least temperate. He was "correct" as the hangers-on of Vichy loved to say.

His attitude was rather constrained and at times labored. I personally had occasion to see with what delight the lowest second-class private drew his automatic to threaten civilians, how prompt he was to use it. Calm was a challenge to him. He always wanted to send a bullet right through any brain that did not reveal its thoughts to him. But one felt that he gave way to this impulse only when drunk, under the sway of alcohol or of anger.

He had been given orders. German propaganda set up a model which he did his best to copy. This model covered our walls in the guise of a poster, as ugly as it was stupid. A soldier of the Wehrmacht, a *feldgrau* in steel helmet, with manly face and smiling eyes, carried in his arms a plump French infant and by the hand led a hatless woman from the smoking ruins!

When, on turning into a street, a *feldgrau* found himself face to face with his travestied image as an open-hearted family man clad in gray-green and welcomed with tears of gratitude and joy, there was no reason why he should recognize himself, but discipline aiding, he hesitated to show himself as he had so recently been and, in cringing obedience, did his best to imitate the man on the wall. Hitler, the cruelest of the cruel, had certainly something up his sleeve.

It was not even good window dressing! A mere poster that would have made its authors laugh if they had had the slightest sense of humor.

The German had before him only a vanquished people, he could not treat it otherwise.

He was The Master, as I once heard a *feldwebel* declare, a *feldwebel* whose mastery was so well alcoholized that he could not manage to regain a vertical posture.

He abused his authority, he pillaged, he ill-treated, he killed without provocation, if it be that dignity is not a provocation.

Then he got killed himself.

He was hated and acted in a hateful way. It was inevitable he should get killed when opportunity offered. He held the honor, the property and the lives of others so cheaply.

In presence of these "degenerate crimes"—it was thus that by an abuse of language were called the reprisals to which he was subject—the German committed fearful crimes and justified them by condemning them.

Thus to justify and not to justify it, like some new Joseph Prudhomme, he put forward two arguments that were self-contradictory. His square-headedness, that bothered him no more than his field cap, did not permit him to see the contradiction between the two.

On the one hand, he alleged that the "terrorist" crimes were the work of British agents, handsomely bribed by the Churchill government and then proceeded to punish the entire people of France.

Was England guilty? In that case the thing to do was to proclaim the innocence of France in organ-toned tumult of

sound so as to give the impression that she sided with Germany. France should not even have been threatened, far less punished.

Was France guilty? In presence of the determined will of a nation, what was the use of fairy tales about the English or the Russians? It could only strengthen France and render service to the common cause. Create an entente that could but give courage to those who lacked it! How imprudent to proclaim such a community of interests.

Was a French minority guilty? What better way to weld it to the majority, than to punish the latter. The Germans were merely going out of their way to enlarge the circle of their enemies.

Only German morality could penalize Peter to punish Paul.

Only German policy, conceiving collaboration as necessary to its cause, could hasten to prove that it looked upon such collaboration as a lie.

Only a German could fail to be embarrassed by such a dilemma.

Be that as it may, a whole gamut of pains and penalties, ranging from vexations to murder with extortion thrown in, was introduced in reply to these killings and other acts of sabotage.

The pains and penalties were applied with mailed fist or velvet glove, as caprice or inspiration dictated.

As soon as a gray-green man lay in the street or on the sidewalk, the walls were covered with Gothic posters to this effect:

> "The Feldkommandatur of Trifouillis in reprisal for the cowardly attack on . . . (date) . . . upon . . . (name) . . . a member of the Army of Occupation has ordered curfew to be imposed every day for a week at 4 P.M., etc., etc."

Pains, penalties and punishment rained upon the land.

The *feldgrau* of the poster let go the hand of the hatless woman and dropped the baby to level his rifle with unerring aim at the husband of the woman and the father of the child.

If the poster was a fake, the scene itself was true.

Hostages were shot, anybody was shot.

At first they were shot with only local publicity. At times they were shot in secret, as a pervert indulges his vice to safeguard his reputation and respectability.

Then a day comes when he no longer resists the pleasure of exulting in it! If Pétain waited till then to protest, only his Jesuitism is to blame, unless it be that his Minister of the Interior was singularly secretive. Pétain was not trying to save the honor of France but only his own face, for many innocent Frenchmen had fallen beneath German bullets without a voice being raised in protest.

When the lists of victims thus blindly done to death is published, a cry of horror will rise to heaven. Is it possible, people will say, that the Germans can have been guilty of such awful carnage?

Yes, coldly, deliberately and day by day.

Many, many patriots were thus massacred under the label of Gaullism or communism. The mass murder of Chateaubriant is notorious. There were many others.

Those patriots belong to us. They were our soldiers, our greatest soldiers. They faced the firing squad singing the *Marseillaise*. They died for France. France sustained them.

A martyr has resources unknown to the common man. He pays the heavy ransom of love.

These patriots thirsting for France are the "valiant and the strong." Their names will be inscribed not here but in the

Book of Glory. They will have no shrine more vast or resplendent than the length and breadth of our land.

There were many Jews among them, to their honor and to ours. I shall not speak of them, but of the "little Jews," the freshly naturalized, the bedazed Jews suddenly thrust before a firing squad.

What did the German care. Those defenseless victims he murdered without shame, on them he wreaked his crimes of sanguinary lust.

Here are just a few cases.

Mayer Zaubermann, a man of forty-one, 18 Passage de la Main d'Or in the Faubourg St. Antoine. Naturalized French in 1932. Called to the colors and discharged as father of five children. Interned at Drancy. Shot on December 15, 1941, as a hostage.

I have before me the note he wrote to his family from the prison, a discolored bit of paper. Here it is in all its lack of eloquence.

"Prison of the Cherche-Midi
December 14, 1941

"Dear Mina and children:

"I send you my last farewell. Tell the children to be brave and good to you, for this is my last night. Tomorrow morning I shall be executed as an innocent hostage.

"Pray for me.

"Zaubermann, Mayer

"P.S. I kiss you good morning, Monday morning at 7 o'clock. Kisses for you and the children.

"Dear wife:

"You must send to the Cherche-Midi prison for my things and five hundred francs. Kiss all the family for me. For you and the children my last kisses. Think of me always.

"Zaubermann"

The poor man kisses, kisses. He can think of nothing else. I never knew him. I cannot imagine him otherwise, in the disarray of his last moments, than turned toward his dear ones in a gesture of tender misery.

I saw one of his daughters, little Micheline Zaubermann, who was about six years old. A lovely child of irresistible charm.

After the storm, that dispersed her family to death or deportation, she is the delight of the good people who managed to hide her.

I cannot believe that we owe her nothing.

In the person of her father it was a Frenchman who was struck down. One perhaps not over-vigorously French, but more one of us than he knew. He left to us, in his children, pieces of our own flesh, and that we recognize as such.

Like Sammy, Micheline is a Parisian child.

Morfeld, a baker, 31 Rue du Cormier on the Pre St. Gervais was also a naturalized Frenchman. He was mobilized. The Germans shot him as a hostage on December 12, 1941. He left six French children, the oldest eleven, the youngest two.

But I will confine myself to a really unique incident, the incredible story of the victims of the Rue Crozatier.

I have told elsewhere of the misfortune of the Jewish inhabitants of a large tenement house, 58 Rue Crozatier. A youth wearing the Star of David had dared to go to the motion pictures and was caught in a police cordon. All his co-tenants of the Jewish faith were held responsible and arrested.

That was an odious measure. But it was hard to imagine that it would lead to another so abject as to surpass the bounds of crime.

At a time when the German was drunk with the blood of

hostages murdered before the eyes of a terrorized people, some Nazi bureaucrat decided that all male inhabitants of 58 Rue Crozatier would be excuted. No sooner said than done.

Among the victims, I noted the names of:

Tascha Frydaman, a Pole, who served in the army for thirteen months, was discharged but did not enjoy liberty, for long as twelve days later he was taken in the Rue Crozatier raid and sent to Drancy. Three months later he was shot, leaving a young wife and three children, all of whom were interned at Pithiviers on July 16, 1942, and deported.

Mayer Goldstein, a Pole, who had volunteered for service in the French army, wounded and discharged, was shot the same day as his friend Lewergen, also a Pole, who was in the army thirteen months and after his period of training spent a month at the front. Discharged, he was arrested, sent to Pithiviers and soon afterward shot with his comrades, the order for their execution having taken some time to reach the camp authorities. He was executed early in March, 1942, and left a very young wife and a nine-month-old baby.

His only consolation was to send to his wife the order for his execution which read "Innocent but a hostage."

Perhaps in his simple-minded way he thought that to serve captive France as a civilian was a crime, and he did not wish his memory to be a reproach to the offspring that bore his name.

De Minsky, also a tenant of 58 Rue Crozatier. I have only a note written by him. Here it is:

"Dear wife and child:

"I am sentenced to death by order of the German Kommandatur, and you know I have never done anything except hard work. Now the day has come, and my life is to end and

we must take things as they come. Take care of my child that he may be strong and always well. I kiss your brow and our little one.

"Minsky"

He, too, was "Innocent but shot as a hostage."

Poor devils.

Pity is even stronger than indignation.

It was with their blood that we were spattered.

It was with the blood of humble workers that the enemy smeared his face and his hands.

Was he not ashamed? Did he not understand the nature of such murders?

Heroes may give their lives. They do so willingly. They risk their lives. They glory in the magnitude of the risk.

Heroes belong from their first deed to legend, and sooner or later legend claims them for her own.

Heroes are sustained, uplifted by faith.

But poor little street-bred people who have never risen to such heights, who with simple joy, in peace and labor, acquired for themselves French nationality, who never raised their eyes to the skies above, good little people who shouldered their rifle when they were told and who returned it with the same docility, to think only of their wife, their children, their job. Victims who stupidly believed that life continued, was it not infamous to massacre them by the thousand?

They were so-called hostages, the dew that in some seasons the enemy let fall every day from its prisons upon us.

CHAPTER

# VII

## *Journey to "Pitch-Point"*

IT WAS on August 21, 1941, that Drancy entered into Jewish history.

Drancy, notorious for all time, may well be described as one hell of a place.

On the site of a few farms and family holdings, just where the plain of Le Bourget borders the outskirts of the forest of Bondy, a village had grown up by the haphazard grace of real-estate developments. The site reminds one, in uglier, of the "gloomy plain" of Waterloo, which dies down against the forest of Soignes. The same rich gently undulating earth, cut by straight roads as far as one can see. The same monotonous horizon, the same sad and naked landscape. A real gathering place for crows, in winter.

No armies clashed at Drancy. The fate of no empire was decided there. In coaching days it sometimes happened that highwaymen who robbed the mails and despoiled lonely travelers earned a notoriety that went beyond the village of the roses with its cartloads of cabbages and beets. That was all.

Today the railroads have domesticated the gloomy plain. They imposed the site of the existing village. Along the tracks of the belt-line that runs around Paris and the sidings that

spread out from Le Bourget, hamlets and villages have sprung up. One of them, the Garden City of the Northern Railroad, sought to bring joy to some music-mad and moreover paralyzed gardener. Without even the disillusion of going there, he knows that there are blocks of houses facing each other across muddy lanes named after birds and flowers and operas, streets named for canaries, finches, tomtits, nightingales, larks and red-wings, streets named for roses, geraniums, forget-me-nots, anemones and primroses, streets named for Lakme, Manon, Faust, Mireille, Carmen, Mignon and Louise.

If one turns one's back to this ferroviatic, orthinological, floral and operatic Drancy one can see on the outskirts of Bobigny and Blanc-Mesnil, at the blind end of the Avenue Williams, the new barracks of the 22nd Legion of the *Garde Republicaine mobile,* which has now earned for itself world-wide notoriety.

No prison—not even the Plombs or the Chatelet or the Conciergerie—has known in all its history what Drancy saw in three short years. None can rival it in the number and diversity of its inmates. None has harbored so many infants and old people. None has counted so many hours of anguish.

The retreat of June, 1940, drove the *gardes mobiles* from their barracks. The Germans occupied them on the surrender of Paris, and used them as a camp for their prisoners of war.

In June and July, 1940, they were something more than the witnesses of France's great misfortune, they were a stage setting for a "Warning to France."

Covered with vermin, dirty, in rags, deflated by dysentery, their feet in soleless shoes, the poor devils begged for food. So near to Paris, some measure of relief was organized. A few loaves of bread reached them, a few opium pills. We did not

want our soldiers to feel abandoned. Were they alone in their utter misery? On the other side of the walls people were still wandering on the roads, coming back to violated homes. France hesitated to look at herself in a broken mirror.

But the prisoners of Drancy cried "treason." Everybody cried "treason." Ruins, perforce, had to be sowed, but the cry of all France was spontaneous: "We have been betrayed." It had barely sprung up before it was ripe. Laval kept on saying, "We must think of the crops." Benoit-Mechin wrote his "Harvest of 1940." The harvest of souls yielded but a single cry, "We are betrayed."

That was serious.

It is all very well to say that all vanquished peoples are the same, that this cry is the first that rises from the depths of defeat and that it must not be heeded. In June, 1940, the soul of France gave no other harvest. If later on hope was able quietly to sow its seed in French hearts it was because the Germans were losing. It was because the idea of resistance was obliterating that of treason.

This cry "We are betrayed" was echoed by the walls of Drancy up to the end of the war. On August 21, 1941, the place changed its inmates, but not its atmosphere. The air one breathed was what had emanated from the Pétain dictatorship from its very inception, no matter what efforts were made to change it. The French were betrayed. The French had been betrayed. Pétain's past was one long betrayal. Whether soldiers or Jews were interned at Drancy, they were being delivered up to the enemy. Even this very barracks of the *gardes mobiles,* built to stem the rising anger of the people, was devoted to works of treason.

On August 21, 1941, all the Jews of the XIth Arrondisse-

ment (Popincourt) were arrested in their homes. From the Faubourg du Temple to Charonne through Fontaine au Roi, the Oberkampf quarter, the Chemin Vert and the Folie Regnault, from the Filles du Calvaire to Menilmontant through La Roquette Saint-Maur, the Rue Basfroi and Godefroy Cavaignac, there was one immense raid. Only men at first. A manhunt for six thousand five hundred individuals, of all classes and of all nationalities, especially French. They were rounded up and carried off to Drancy.

The Popincourt quarter, one of the most thickly populated in Paris, was the theater of scenes of agony, stupor, despair, terror. An entire volume would not suffice to describe the details of the vast operation. Some were colorful, none but was odious.

A single anecdote may serve to illustrate.

The Rosincher couple lived at 76 Rue St. Maur. These little people were at home when the police arrived. There was no bell at the door of their humble dwelling. The police knocked. No one answered. They knocked louder. Then they burst open the door and packed the couple off to Drancy. His case was "aggravated" as the police say, he had resisted.

Besides he refused to answer, clearly a proof of his intractability. Some light was shed on the strange behavior of the couple by a letter from the President of the French and Foreign Association for the Deaf and Dumb. They had not opened their door, they had not replied to the questions of the police because they were deaf and dumb.

"Former pupils of the National Institution of the Deaf and Dumb, 254 Rue Saint Jacques, they can neither hear nor speak.

"It is true they are of Polish origin but their long residence

in France, their honesty and decency, their benevolence toward others more unfortunate than themselves, have earned them the friendship and esteem of all classes of the deaf and dumb."

After a life of love and labor, Rosincher is deported in the first batch, without knowing with what crime he is charged, while his wife goes to hospital to have her baby.

Can one imagine what passed in this man's mind when he was shoved into a cattle car? What had he done? Why was he being tortured?

A couple of deaf and dumb people had joined together to do good. They aspired to nothing else. They understood nothing else. The world had closed over them in the music of the deaf and the language of the dumb, only to reopen suddenly on a vision of violence. These walled-in people found nothing in their repertory to express the anguish and the horror they felt.

Is it possible that no one noticed they did not hear because they were deaf and did not speak because they were dumb. Nothing is more likely. Bullies do not bother about such trifles.

Original sin rested upon the Rosinchers. They were deaf and dumb as they were Jews, without more intent.

After the raid, life went on as usual in the quarter. Anxiety was general. Many of these Jews were furriers. The fur trade, passing through a crisis, was not greatly affected as the Germans had not yet had to face a Russian winter. But it seemed to the small shopkeepers and artisans, who were as Aryan as Vercingetorix, that they had been deprived of part of what precarious life was left to them. The little Paris that belonged to them had been molested.

This affair of the XIth Arrondissement, it was whispered in German circles, was a settlement of accounts. Too many soldiers had had their throats cut in the stews and brothels they patronized. It could only be a Jewish plot, even though in such places one never met the Jewish furriers of the quarter, all quiet and timorous people fond of family life.

This harvest of hostages did not make the pimps of the quarter less handy with their knives, but it served as an outline of the vast plan for the extermination of the Jews. Drancy became its head and front.

It was from this beginning that a distribution center was created for handling large numbers of victims, it was there that the system of deportation was perfected, and for this purpose the barracks were rearranged.

Forming a blind alley at the end of Avenue Williams is a tall building designed as living quarters for the married *gardes mobiles*. This edifice could not be used. To heat it required an immense amount of fuel. The first winter it was left empty had ruined the water supply system and part of the heating apparatus. The upper stories had become uninhabitable. Effective supervision was impossible. No internees were housed there.

Then there were the dormitories. Four large wings formed a square around a spacious courtyard. Closed on the outside they opened onto the courtyard through a number of regularly spaced doors. Each door gave access to a given number of dormitories, usually two on each floor, making up what the Germans called a block. Thus each door represents a block of dormitories numbered from 1 to 22. Beginning on the right the blocks numbered from 10 upward were used as sleeping

quarters for the inmates; on the left the blocks 1 to 9 housed those about to be deported.

Thus to the right, people who doubtless are prisoners. They have lost their liberty. They live together in conditions that are anything but pleasing to them. They expect the worst but they have their feet on the ground, the full width of their soles. What their eyes see is not of their choice, but they enjoy it as something that is still theirs. They live in a real world with their faculties, their desires, their self-control. They are chained, but they exist.

To the left are the damned. The word is not of my choosing. It is to be found in nearly all the letters smuggled out of Drancy. One hears it in all the confessions of eyewitnesses. A young man writes to his "dear little Lily," "Going away is a nightmare beyond imagination, no pen could describe. Dante invented nothing better." Let me say that this going away which takes place in atrocious conditions that I shall describe when dealing with the way Drancy is run, this going away conducted with the coldest brutality is the prelude to the most unreal, most mysterious, most unheard of journey, the journey that inmates of Drancy call the "Journey to Pitch-Point."

Everything you possess is taken from you and you are taken away.

Where to? The Germans themselves, who shout as they shove you into the cattle cars, do not know.

But everything is taken from you. You have nothing left. You are unable even to pay your toll fare across the Styx.

In fact you take nothing with you. Not even the pencil case your sister gave you for your birthday. You are stripped naked before being murdered, you are not even allowed the consolation of dying with your boots on. You are obliterated.

In the summer of 1941, the Nazi, thanks to the good offices of the Paris police, arrested all Jews who were members of the Paris bar and interned them at Drancy. It was the time when Vichy had begun to hunt the Jews. They were not allowed to hold any position in the government, the judiciary, the army, in banking, the press, the world of letters, in education, the theater or music or any of the main callings of social and economic life. Certain liberal professions, law, medicine and pharmacy were subject to the "numerus clausus" rule. The number of Jews allowed to continue to practice their profession was extremely small. By their forceful action against the Jewish lawyers, the Nazis were giving Vichy a lesson. They suppressed the lawyers radically. With Pierre Masse at their head, the Jewish members left the Paris bar, handcuffed. They left it for good, as Polish miners left their pits never to come back.

About the same time other Frenchmen, who were not Jews, were given a free trip to Berlin in very different circumstances. They were men of letters, painters, actors who indulged in the luxury of selling their country for a mead of praise or a handful of marks. That is what they thought they were doing. All they could sell was their honor, that had never amounted to much.

The internment of the Jewish lawyers was significant, if only as a counterpart to the trip of those Frenchmen whose honor had gone into mourning.

When anonymous denunciations concerned a Jew, they were always followed by action. Only rarely was any investigation made, never any preliminary inquiry.

Sometimes one man was arrested for another. When the police were sent to fetch a prisoner, they never returned

empty-handed. If they went to the wrong street, the wrong house, the wrong floor, the wrong flat or the wrong room; if they found the wrong man, the police always managed to bring back someone.

I can vouch for the case of one of my friends in Marseilles who, having time on his hands, went to call on a member of his family. As the man was out and expected to return immediately, my friend waited comfortably in an armchair, smoking his cigarette. The door opened. It was not his kinsman but the police who came to make an arrest and had no time to await the return of the man they were after. My friend was packed off to Drancy, where he did not stay long as he was just in time to join a trainload of deportees. Being an optimist, he believed to the last that the mistake would be rectified. At least he was a Jew. But when the Gestapo raided the offices of UGIF in the Rue de la Bienfaisance, it arrested the painters who were renovating the place and released them only with regret. It would willingly have de-Aryanized them.

Some measures might easily have been mistaken for the stake of a drunken bet, others as the consequence of a number fetish. A thousand deportees could not decently be entrained when there were only nine hundred and eighty of them. The twenty missing were rapidly culled from the street, by means of a few hurriedly formed police lines. A man who had gone out to buy milk, carried the empty bottle to Drancy. An old woman in slippers who was on her way to buy the morning paper, had time neither to read the false news to which she paid too much attention, nor to return for her toothbrush.

In incidents so revolting to us, the enemy saw only the liberal application of a principle near to his heart: a father pays

for his son; a man for whoever bears his name; a hobo for Mr. Morgenthau.

There were also times when you were not arrested for somebody else, but for alleged infractions of the anti-Jewish regulations.

The widow of General Billotte, former military governor of Paris, who had command of a group of armies in 1939–40, and was killed in Belgium in May, is an old lady who was rather spoiled. She did not have to wear the Star of David and was allowed to live in a hotel. Pétain, Laval, de Brinon exonerated her from regulations that were distasteful to her. They took her under their protection, which was the least they owed to the memory of her heroic husband, if they wished to appear decent. But when the Gestapo sent Madame Billotte to Drancy, her friends fell away from her. The three churls of capitulation had forgotten the very name of Billotte. It was the wife of one of the general's aides-de-camp who, taking her courage in both hands, made her way to the German field marshal in command of the Western front and obtained the release of the old lady, by appealing to his fellowship of arms.

Less fortunate the young girl wearing a Star of David who walked out with an Aryan friend near the Arc de Triomphe. Her friend went alone into a pastrycook's and got some éclairs that they ate together in the Champs Élysées. Then her friend went to a near-by post office to telephone. When she came out, one of the Doriot gang, more anxious to ambush the yellow star of a Jewish maiden than the red star of a Russian patrol, appeared and took the two frightened girls to the Rue Greffulhe. The little Jewess was charged with having made

use of her friend to obtain pastries and to telephone. There was nothing to prove that she did not know the people to whom her friend had spoken. She was bundled off to Drancy.

As no one had any means of defense, it was inevitable that monstrous and amazing errors, incredible abuses were committed. Those who expressed surprise were out of luck. They were quickly cured of such misbehavior.

However, it was less the improvised police measures, no matter how disagreeable to the victims, than general measures announced long in advance that created an actual neurosis of anguish among the Jewish people in Paris.

The Prefecture, where leaks always occurred, was the first to give the alarm to prospective victims. Every policeman had among his own friends a dozen people he wanted to warn, and each immediately became a winged messenger so that the bad news flew from street to street.

The grocer's wife ran to warn her customers, and the concierge her tenants. No matter how unlikely it seemed, what they had to say was true because the Prefecture was always well informed. It had to prepare the orders for the police and tear-gas squads. Its arrangements created alarm which its services spread, and the potential victims knew what was coming, knew it too well! The last night, thus brought to pass, was an awful experience even for the calmest people. Some went into hiding, others sent their children to stay with friends. Suitcases were packed and good-bys said. Everything was ready, and when dawn appeared everybody was up and dressed, waiting for the bell to ring. People watched the staircase, and lent ear to the noises of the street. At last it was daylight. Front doors opened, garbage cans were put out. One had escaped after spending a frightful night. There are scenes that one

cannot play over and over again in actual life without being worn to death. Liberty and life are no longer enjoyed when one expects to lose them at any moment.

The next week or the next month it began all over again. So the obsession of the telephone—until the Jews' telephones were cut—mysterious visits some of which were unexpected and ended in blackmail, the guileless solicitude of friends, the perfunctory pity, or even the vigilant malignity of others, added to the anguish. Jews could not forget what their fate was to be.

Besides, the police did not pick up everybody. Their lists were fanciful or their information incomplete. The raids on Rumanian Jews would spare a few Rumanians, so as to enable them to make up the quota of Baltic or Mediterranean Jews of whom there were fewer. A Jew who, knowing himself in danger, slept away from home, was likely to be taken in bed some night when another quarter than his own was being raided.

What happened to women, children and old people was governed by laws even more unfathomable. There was a time when only the breadwinners of families were taken, so that poor people, even cripples, were left without resources. When women were subjected to internment, little school girls became housewives, washed the kids, carried out garbage cans as big as themselves, went out to fight tooth and nail for bread and got on as best they could till their turn came. Soon no one could tell who might not be arrested. Sometimes one, then the other. The Germans did not destroy a family, they mutilated it in such a mad way that, in the Rosenberg home, for instance, Marcel, a boy of sixteen, was sent to Drancy before his brother Joseph who was twenty-two or his sister Sarah who

was twenty; that a wife was interned six months before her husband; that an old man of seventy-four was the first to be taken of a numerous family many of whose members were in the full bloom of manhood. Uncertainty was added to injustice.

It was only in 1943, under the reign of Brunner, that the decision was taken to intern and deport entire families, and that mothers who would not tell where they had hidden their children were flogged.

At Drancy one is on fatigue duty, or one is exonerated. It is possible that in other circumstances, young bourgeois and young peasants may have learned something from such common tasks, but no one ever thought of it as a blessed exercise for women and children of all ages from the tenderest to care-ridden adults long past military age.

If fatigue duty goes on as usual, no visits are allowed at Drancy. Everything that formed the warp and weft of the inmates' former lives was outside: family, business, friends. It is from your family that comes the best part of your food, for you are on famine rations, until Brunner decides to do away with individual parcels and allows only collective shipments, which become rare as time passes. So you expect everything from outside, the weekly postcard censored by the Prefecture that reaches you through the UGIF. You are not content with that. You want more news and more food. You still have a little money on you, perhaps a large amount. Under German rule the regular market has become a miserable front behind which the black market flourishes. At Drancy, more even than elsewhere, you must pay tribute to the black market. The long chain of intermediaries it entails ends with

your warder. Everything is for sale save liberty, everything finds a buyer.

Behind the hideous enforced idleness, broken by monotonous fatigue duty, there is a madhouse, a weird madhouse, vibrant with desire and fugitive possession, a secret madhouse, the clandestine, with its incredible throng of crooks and dupes.

A crowd in the throes of anguish will mill around vainly without ever coalescing. It will be prone to mysterious actions, it will bargain for anything, shirts, tobacco, silk stockings, false papers, love letters, securities, pieces of bread, earrings, ideas or paper wrapping with scraps of butter or paté.

A madhouse! Such is the impression one derives from reading over in cold blood letters scribbled in pencil and folded in banknotes that have passed out in the pockets of the police, from reading these appeals quivering with well-whetted appetite for life, from anecdotes one hears out of the mouths of those who have escaped. They have seen the most unimaginable things sold, the most unsaleable things bought. They craved the impossible, not to have to suffer for the lack of necessities. The go-betweens got rich quicker and the internees did not always receive what they wanted. Here are some excerpts from letters:

> "There are crazy men and women here with yells, strait jackets and all that goes with them. There are women who fall from windows, miscarriages, tuberculous people and others with venereal disease, all mixed up with pregnant women and a hundred vermin-infested children."
>
> "Curretage is performed with finger nails."
>
> "The filth is frightful. Bugs as big as drawing pins."

For page after page, this misery runs straight along. One can hear it panting. Some lines are but cries. When they can

let themselves go, all the inmates have the same accent. Each document gives the same sound, the same harrowing tone, the same note of frightfulness.

But what gave its real character to the forced holidays of the Jews, was the "Journey to Pitch-Point."

The journey began under the most terrible auspices, about which no one was able to speak. It probably gave all it promised. "Pitch-Point" was silent. It did not dare reveal its secret. For months not a voice had been heard and this silence frightened the inmates of Drancy more than if they had had to dig a grave with their own hands. A word, the most sordid lie, would have reassured them. That word was never uttered. As these poor people used to write to their families, "I leave tomorrow for what is officially called 'an unknown destination.' "

It was only in January, 1943, that a few postcards arrived from deportees who had been sent to the Birkenhau camp in Silesia. So there were people who lived on the other side, voices from beyond the cattle cars? Some unfortunates still lived, who had managed to cross the haunted threshold.

As a matter of fact that proved nothing. New circumstances dictated exceptional measures. Germany felt the approach of defeat, at last visualized the punishment of her crimes, and feared. Besides she was fighting to the death, she needed all and everyone. Straining in a final effort she undertook ant-like works. To complete her hours of labor, innumerable and useless, to continue her incessant digging into a soil of adverse fate, Germany needed man power. She spared lives to endure.

It was none the less true that human beings by tens of thousands had made the "Journey to Pitch-Point" without leaving any trace.

Death is usually less discreet, than at "Pitch-Point."

If a few rounded the corner, that detracts nothing from the horror of the journey. The women, the children, the old people never spoke again.

One must have lived among those unfortunates whose mouths were to be closed forever. One must have heard the words: "He is to be deported. He has been deported," to realize the magnitude of the trial, its superhuman scope.

*"Madame se meurt, Madame est morte."*

By the voice of the first comer, one can almost hear Bossuet. Alone in the kingdom of letters Bossuet was able by improvident eloquence to invest emotion with mountain-like grandeur and gravity. Alone his prose can serve to scan the funeral chant of the Jews.

Jews are not hung or beheaded or shot. They are deported. Thrown pell-mell into the well of deportation.

To really understand how, facts must be given.

There was Réné Blum, but his departure was an arrival, the end that wise men attain. One refuses to think whether he was tortured and killed on the way, the last moments of his death. The vision is unbearable.

Wherever charity was done the name and person of Madame Getting were venerated. This old lady could not appear at an international congress in Palermo, Washington, Berlin or Copenhagen without being respectfully acclaimed by its members. Her whole life had been devoted to others, to others whomever they might be, to all who suffered. She had lived only to help, to succor. She had spent her fortune to help. She had begged and raised money to do good. Her time, her nights, her thoughts, had no other aim. She had already made a name for herself in the French Red Cross when she conceived the need for welfare workers in hospitals and provided them. The

sick, the wounded, needed more than medical attention, they needed someone to enter into their intimacy, their domestic cares, their material difficulties, needed that these be lightened, be solved, that help should not be confined to the hospital but should be continued as long as it was necessary. The social welfare worker was brought into being. Nevertheless Madame Getting continued to fight on at her peace post, to create a tradition of welfare work, to form generations of welfare workers, to enrich the love of man for man with other good works.

It was discovered that she was a Jewess when the Pétain decrees drove her from the Red Cross. They could not get along without her advice, and from undercover she tendered it in such a way that the new-fledged executives could take it without offense. She gave it regularly, without title, without reward, without gratitude.

When the Germans created UGIF she placed herself at the disposal of the young organization. There were unfortunates to defend, women without support, motherless children. To the latter Madame Getting devoted the unswerving activity of her seventy-five years. She did so on one condition. To attract members to the UGIF the German had given them a safe-conduct, a pass. They were the only Jews who could not be arrested without warning. At least that is what they believed but, according to well-established German custom, the safe conduct was only "a scrap of paper." Madame Getting was unaware of this detail when she refused all such privileges, including that of being better protected than the last of the Yiddish.

She worked at UGIF. She was there every day, rain or shine, always ready to help, always able to do some good. It

may be that she saved more children than she had the right to, it may be that she destroyed records to prevent these children being traced, but when one remembers that some of the delinquents were only a few months old, no human being could blame her.

At noon on July 30, 1943, the Gestapo raided the premises of UGIF in the Rue de la Bienfaisance. Everybody was arrested and sent to Drancy. Madame Getting was in the lot. The news stunned all people of good will. No one doubted that the old lady would be released immediately, yet her arrest seemed odious beyond words. Days passed. Paris was on the alert, decent people outraged, the poor shuddering. Appeal followed appeal. In vain. Finally her friends were allowed to send Madame Getting a toothbrush. The old lady had been carried off without anything, a woman of her age and social standing had neither a piece of soap or a nightdress she could call her own.

It was the last straw. Courageously Father Riquet wrote an indignant letter to Pétain pointing out his duty. The French nation was more indebted to Madame Getting than to any Marshal of France. The head of the State could not do less than intervene, for his own sake and the honor of France. The Man of Defeat never even replied.

One month after her internment Madame Getting was deported. She belonged, the Germans explained, to the Rothschild family, but the Rothschilds to whom she was related had nothing in the world to do with the Rothschilds of finance. That was only a detail. The old lady who, with unequaled science and authority, had given the best that was in her, left France without more ado as part of the contents of a cattle car. An animal among fifty others.

Oh what an immense pity would have overcome those she had helped, if they could have seen her thus. How that host would have cried out with a single heart: "We are here. We will not leave you. Your strength fails you. Don't you feel that we are with you."

At Drancy one learns that one is on the list of deportees. One is searched, then isolated like a leper and embarked. After that God alone knows what one is.

Each of these operations bears the hallmark of despair.

The list contains a thousand names. That is the number. Fifty people in each cattle car, that makes a twenty-car train. If, during the preliminary operations someone commits suicide, even if he kills himself when being loaded into the car, he is at once replaced. The train does not leave till it has its full toll of one thousand. This is idiotic because even supposing that some day the train will arrive somewhere, there will no longer be a thousand. Far from it. But in the immense Garden of Torture that modern Germany has become, not a single executioner will forego a single pain he has been ordered to inflict. Nothing else interests him.

The lists are incoherent. No one can tell why this child of five is deported while its mother remains at Drancy. No one can tell, because it is senseless. At first they only deported men under fifty-five. Later all distinctions were dropped. On a same list there were Frenchmen, foreigners, men, women, youths, children, the halt, the blind, the deaf, the dumb, even a one-legged man. No one could possibly fathom the thought that had led to the drawing up of a list. The German loves system and despises thought.

However there were minor differences according to the

changes that occurred in the management of Drancy, where the flower of Nazi education passed in quick succession: Dannecker, Erichson, Rathke, Brunner.

Dannecker, a howling madman incapable of even a glimpse of lucidity, at first had orders. As a good German he tried to carry them out. Happily so, for thus his scope of action was restricted, otherwise he would have deported the cats and dogs of the Jews because they did not wear the Star of David. He would have dug up every Jewish cemetery to send the dead to the devil.* He belonged in the horror films as much as in Italian comedy. He spent himself in a delirium, the effects of which were imprevisible and comic. When he decided to intern a lady named Lang, who failed to obey his summons because she had a tumor on the brain and that very day was being operated on by Clovis Vincent, he deported all the Langs because their name was Lang. He could not resist the pleasure of proving offhand to his victims his knowledge of the finer points of the French language by reciting to them all the words deriving from the substantive "merde" and conjugating with many gestures the allied verbs. He deported by fits and starts. At least he was insane, and at times a real paroxysm with screams, foaming at the mouth and kicking, served to take his mind off murder. When the storm had subsided people began to breathe again. They showed themselves as little as possible in the vain hope that he was capable of everything, even of forgetting you.

Erichson who succeeded him had more continuity of purpose. He yelled less, but seemed more cruel. Young and handsome like his predecessor, wearing a tight-fitting tunic with the

* In Alsace a Jewish cemetery was plowed up and made into a playground.

elegance of a professional pander, with hair the color of ripe wheat and a bull neck, he too deported as fast as he could with no more method than if he had been mad. Under his proconsulate women and children knew the agonies of departure. However, he did restore their liberty to a number of people (Frenchmen and former veterans who had complied strictly with the regulations) whose presence at Drancy no one could explain. This modicum of justice was not extended to those who had been arrested as hostages.

Rathke who came next, also deported many people. In some rare cases he seemed accessible to pity but no one could say whether or not money and the condescension of comely wenches had something to do with it.

The last of the lot, Brunner, the smiling captain, succeeded in making the others regretted. If Dannecker was incapable of conceiving, understanding or applying a policy; if Erichson and Rathke tried to do so with the zeal of blinkered underlings; Brunner lacked neither ideas nor intelligence nor initiative nor tenacity. His program was of intense clarity. To obliterate all Jews as quickly as the precarious state of communications would permit. With this end in view he drew up a plan of operation which he proceeded to carry out.

As his aim was to exterminate everybody and to allow no one to escape under cover of disorder, families were gathered together to be deported as a whole. The hunt for children was organized and grew to scandalous proportions. Scientifically applied torture drew from mothers the secret of their hiding places. Brunner marked up points even against maternal love.

As finally all the Jews of Paris were to be arrested, any pretext served to take them into custody. Whatever road one took

led to Drancy. No matter how grotesque the incident, it always ended there.

The freakiness of the Brunner proconsulate, its seeming contradictions, were only the result of inflexible rigor. If to amuse the inmates and educate them in German ways they were flogged; the buildings were washed; the camp embellished, made cleaner and neater. If to maintain order, the too easy-going, too-corruptible, too-inefficient French police were replaced by Jewish inmates terrorized by the weight of their responsibilities, by the knowledge of dire punishment for the slightest laxity and of the hatred aroused by their authority, it was because this gave better results. Nothing could have made the discipline of the camp better, and the price paid by the miserable Jews thus transformed into policemen was only a war tribute, another turn of the Nazi screw. If Brunner suppressed the reception of individual parcels—the distribution of which entailed time and labor while the consumption of their contents in public emphasized the injustice of social equalities—and replaced them by collective shipments of food equally distributed and correspondingly rare, it was less to starve the inmates than to correct their lack of tact and initiate them into the egalitarian principles of a Nazi organization.

Above all, no one was given time to become attached to his last residence.

As a matter of fact the inmates were not given time even to acquire bad habits.

Under Brunner, Drancy was run with all the efficiency of the best redistribution center of the German army. The obstacles he had to overcome had nothing to do with his organization, but were due exclusively to conditions foreign to it.

Hitler had lost too much rolling stock in Russia. He was still holding too wide a front to permit the exodus of the Jews to attain proportions "unparalleled in history."

Otherwise Drancy would have been merely a sandstorm.

In the camp the first act of deportation—abandon hope!—fell upon one's shoulders like a downpour of rain. One's name was on the list. One was condemned. For a few moments one was still like the other inmates, one saw the line of cots, one saw one's companions. Yet one had the feeling of dying alone in a desert.

Some reacted no more than steers being led to slaughter. They went where they were pushed. They obeyed a voice and a shove. But attitudes differed according to the self-control of the victim, according to his or her education, modesty, courage, sex. Thus it was rare for women to take things lightly. Pleasantry is not a weapon they use to defend themselves. They did not call deportation the "Journey to Pitch-Point." They did not coin the phrase. They are too quick, too impressionable. Some ran up the stairs to throw themselves from the top windows. They tore themselves from arms that held them back. They neighed with impatience, their ardor for death was greater than their ardor for pleasure had ever been. It spread like wildfire. Thus in a single morning at Pithiviers, nine women killed or seriously wounded themselves rather than face deportation. The dying were entrained on stretchers despite the protest of the French doctor on duty at the station. Some of them did not even have their wounds dressed, and two died before the train started. As usual, two others were deported in their stead. A woman named Pliska threw herself out of a fourth-story window at Drancy. Before crashing down

she raised her arms and cried that she gave "her life that other Jews might not suffer." She was taken to the Rothschild hospital, where she died on October 2, 1942. Mothers willingly killed their own children. There were many who swore to do so, but fewer who actually went to that extremity. Thus a group of Drancy's inmates saw two young babies hurtling out of a window, followed by a little girl and two women. The young Korn swore that she would strangle her two children if she or they were marked for deportation, and she kept her promise. Other unfortunates were seen throwing themselves on their little ones with a razor. Indescribable scenes where fright and folly mingled.

Men did not commit suicide in the same way. They used a knife. I had occasion to attend one who had cut himself open from the neck to the pubis. Dr. Herskovitz, a Rumanian, threw himself beneath the wheels of a moving car and his two thighs were crushed.

The list of suicides is long and monotonous. French or Jewish flesh paid a handsome tribute of blood and suffering. No misdeed could be deserving of such penalty, but if one remembers that it was the reward of innocence, words fail to speak of it.

What was the reaction of the Nazi to such scenes?

That of bureaucrats.

They could not forgive the dead their importunate deaths. They could not tolerate the impropriety of deaths that obliged them to make over a list, and they made their vengeance felt.

It is at such times that one really understands the mentality of this species of bureaucrat, a mentality that entitles it to be set up in wax at the Musée Grevin alongside such assassins

as Tropmann. The same unhurried cruelty, well ordered and machine-like, executed with strict and proficient elaboration. The same effects.

Dead or injured, those who threw themselves out of windows were left where they fell for hours, if not all day long, on the sidewalk, in their blood. *Verboten* if they are dead, that their faces be covered or their limbs straightened to give more serenity to their remains. *Verboten* if they are injured that their wounds be tended or their lips moistened as they cry out in their thirst.

They still belong to the executioner and to him alone. They thought they would escape by seeking refuge in death. They will enjoy neither the peace of silence, nor the peace of respect. All the inmates will be made to walk past their remains or their convulsions. They must bear witness before men, to the last limits of disgust and horror, of the anger of the sovereign bureaucrats. The Greater Reich will not let them off so easily.

The day is marked by a few suicides. But the real story is elsewhere.

Go down into the courtyard following the staircase as all must do, go down with the people on the list and follow the track of their emotion. It is in the hubbub of the courtyard that one grasps the essential features of deportation, that one exhausts the theme of deportation sufficient to the day before penetrating further into its horrors.

In the courtyard is a space surrounded by barbed wire. Opposite blocks, 12 and 13, is a wooden shed where the police assigned to deal with the Jews proceed to search them. On the other side is a space where those who are to be deported are huddled before being packed into cattle cars. In the interior

of the rectangle are lines of barbed wire that channel the deportees from the first blocks (Nos. 1–9) where they were sent as soon as they were marked for deportation, to the shed where they are searched, and from there leads them back alongside the preceding path, dispossessed of all their belongings, reduced to their lowest material expression, to the place where the autobus awaits them.

The search, everything gravitates around the search.

One expects it, one is subjected to it. One is searched.

One expects it without knowing what to expect. One can imagine but not invent it. Those among the inmates who had the least illusions about their future kept a whole lot of things, things they had on them when they were arrested or even that had been sent to them at Drancy. Not only linen, but the most miscellaneous assortment of souvenirs, the precious and futile nothings that appeal to the heart, the "trappings of sentiment." Nothing could be more uncouth or laughable. In alien hands such things become ridiculous and shameful, they fall to dust, but in hands that for years have cherished them, what a magic wand, how they lend a new lease to life, how they recall the trodden way.

The miserable inmates also kept things as witnesses of their existence: a tiny mirror to see their own faces, a comb to recreate their familiar aspect.

To these symbols, dearer than one can imagine, was added another that held an appeal for all in the form it had assumed: wealth.

Banknotes, securities. Paper in the wallets or sewed into the linings.

And then women's jewelry, and in mid-summer on the backs of the women, furs.

Then suddenly the truth confronts you. You are in the cave of a mountain brigand, a mountain brigand with no more decency than a hog. One may have forgotten it because he was occupied with other robberies, but now it is your turn. You are to be searched and stripped of all your belongings. A search that will remove every symbol of your existence, every outward sign of your personality, reduce you to your narrowest dimension, deprive you of your last resources.

Your death is to be a two-time affair. You are in the first phase of death.

You protest, you rebel in vain. You give way to gestures that would have no meaning if you were not reduced to this extremity.

Otherwise nothing of what you witness would be explicable. Otherwise you would spontaneously help the mountain brigand. You would be amused to see his pile of loot grow.

The search itself is odious. It would seem as if the gangsters who undertake it fear they have omitted some attribute of the crime they perpetrate. A few words will suffice to give some idea of it, but already around the search life is suspended like before some frightful storm.

The deportees are swept round in an infernal vortex. Perhaps they are unconscious of it. They indulge in actions, always the same and that seem so vain. They hand over and destroy, destroy and hand over. Some think they can keep something, forget to rid themselves of it, cannot resign themselves to destroy or to hand over everything, so that even the last pickings will be fruitful; all have handed over and destroyed much when finally searched. What curious things are seen. A society woman adorns the shoulders of some poor creature with a priceless fur that Goering himself might envy.

Everyone offers his neighbor something of which he is to be dispossessed, and his neighbor, who is in the same danger, refuses to increase his coming spoliation. Everyone goes, hands full of what was his, of what was his very self and hastens to get rid of it all. Thus he causes to disappear a little of himself. It is not without a note of pride that he gives the voluntary aspect of personal choice to the dispersal of his last wealth, that wealth that clung to his skin. A veritable fury of renunciation and destruction reigns. The latrines, the notorious collective latrines, where nothing could be hidden, are besieged. There one can see people busy tearing up banknotes, securities, family photographs, letters, into tiny pieces. The excrements are covered with multicolored confetti. Family heirlooms that no bankruptcy, no inheritance had ever dispersed are ground underfoot, broken, thrown down the drain.

Things that were the outward signs of earthy power are now worthless. True, people do not willingly dispossess themselves thereof, but things are not to be allowed to pursue their mission of power. They are destroyed. Nothing of them must remain. It is a little of oneself that escapes from the enemy.

Yet too much has been kept, for the search begins. With the large contingents to be deported it does not last less than six or seven hours. As her young swain wrote to "little Lily" you have to wait in line standing between barbed wire, whether rain pours or sun shines. The sick on stretchers are not spared.

The shed is occupied by the police "on Jewish duty," the plundering gang of the Rue Greffuhle. They take everything from unfortunate deportees. They do it joyfully, cynically, completely. Publicly they share the loot. They take everything, even fountain pens. They even steal rugs and overcoats. "The women are undressed and thoroughly searched."

This means that, without decency, their skirts are lifted, every hem and tuck is felt; they go even farther, they verify whether they have not swallowed their jewels or hidden them within themselves. All this is done in a brutal way. It is rare that the search is fruitless: a lock of hair in a medallion, sometimes a little cross of gold, for many Jews are Catholics, a wedding ring . . .

And the police continue to fight over their share of the spoils.

Leaving their hands, one has the feeling of being naked, as brutally naked as a corpse on a dissecting table.

What remains to the Jew. He has already crossed the threshold of death, he awaits the *coup de grâce*. It is not he who awaits it, it is the shadow of what he was.

But human nature is such that it does not tolerate sacrilege, that it elevates him who has been abased below his pride. A defenseless man cannot be outraged with impunity. The most repugnant trial reveals and raises him.

The outrage is complete. All that is now needed is to assemble the herd and entrain it. It is so easy. One has but beasts to deal with. As beasts are they treated.

From eighty to a hundred are huddled into each dormitory. All together, women, children, men. They will leave next morning at six o'clock, till then no one must leave for any reason whatever. Ill-fed entrails are deaf to all sense of decency. In a few hours the stench rising from each dormitory is unbearable. In those conditions the unfortunates who still retain human features must answer the roll call.

Their features—the souls of which they are witnesses—are not soiled by such misfortune. Outrage has cleansed them.

They bear the stigma of martyrdom, they express its purity.

It must always be so, that is why man is noble. A truth revealed in the persecution of the early Christians.

Finally there is a limit to horror, a moment when the features of the tortured express joy no matter what pains the executioners have inflicted.

God has touched his creatures.

Those who see the deportees go by, say:

"The morale of those who left was good."

This amazing, this miraculous phrase, I find it in letters and hear it from the lips of witnesses who often add:

"Better than ours."

Yet the worst is to come.

There on an empty siding are cattle cars, gray, sinister, open-doored, set on worn out axles. Into each car will be forced its human cargo: fifty unfortunates with a few days' rations, a cask of water, a pail for defecation. The car will be fastened, the car will be sealed.

Outside it rains, it blows, it snows, a torrid sun beats down. The dark box in which the Jews are locked reflect only inclemencies.

Those cars will stand forgotten for hours or days on sidings; they will roll on through unfathomable nights, in stinking air that no opening can change, shaking up a mass of humanity, torn by suffering, penetrated by death, that voids itself everywhere, a sightless jelly of the living and the dead.

The cars will roll on, carrying their cargo of invading corpses, their darkness where voices become scarcer, leaving in their wake a sickening stench across the German countryside.

Later it appears that the enemy did even worse, that he killed whole trainloads by hunger, by gas, that he completed

his work with bludgeons and revolvers. Is it not superfluous?

The journey's end, until the arrival of news from deportees in the Birkenhau camp at the beginning of 1943, remained shrouded in impenetrable mystery, as if the Nazi wished people to believe that they had outdone themselves. That they could not do. They finished off shapeless forms, they could no longer hurt them, they no longer feared anything, they had passed the last limits of suffering, they had written ineffaceable things across the face of German history.

No matter what German authors may some day write or say, to make us pity the old stones of Hamburg or Nuremberg, the naked and flaming sword of the archangel will always shine more brightly over the cattle cars that vanished.

The murderers have called down the last maledictions upon their country, and their enemies will appear as avenging angels.

Those who made the Journey to Pitch-Point, without arms or armor have taken their place in the van of that avenging host. In following, sword in hand, French soldiers will feel, perhaps better than they did for Danzig, that they are doing their duty.

CHAPTER

# VIII

## *Royallieu*

IT WAS only on December 12, 1941, that Nazi intent deigned to come out of the clouds, to take such precise shape that it was impossible to mistake it. Its meaning was plain. Perhaps the Nazis themselves were surprised at its lucidity.

Circumstances lent themselves to grand gestures. The United States, the greatest country, the century-old friend of France had entered the war against the Axis.

A raid was carried out.

Ill omens foreshadowed it. The temper of the victors had grown worse. An earlier curfew was ordered. People in the streets were stopped and searched with more care. Suddenly police lines would be thrown round certain quarters, piebald police lines, half Gestapo, half Vichy. Entrances to the subway began to look like open-air police stations. Then, during the weeks preceding the raid of December 12, the authorities of occupation had ordered the drawing up of full lists of all Jews who had fought in the last war, 1914–18. The idea was to avoid mistakes, combine tact with severity, grant a few favors to veterans of a bygone struggle, treat Jews who deserved it as unfortunate warriors, as brothers in arms, a handsome thing not unknown in the annals of war-like nations.

In the early hours of December 12, 1941, German police forced their way into the dwellings of seven hundred French Jews chosen one by one. The masters did the work themselves. They did not entrust so delicate a task to their French underlings. The idea was at one fell swoop to make a resounding catch. It was a "top-drawer" raid.

This was something really new. So far—apart from a few individual arrests, presumably dictated by considerations of security and the raid on the Jewish members of the Paris bar which seemed a delicate way of forcing the weak hand of Vichy—only ordinary people had been interned. That appeared to be the Nazi policy.

To intern, to deport ordinary people in a haphazard way or according to some more or less artificial system—Poles all together or the Jewish quarter of Popincourt—presented certain advantages.

But on December 12, the Nazis struck a heavy blow. They chose their prey. All the arrested were French, the majority veterans; more than four hundred out of seven hundred. The selection went farther, it was in the nature of a challenge. Once upon a time there was a France famous in the world; a France that in every sphere resisted German penetration. This France was led, formed, represented by certain classes of Frenchmen. In its diversity of action it formed a whole, and in this whole were Jews. Those Jews had to be maltreated, that the whole might collapse.

December 12 is more than symbolic. Jewified France is to be taught a lesson. Of course the Jews will suffer, but behind them so will the whole country. Vanquished France herself will pay the price of December 12. To the signs of her defeat,

were to be added those of her self-depreciation. Only the blind could fail to see it.

These seven hundred French Jews represented the elite. Probably they did not all deserve to. Some were envied. Some had rivals who denied their talents. Such is the price of success. Even admitting that their critics were right, these Jews were not to blame, or if they were they shared the blame with the public which had made their reputations.

Thus, Jews chosen from every leading or thinking section in the country, the most representative Jews, as far as possible those who enjoyed the esteem and consideration of their fellow Frenchmen, suffered the same fate as ordinary Jews, but they suffered it all together.

There were, huddled together in the riding school of the *Ecole Militaire,* covered by machine guns, separated from Paris whence they had been torn by a heavy door that opened only to admit new arrivals, great judges, Laemle, President of the *Cour d'Appel,* Robert Dreyfus, Counselor at the *Cour de Cassation,* other judges less well known, Revel the only Jewish *notaire* in the Seine department; weather industrialists, Andre Levy, a director of St. Nazaire-Penhouet, engineers, merchants. Gombel, general manager of the "Trois Quartiers" a great department store, officials, officers of the army whom the Germans had taken back to their home for them to change into civilian clothes; there were professors, scientists, astronomers, the historian Jacques Ancel who married Aulard's daughter, journalists, Colette's husband, playwrights, Jean Jacques Bernard, Spitzer, Arnyvelde the director of the Monte Carlo Opera, Réné Blum brother of the socialist leader, great doctors, Prosper Weill the famous ophthalmologist, and if

Jean Charles Bloch was not there it was because he committed suicide when the Gestapo came to arrest him.

All day long the seven hundred Jews waited in the riding school. They did not know why they had been arrested. They did not know what was to be done with them, but they would not have been surprised if they had been released, although some spoke of deportation. The dominant impression was that the measure was absurd and would be canceled from one minute to the next. The most extraordinary rumors circulated. Most of the arrested knew each other at least by sight, acquaintances were renewed, they talked with each other and found mutual affinities. The situation was anything but comfortable. The changed surroundings, hunger and thirst so important in the case of the well-to-do, the fatigue of a long day without a place to relax, the dust of the riding academy unceasingly trodden by an ever denser crowd, the anguish of being torn from one's family who could not know what had become of you, all entered into the picture. There were some very old men, one of whom fell from exhaustion near the door and lay there for a long time as the doctors who were present had nothing with which to render aid. But no one felt he was a Jew among Jews. Such a thought would have seemed ridiculous. They were all being persecuted by the enemy. Who were they looking for? They were all French, peaceful bourgeois proud of their French nationality, of their honors and charges, greatly upset and deeply offended at being treated like recruits in an army camp or requisitioned livestock, but seeking to hide their chagrin and surprise, to behave like the people they were, as polished gentlemen coming from a class where no matter what is done a man never loses his sense of dignity.

French, without provocation, they had the great honor to receive the blows of the enemy. There was a burden to bear and from the manner in which it was borne they would derive comfort. In civilian clothes they were the soldiers of an old if wounded ideal. That ideal must not be allowed to falter or to die. There are battles that do honor to the vanquished.

"What a pity," said one of them, "that there is not a Rothschild among us."

A short winter day that most of them saw dawn and die without leaving the riding school. Finally the German appeared, gesticulated, vociferated in extreme agitation, and after nightfall everyone left in cars for the Gare du Nord where amid these madmen milling round, gesticulation and shouting louder than ever, they were entrained for Compiègne and from there taken on foot to Royallieu, where they let themselves fall on the straw with their clothes on. From the first they had been treated with a total lack of regard, as brutally as if they had been convicts.

The camp of the distinguished Jews was next to the two other camps, that of the political hostages and that of the Russian, Red or White, who despising the few blackguards who had thrown in their lot with the Germans said, "We are united in our love for Mother Russia." Friendships sprang up. The Russians were good neighbors, but the political hostages, mostly communists, acted like brothers. France united those men so unlike each other, and carried them in her heart united in the same love and the same hope.

The "brothers" in the political camp were not subject to the same treatment. The communists ate badly, but they ate. They had two soups daily and could receive parcels and postcards. They were not intended for starvation, another kind of

death was in store for them. From time to time a few of them were taken out and shot. Alongside the "camp of slow death," the starvation camp, was the "camp of violent death," the "lobster-pound" as its inmates jokingly called it. At the height of starvation, when the Jews were only skeletons, men of few words and rare gestures, someone asked the Jews to rise from their straw mattresses and to look upon their neighbors from the windows of their block. A few men were being assembled who said a brave good-by and, as they moved away from their fellows pressing around them, the strains of the *Marseillaise* arose. That virile and sonorous war song enveloped them all, those about to die and those who watched them. There was an unforgettable paroxysm of emotion. France arose to accompany her sons in the snow and the wind, even into the soil where they were about to be buried.

The "lobster-pound" furnished food to the camp of hunger whenever it could, displaying treasures of ingenuity and tenderheartedness. Nevertheless, despite the secret arrival of parcels sent by their families and reaching those to whom addressed by the well-oiled channel of German guards, when the latter did not have the thoughtfulness to send them on to their own families in the Rhineland or Silesia, using the bribe to pay the shipping charges ("the best chicken I ever ate in my life," wrote one Gretchen as she licked her chops); despite the friendship of the communists and the Russians, the Jews were literally dying of hunger. That was the form of death to which they were sentenced. One cannot say that the head of the camp was inhuman, but his orders were strict. The death he was to deal out to his guests was explicitly enjoined upon him. What he did, for instance, to try to obtain permission for them to receive parcels, only brought him a repri-

mand. He hid his obedience to orders beneath a mask of polite indifference.

A loaf of bran for five or six, one soup a day—a ladleful of hot water—was all the food allowed, it was so little that the stomach received no appreciable nourishment. The first week this meal, craved for as soon as it had been taken, this disappointed and ever more imperious expectation, this unceasing gnawing of the body, this pursuit for which one's legs failed, was intolerable.

Soon it became a painless habit, an uneasy and ever near feeling that one avoided awakening, a peculiar state where the mind rode faster on ever lighter shadows, spurred through the void with deceptive gaiety. These unfortunates lived in a curious exaltation to which hunger lent a strange intensity. In other circumstances, men had been gathered together, in spite of themselves, in a common love of country and desire for her greatness, and one cannot help but think of those men. Daily, with their tin cups before them containing a starvation pittance, the symbolic Jews of Royallieu renewed the banquet of the Girondins. The noble behavior of the victims gave new and hitherto unexpected lines to the eternal figure of immortal France.

That is not how the Jews of Royallieu saw themselves, they were far too modest; but it is thus that history will see them.

At the end of December and the beginning of January the camp witnessed a phase of cerebral activity, of Girondine exaltation. It was then that significant discussions were in full swing in the dormitories, that recreative evenings were spent on which I shall dwell; it was then that, lightened and sharpened, their intellects bore witness. This was followed by a dulling, an edema of ideas, the slow agony of minds and

bodies, silence, the grasp of cold, with rectal temperatures around 95° F., the final faltering and painful motions, the collapse at last with on every back the cross of misery, that carnal identification that, as one of the victims said, gave to French Jews their true aspect of non-practicing Christians, fashioned by the Gospel while still belonging to the obedience of the Old Testament.

"Rarely"—confided a Jewish doctor at the camp—"has a biologist had an opportunity to observe the effects on man of inanition pushed so far, or to see them on such a large scale."

Elsewhere the German eagle, whose triumphal flight nothing so far had stopped, was beginning to flop. That was something really new and of obvious importance. Echoes of it reached the camp wafted by the icy wind, deformed, amplified, exaggerated. When it was learned that the famous Pincer movement against Moscow had been broken, leaving on the ground as spoils for the Russians the tanks taken at Sedan and on the Somme, rumors flew ever faster and faster; the Cossacks were at the gates of Königsberg, the King of Italy had abdicated!

At that time, which many will forget but that remains graven in my memory, a Frenchman had to be a victim, a sacrifice, a fragile and derisive wafer, a living symbol, containing all of France and offer himself up to every misfortune and trial, but also to the radiance of a great people enslaved and surviving only in the fiber of its sons. That duty was done. The winter was hard, very hard, harder yet for the vanquished who were starving behind barbed wire. One cannot be cold when one is already hungry. That is beyond human strength. That is pure agony. Some of the Jews of Royallieu lived through it. One must have seen from an actual photograph what the fea-

tures of an intellectual look like when emaciated by fasting, to fully understand the crime that such misery in such circumstances constitutes. We have seen in this century of abundant and facile documentation many fleshless corpses. Illustrated magazines that print them find a ready sale in countries where people eat well. But when one sees a face fashioned by intellect shrivel up and wither, be reduced without exaggeration to skin and bone, one is overcome by a feeling of shame.

The victims of Royallieu, within the triple ring of lost liberty, of misery, of hunger, in the isolation of a cruel winter, in a camp where they no longer had the strength to drag themselves about, were Frenchmen worthy of the trust and confidence that France had placed in them, of the honors she had showered upon them. They did their best to be such Frenchmen. They were such Frenchmen. Details I shall give to prove it beyond doubt, but I cannot deny myself the pleasure of convicting of deliberate falsehood the quasi-official spokesmen of anti-Semitism.

A typical experiment was carried out. An experiment one has the right to interpret but that one cannot neglect to observe because of its very character of a demonstration. Here are seven hundred Jews, men of parts, quick of tongue and of mind, gathered together and condemned to months of idleness. They are among themselves, far from any gentiles. The Gauleiter of Vichy has treated them as pariahs. What a free field for the *pilpul*. They can take full advantage of it. They are among themselves, *en famille* one may say. No one will interfere with them. They can at least take their revenge in a nice little avalanche of words. No one ignores that the *goyim* are the enemies of the Jews. They are, if one is to believe the anti-Semites, in the best possible condition to ferment. Noth-

ing is lacking. Here are Jews, the elite of Jews, eloquent Jews, super-Jews, persecuted by the *goyim*. They have nothing to do but to see themselves as Jews, understand each other, join together, express themselves. They will bear witness better than in a synagogue, for they will agree on many other issues than religious conformism or their monotheism so deprecated by the Nazi doctrinaires.

Everything will rise to the surface, blossom out and grow, the innermost heart, the deepest feelings, history, prehistory, the night of time whence a marvelous light is to be thrown upon the Jews of today and everywhere. In the camp at Royallieu are three thousand years of fables and of fairy tales. There is the Old Testament, a heritage Catholics and Protestants insist on sharing; there are all the crimes of patriarchal ages, stories to frighten little children, that were told from one tent to the next; the troubles of lawgivers who had to legislate for tribes long since dead; the joy of nomads who suddenly saw on the horizon the white walls of a city, the sparkling fountains, the cool gardens, and who were secretly harassed by ideas of possession and lust. There is Abraham who it appears sold his wife to Pharaoh! There is that bandit Mordecai with his niece Esther, the most obedient of girls, whom all Jewish fathers may envy. To this Esther, Ahasuerus can refuse nothing. And so she brings about the massacre of a multitude of Persians, and for thousands of years the Jews celebrate this massacre, the Purim, solely because they love blood. It is true, it is in the Book of Esther. This bestial habit of drinking warm blood in front of their altars, this annoying shortcoming, of which they cannot rid themselves if one would believe the most conservative of Nazi chroniclers, comes to them from Moloch and the Phoenicians. That habit must persist at Royallieu, along with

Abraham, with Mordecai and his niece, with the northern portals of our cathedrals, all complete.

There is the Jewess Poppaea who placed the sword in Nero's hand to slay the early Christians. Everything leads one to suppose that Jews and Christians were not without indulging in unfair competition in Rome. To Royallieu, the Jewess Poppaea.

There is Titus who, seventy years after Christ, destroyed Jerusalem. He had reasons of his own. They are perhaps not very modern reasons. The Roman empire had its Balkan question, but such problems are no more everlasting than empires. And the action of Titus endures with consequences he had not foreseen. To Royallieu, the action of Titus.

There are Jews without a country, without a land, thrown into exile by an emperor who sought none too gently to restore peace in the East, to the dismay of the Jews. The Levantines are always loudmouthed. It is the Diaspora, the dispersion. The Jews gather in the synagogues; they search the Old Testament through and through, the Old Testament that needs a serious dusting off. They squall, they dispute. Some are resigned, some vituperate and side by side grudges and hopes are collated in the Talmud. They are obstinate. They wish to endure, alas, they cannot make up their minds to bow before the universal law that does away with particularisms by the welding of individuals.

They resist Titus but remain Jews all the same. To Royallieu, the makers of Talmuds but also those who have nothing to do with it.

The books of the Talmud are of different dates, minds and sources, but all included in the lapse of time covered by two generations of enraged and transplanted Jews. The trouble is

that those books have not fallen into complete oblivion. If the Rabbis have taken pleasure, by a tendency common to all ecclesiastics, in ruminating over what was merely a commentary on more ancient texts, the ill-intentioned *goyim* threw themselves upon the great wrath of the Talmud; recognized it for the bedside book, the law, the lasting rule of Judaism.

Men of parts, Aryans or Jews, have reduced this jumble to its right proportions.

However the almost illiterate exegetes who, revolver in hand, keep watch on the other side of the barbed wire are certain that in the person of seven hundred distinguished Frenchmen they have interned the Talmud, its threats, its puerile challenge, and its cries.

Not only the Talmud.

Also at Royallieu is the Jewess Zeinad, who assassinated Mohammed. Doubtless it is she who all along our roads, among our columns of prisoners, massacred so many Moslems.

There are also, condemned to deny themselves, the great victims of the Dispersion, Ahasuerus, Cartaphilus, Isaac Laquedem, the Wandering Jew, whose career it is hoped to bring to an end.

> By thyself shalt thou walk,
> More than a thousand years.
> The chief of the Germans,
> Thy martyrdom shall end.

There are all the usurers, the money-changers, the robbers of corpses whose sole mission and unique care are, says the Jakut Sim, to "receive money from the peoples of the world, without the burden of labor."

At Royallieu are the Rothschilds, for it is they who inherited the Old Testament, the Talmud, the eighteen centuries of ghettos and migrations, of dark designs and murky machinations, not to mention the wealth of the *goyim*.

The brood of the Landgraf of Hesse, the sons of old Amschel, the speculators of Waterloo, the Barons of Phynance, overrich yet unsated, the eternal cause of war, the builders of plans for universal domination, the masters of Yankee imperialism, the cavalry of the gold standard, the backers of democracy, of freemasonry, of Judeo-Marxism and of the last great feudal families, the animators of the great conspiracy, are behind barbed wire.

What a unique opportunity for them to make over the Talmud. Is it that they do not want to, because they are cold, because they are hungry? Irresistible force must compel them. Are they not a people, the chosen people? Is not this a people abandoned and cast out by all the peoples with whom it sought asylum? Is it not likely to show itself embittered, exasperated and unjust? Has it not been launched, quite against its will, on the highroad of rancor and anger? Besides what does it owe to the French who have denied it after having adopted it. Is it not, as Voltaire, the author of that famous slip about a "few acres of snow in Canada" wrote, "of no other country than where it makes money"? Is it not, as Schopenhauer asserted, "Nowhere at home, a stranger everywhere"? The latter adds "The Jew maintains with unparalleled persistency his nationality" because "his known faults, inherent in his national character, are perhaps imputable to the long and unjust oppression to which he has been subjected, but if that excuses those faults it does not do away with them." Is it not deserving of the reproach Renan levels at it as an historian? Renan to whom

it appeared that any Jewish claim, based upon the past, to play a role in the present, is vain, abusive, ridiculous, for that past is dead and must be forgotten; Renan, who exhorts them to a more accurate appraisal of facts. And one cannot but subscribe to the arguments of the historian, for nothing justifies the survival of an ill-founded Judaism. That, as we shall see, is the opinion of the French Jews at Royallieu, expressed in striking manner by the historian Jacques Ancel.

But there may be a cleavage between historical and sentimental considerations. Jews may still be Jews, above all Jews. Israel has a long history. Israel lives on. Israel has its own patriotism.

If this thesis is not mere *pilpul,* if it is anything but the mania of persecuted people to do themselves harm, the opportunity is too wonderful. The inmates of the camp of hunger must not be left for a moment. The truth will issue from their mouths. The State within the State will appear, otherwise it does not exist.

If I may so express myself, the Jewish myth is seated at its clavichord. It will not resist the temptation to play.

Well, paradoxical as it may appear, there was one question that by common agreement was never mentioned in private conversation or in dormitory discussions, indeed any reference to it was forbidden. That question was the Jewish question, and if any Jew from Central Europe even attempted to do so he was indignantly stopped. In the camp there were no Jews, any more than there were Germans. It was forbidden to speak of either. President Laemle summed it up good-naturedly:

"We are Jews only from such time as it is held against us."

That mirrored and gave the true note of the feeling of every Frenchman in the camp of hunger.

Why fulminate against the *goyim*, when one believed that the word did not even belong to the French language and was without meaning on the lips of a Frenchman, no matter what religion he professed?

Why evoke the fables of Abraham, Mordecai, Poppaea, Titus, Zeinaud, why invoke the Talmud, since it was all as little known to them as to the Christians? The story of Ahasuerus was neither more nor less amusing to them than to people who had been baptized. They had had no share of the benefactions of the Rothschilds, nor of the lucky speculations of their ancestors.

Above all, in the course of life, they had learned to distrust the theorists of any Judaism, to whom they had never paid much attention, even if they knew of their existence.

To tell the truth, they would have felt very miserable to be among Jews. I even thought at the outset of my investigation that this suffering or rather discomfort had existed and had been overcome. To be united under the sign of a community that one avoids and distrusts, what a trial. Those I questioned showed such great discretion, such refined restraint that I imagined they were hiding something.

No, they did not feel they were Jews, no matter what happened.

France remained standing. Pétain had simply drawn away from her, and all good Frenchmen lived in the conviction that it was so. Before all else one was French, an actor in the drama that was being played, singers of the choir France, and that kept one busy, that engrossed all the thoughts at one's disposal, that was enough.

If a whole literature dealing with Jewish shortcomings and weaknesses has developed, if a whole iconography of carica-

ture has portrayed them in cruel strokes, it is the work of Jewish pen and pencil, the result of the pitiless obstination of the Jews to deliver themselves from an imaginary ghetto.

Belief in the Jewish bogey has become part of daily life. Spreading it has become a commonplace in which Jews and non-Jews join, not without harm to the former, for in a country like France where all people have the same aspirations, enjoy the same pleasures, read the same books and the same magazines, speak the same language and understand it in the same way—which is not true of the Walloons of Belgium or the French-Canadians—go to the same theaters, share the same prejudices and the same tolerance, live the same life; in such a country, that becomes a closed arena for the vaticinations of the obsessed and the polemics of the market place, anyone can create an incident, can muddy the waters of opinion, can raise up a wave of anti-Semitism.

When people who enjoy splitting hairs compare the Jews of here to the Jews of there, the *Ashkenazim* to the *Sephardim*, this is merely a hypocritical attempt to prolong and envenom the discussion, for there are only French and non-French and, in our country, the Jewish problem remains a problem of non-participation in French life.

If they felt themselves less French, the French of Jewish origin would suffer from a label they do not wish to wear, because they believe it does not define them or defines them too superficially. They would feel outraged to be called Jews but, gathered together at Royallieu, they esteem themselves so much French that they examine with curiosity not unmixed with pity the Jews of Central Europe recently brought to the camp. Their first impression is that here indeed are Jews, real Jews, but among these outsiders they soon discover differences

that will cause them to say that a Polish or a Rumanian Jew is far more Polish or Rumanian than he believes, that a German Jew is after all a Boche with whom it is difficult to get on, a Boche who denied and cast out of his country still loves it.

Here is a little story that appears to me to throw a double light on the biblical problem. Among the most representative inmates of Royallieu was a writer. This man, the most refined, the most reserved, the most loyal of men has both a delicate constitution and the soul of a stoic. He suffered so cruelly from privation that he cachectized himself. His thinness was frightful, he could no longer drag himself about. When, without noticing it, he had reached the end of physical endurance his friends took counsel. One of them, the warm hearted Réné Blum, a real figure of the banquet, smiling before the cup of hemp but quivering before the woes of men, sent for the Jewish doctors of the camp.

"Don't you see the state Jean Jacques is in? He is dying. Send him to the infirmary. You cannot permit to disappear he who one day will bear witness in your name."

Witness! Réné Blum and his friends were pleased to look upon the writer as their witness. This is what that witness in whom the inmates of Royallieu placed their trust and who loved them dearly confided to me.

"Frenchmen may be Jews but even so they are saturated with the spirit of the Gospels, like all other Frenchmen. Their culture is Christianity."

In the camp of hunger the inmates were not content to meet in small groups for conversation. It was decided to have lectures in the various dormitories. What better way to amuse and improve oneself? Here were gathered representatives of every branch of national activity. Each would speak of his

work, deal with questions that were near to his heart. In peacetime, each had been fond of some aspect of life, had drunk at some fountain, warmed himself at some fire. In captivity each would open up his mind to his fellows and share with them the salt and wine of his life.

The attainments of the lecturers, their ardor to give the best that was in them, to share their innermost joys, had more effect upon the audience than the subject of their talks. Never had one realized how interesting so many and such different things could be.

Recitations of French poetry and talks about French poets from the sixteenth century to Verlaine had enthusiastic audiences. Joseph spoke on astronomy. Jean Léon on agriculture. Réné Blum on the Russian Ballets. Jean Jacques Bernard on the theater and on the Salon de l'Arsenal in connection with Arvers's sonnet, the famous secret that inspired one of his poems. There was a lecture by Kanapa on the cruise of the *Ile de France* from St. Nazaire to Toulon, others by Halphen on oil, Kohre on public charities, Ulmo on famous trials, Propper on horseracing, Henri Lang on the future of science, a remarkable lecture full of hope and restraint.

The most instructive lecture for an impartial psychologist, anxious to get to the heart of the Jewish problem, scrupulously respected the rule of neutrality that had been agreed upon. Jacques Ancel, the historian, who had already discussed the future of the peoples of Central Europe, spoke one day on the "Bases of the 'Nation' ideal." He reviewed all the various factors concerned and when he had finished his broad and masterly synopsis, he stopped. Immediately, one of those present, a Jew from Central Europe, asked: "What about the Jewish nation? You have said nothing of the Jewish nation!"

To a roar of applause, Ancel replied: "There is no Jewish nation."

For sentimental reasons, oppressed Jews may find consolation in the belief that they constitute a nation, may complacently turn in their wound the weapon that had been driven there, but that did not suffice to convince Frenchmen who love logic and respect facts.

At Royallieu there were three hundred foreign Jews. It was from them that came a few timid attempts to resuscitate Judaism, that Judaism to which they turned in their trial for moral support. It was they who would not believe that to support them in their trial they did not at least have the resource that they were Jews. They needed the Jewish myth, perhaps they had always believed in it, perhaps they took a certain wounded pride in believing in it or were distressed by the thought of rejecting it, of relinquishing the last straw to which they clutched. German intellectuals were more refractory to the atmosphere of the camp than Polish furriers. The latter were poor men in search of a country and ready, if time were granted, to change their name, their skin, their spirit. They were the Duponts of tomorrow. They could not find within them the unconquered pride of the oppressed Jew.

However they did not feel at home in surroundings that were 100 per cent French. Something had to be done for them, they had to be given an opportunity to express themselves. They sang a number of Yiddish songs, which were politely but not warmly received. There were many who did not care for them on artistic and sentimental grounds. Rare were those who in them sought to rediscover Jewish folklore. I who am an Aryan of old peasant stock, I should have listened to them more attentively, if only in memory of those Hebrew Melodies

of Darius Milhaud which had delighted me when first published. There was nothing to do about it. French prejudice is heavy with taboos.

Soon the camp of hunger became silent. Not only it no longer sang, it no longer even spoke. It had no strength to do so. Everyone thought only of straining his last energies, of passing another week, of trying to survive himself.

To begin with the lectures had been given up. During the last ones delivered before a sprinkling of an audience, for even listening had become an intolerable strain, the speakers had stopped in the middle of a sentence, in the middle of a verse they knew by heart and nothing could repair the leak in their memory.

A listener came up to Jean Jacques before a talk he was to give and handed him two small lumps of sugar.

"I kept those for you. Take them, they will give you strength. You will need them. It does me so much good to listen to you."

When one thinks what a privation those two pieces of sugar were to the man who gave them, one can understand that Jean Jacques spoke of the incident as fabulous.

Similar instances abound. Scenes of generosity formed as it were the basis of life in the camp, as life there became ever more precarious. Kindliness alone continued to visit the dormitories of the dumb. When a starving man managed to smuggle in a parcel, he shared its contents with his neighbors and friends and they, hiding their hunger behind pudic gestures, had to be persuaded to accept.

Winter was drawing to its close. Bodies were on the verge of death, souls on the verge of darkness. Everything was shrouded in a fog that no light could pierce. The slightest

motions called for superhuman efforts; cleaning the place had become an impossible labor. If one sat down another's help was needed to get up. Fleshless forms hidden in wraps staggered on huge feet, swollen in the last stage of starvation and men fell, fell often, fell always, fell because they could no longer stand. Dying of starvation they were evacuated to the infirmary of the Russian camp where a good Samaritan, a Russian corpsman, rugged as a prison door, found ways to give them two thick soups a day. But there were too many of them, some had to be allowed to die in their dormitory. Scene of horror by scene of horror a little of France was disappearing into nothingness. It was expected that by April not one would be left alive. Then suddenly the German authorities decided to divide their prisoners into two batches. All under fifty-five were deported; those over fifty-five were sent to Drancy. A line of skeletons, handcuffed, appeared one evening on a platform at the Gare du Nord: President Laemle, Pierre Masse, Réné Blum were they. They were sent to Drancy. A new life began, a new series of trials.

The rubbernecks held back by the police to allow the famished column to pass whispered together in fear: "They say they are Jews" and they stared with all their eyes.

They were afraid, so shocking was the scene; but they did not know how much that was sacred those Jews carried in their worn-out hearts, they misread the message that starvation had carved on the features of those Jews, they did not know it was the message for which they waited, the call of France to all Frenchmen.

Beneath their eyes a page of French history was being written, but when one takes part in events it is not easy to discern their importance.

Nachtigal, the head of the camp, better understood that page of French history when with his hand to the visor of his cap he saluted those about to leave.

He had understood the lesson of the sufferings he had inflicted on Frenchmen. He had been ordered to torture her, so France still lived. The victims had never ceased to think of her, so France was not conquered. Hunger had erased nothing. Despite appearances, despite defeat, despite the men of Bordeaux and of Vichy, the nation was there, with its beliefs that nothing could change, with its hopes that nothing could dim, with its strength that no chains could weaken. France had her martyrs and her dead and among the best of them, the best Jews of France, good Frenchmen of the tradition of France.

During the winter, in cold and hunger, Nachtigal had only to look upon his charges as they lived and died, to see France survive. France herself bore witness before his eyes.

One of Hitler's illustrious fellow countrymen, Chancellor Metternich, once said:

"Every country has the Jews it deserves."

France was fortunate indeed. The Jews remained faithful to her, offered up all their sufferings to her.

And what is more, they were such exemplary Jews that at Royallieu they had the delicacy to be Frenchmen, and nothing else.

CHAPTER

# IX

## *The Truth About the Velodrome d'Hiver*

MY TRUCK driver had lied to me in the best tradition of ancient historians when he described and commented upon what had happened at the Velodrome d'Hiver.

His emotion was sincere, it was genuine. He was there, or quite near. Difficult to move, psychologically or physically, he had been seized by anger unawares. That lent an appearance of truth to his account. However he distorted the facts. As if through the mist of his brain, he felt the truth but did not see it.

He knew certain facts only by hearsay, which did not prevent him from asserting their truth.

He had pulled up his truck in the Rue Nelaton or the Boulevard de Grenelle, he had never entered under the glass roof of the covered velodrome. He would not have been allowed to. If he had actually seen the herd of Jews arrive and leave, he had not spent a minute in their midst during the long hours of waiting and misery they had lived through within a few paces of him. However as I discovered in the course of my inquiry, he dwelt particularly on those details which he could not have seen and which turned out to be exaggerated or false. Nobody but he, who was not there, had seen the dead of whom he

spoke. There were at times in the Vel. d'Hiv. as many as twelve thousand people of all ages, some of whom were suffering from incurable disease and who could not decently support the hardships imposed upon them. What is surprising is that none of the eyewitnesses I questioned saw anyone die. A few may have done so but for some mysterious reason death if not unknown was rare.

The truck driver was incensed too at the heartless or jeering attitude of the Germans. Now every eyewitness to whom I have spoken has assured me of their absence or their accidental and unostentatious presence. The master remained behind the scenes. He may have sent a few liaison officers or others to report. That was all. It was Frenchmen and only Frenchmen who were his tools during the memorable days of July, 1942. They it was who carried out a German order, approved and tolerated by Vichy. It was their lack of organization that was the cause of the worst suffering and of the most revolting incidents. It was to their ill-will, to their inertia, to their fear that were due the inhuman measures I record below. The guard at the doors was French, the orders obeyed were French and even in the way those orders were carried out, there was a difference between the more clement attitude of the guard and the at times odious behavior of the Paris police. In the German-Vichy collaboration, the part of Vichy was alone visible.

Evidently, the part he had been called upon to play had transformed my truck driver into a partisan.

But what is behind Fabre-Luce's statement that the Jews taken to the Velodrome d'Hiver on July 16, 1942, were after all mostly men without a country. That statement was entirely false.

The truth is that without exception, the truck driver, the gendarme, any and everyone connected with the medical or first-aid service agrees that the sights he saw were such as to inspire horror.

The measure taken on July 16, 1942, was partly routine, partly improvised. The arrest in their homes of the Polish and Russian Jews with their wives and children spared in former raids could not present any difficulty. For a year the police had been trained to such work. In keeping the concentration camps of Beaume-la-Rolande, Pithiviers and Drancy regularly supplied, they had acquired unquestioned efficiency. Their task was complicated by the fact that a large number of women and children were added to their bag of game. If some parents were morphologically aliens, almost all the children were French, spoke, thought and played in French. That was how the badly upset quarter in which the raid took place saw it, and so it was.

But everything passed off according to approved methods and by the end of the morning six or seven thousand Jews were herded into the Velodrome d'Hiver.

Why had the Prefecture of Police chosen the Velodrome d'Hiver? What had inspired it to transform into a gigantic prison the place that in better times had seen cycle races, boxing matches, ice-hockey teams, a place that evoked memories of great sporting events, the fads and enthusiasms of the Parisian masses, and the endless whirl of the six-day races, to the theme of one of Morand's "Nights," as passing as the fame of the winners?

This choice having been made, what measures, what precautions had it taken to make proper provision for the stay of those it was to house there?

To this last question, the answer is unequivocal: none. Nothing was organized, nothing was provided for.

To other questions, the answers may be hypothetical. The Germans were well aware of the existence of the Velodrome d'Hiver. It was a place where they had sat on the benches, in company with paid hoboes, to provide audiences for the meetings of Doriot, Deat and other intermittent agents of their propaganda. In their mind it was associated with unpleasant memories of their vain and ridiculous efforts. From the very fact that they had been merely a sprinkling, they imagined its capacity was limitless.

The police were told to warn everyone they arrested to take along three days' food and some clothes. But they failed to take into account two things: the excitement and the difficulty of obtaining food. Few people had food for three days at home and in suitable form. The privileged few who had it were too upset and too startled to pack it.

Then as they arrived, the Jews were packed onto the benches and forbidden to go down to the arena or the track. Huddled one against the other, they took their places slowly and clumsily as ranks of spectators, their eyes wandering over the empty arena and track.

They waited patiently. They were seated and that did something to restore their courage. Nobody appeared on the track. The whole show was on the benches, in the audience, and the glare of a July sun beat down through the glass roof on a wide and naked space that, in the minds of most of those present, was not peopled by phantoms of stars and champions, urged on by the cries of a delirious crowd.

The proprietor of the Vel. d'Hiv. had rented his building to the authorities as to any organizer of a public meeting. He had

stipulated that no shoe should trample his precious track. So in stentorian tones that once had announced the appearance on the ice rink of "the snow-star of the world" or prizes offered by some popular drink of the six-day cyclists, the loud speaker threatened with "the severest penalties" anyone who set foot on the track or in the arena, access to which was strictly forbidden to "all persons not belonging to the staff." And the poor people listened without a smile.

Arrival followed arrival. The tide rose, as my truck driver had said. The arc widened and then closed. The ring of misery widened hour by hour, invaded the amphitheater, reached to the roof and came down to the row of boxes. Fresh files of people carrying suitcases surged through the dark entrances and were at once seized and devoured by the benches.

In two days eleven thousand Jews found themselves seated on the benches without daring to tread the wooden track.

But it did not take even half a day for the heedlessness of the Vichy administration to become evident and for all its consequences to be felt.

The inmates of the Vel. d'Hiv. had to await a decision that was probably not even taken when they were brought there. But they were not Buddhas of stone or metal. They were men who needed to sleep, to eat, to drink, to wash, to use the toilet; they were women who had the same needs and others besides.

Each of these needs created a problem and none of them had been foreseen.

In the Vel. d'Hiv. everyone was seated, and could sleep only seated.

There was nothing to lie down on, not a straw mattress, not a bundle of straw.

One could not even lie down on the steps of the wide stair-

cases, there was no room. There was no room on the benches except to sit or to lean across the knees or on the shoulders of one's neighbors.

Sleep thus lost its hours, its rights, its substance. It was brutal, fantastic, troubled. It repaired nothing. It stunned you without taking you into its arms. As it was never satisfied, it never ceased demanding its due. It continued to torment you by day, because night gave it no appeasement. It fell upon limbs in uneasy posture, and made them painful, aching and stiff.

Eating was another problem.

Some had left empty-handed. They had to fast.

Others had caught up in haste any food that came to hand: a piece of raw meat, a bundle of carrots, a few potatoes, a roll of bread; whatever they had found in a kitchen stripped by rationing.

The bread could be eaten as it was, but the other things had to be cooked. How? No cooking arrangements had been provided. These unfortunates had to throw away the meat that spoiled and to eat what could be eaten raw.

Others, better inspired, less poor, or simply dealers in that national institution the black market, had brought canned goods, biscuits, chocolate, cold meat, fruit, jam, to last for a few days, to last through and even beyond the fateful three.

They, too, despite their precautions, had a bone to pick with hunger. They were seated and had nothing to do but wait. Sitting there they had nothing to do but eat. And they could not eat their fill in front of other people sitting beside them who had nothing to eat. They would have been pointed out. By the combined effect of these two causes, the food disappeared so quickly that there was nothing left.

Nobody slept, nobody ate.

Among my papers, I have very few documents written by people who were interned in the Vel. d'Hiv. To whom would they have written? On what? Where? Who would have carried out their letters? So it is not without emotion that I read a letter scribbled in pencil on July 18, 1942, by a young woman of twenty, Jeanne Szek Szapsa.

Jeanne Szapsa had recently become the head of a family. Her father had been sent to Drancy early in the year. Her mother had died on June 14, leaving Jeanne to take care of a fourteen-year-old sister, Suzanne, and a twelve-year-old brother, Isidore. The little money that was left had soon been spent on care of the dying mother and on parcels for the father who was starving. On July 16, Jeanne, Suzanne and Isidore, were seized by the police in their home, 98 Boulevard Menilmontant, and taken to the Vel. d'Hiv. They had little bread and hungry stomachs. Their food parcel was not hard to prepare.

Jeanne Szapsa was seated on the benches of the Vel. d'Hiv. Suzanne and Isidore cuddled on either side. They were hungry. She was head of the family. They were under her protection. She had to do something about it. She thought of the welfare worker who had come to see her and offer help and advice when her mother was dying in the hospital. On July 18 she made up her mind. She wrote to the welfare worker a letter that reached its destination thanks to the complicity of a gendarme.

Eleven thousand Jews filled the space around Jeanne with their distress. She was literally submerged in the crowd. She managed, having nothing to distract her, to write a note, the clear lucidity of which is devoted entirely to the suffering of

those dear to her. She spoke of hunger in such simple and precise terms that I transcribe:—

"Madame:

"I am at the Velodrome d'Hiver with all the Polish Jews, with my little brother Isidore and my sister Suzanne. We are dying of hunger, we more than the others, for we know no one. I should be so grateful if you could do something to deliver us from this hell, especially the children. Please, Madame, please do something to help us, we are so miserable. I should like also to ask you to do anything you can for Papa who now has no one to look after him. If you can, Madame, save Papa and us too. I know how good you are and that you will surely do something for us.

"Jeanne Szek Szapsa."

The French language is not like Vichy. It does not betray Jeanne, it serves her. Although Polish, the poor child is as French as her brother and sister. She does not murder our language, she gives it all its simple force.

How we wish we could preserve the heart of that little Jeanne. Where is she now? She was deported to Germany, as was her father and the two children whose suffering mother she had become.

She was hungry on July 18 and 19, as nothing could be done for her.

She was thirsty, too, and thirst is worse than hunger.

There was no question of shaving or washing, but people had to drink. The Vel. d'Hiv. was lacking neither in water pipes nor in taps, but the pressure was low. Water was laid on in dressing rooms where there were douches, and in the various bars. Then there were taps here and there in the vast interior, but as the rooters rarely put water in their wine these were few and far between.

After a few hours of indifferent output the taps were nearly all dry. People stood in line to get a few swallows of water. The plumbers were sent for. Red tape absorbed half a day. At last they came. They spent most of their time watching the Jews. Hopes dwindled. The Jews had felt the pangs of thirst, not enough to die, but enough to suffer atrociously during those long July days.

The lavatories, too, were far from equal to the needs. I apologize for referring to repugnant and tragic details but two things that should have been foreseen occurred. Surprise and fright had acted upon the intestines. A medical service had been improvised, Red Cross nurses and helpers ran after opium pills, and managed to get some. The latrines had not waited, at the end of the first day they were full and overflowing, without anybody trying to remedy the situation.

On the other hand there were a large number of women among the prisoners of the Vel. d'Hiv. Surprise and fright in their case added a further incommodity. They menstruated. Soiled, ashamed, without the indispensable pads, they set siege to the places where they could be alone and searched everywhere for newspapers or any bits of rag that they could find. They stained with blood the already impossible latrines.

It was vile. Some, not attempting to splash through the cloaca, forgot themselves in the passages. Sickening pools spread almost everywhere. An intolerable stench filled the vast amphitheater and dishonored it.

People had to continue to live in it, and gave up trying to conceal the shame to which it was due.

Alerted by the news of the arrests of July 16 that had spread through Paris, a certain number of doctors, nearly all Jews, had placed themselves at the disposal of the Prefecture. They

were sent to the Vel. d'Hiv., but nothing was provided for their arrival and to enable them to be useful. As soon as they arrived they set up a permanent service and organized day and night watches. The dressing rooms were turned over to them and they took possession. With the aid of some Red Cross nurses, a few welfare workers and some ambulance women of the Health Service, who one and all gave proof of a devotion beyond words, they managed to collect the most urgently needed medicines and supplies. A clinic was established. After having at first turned a deaf ear, the police allowed the doctors to use the loges to stretch out the more serious cases and women about to have children, of whom there were not a few.

But the task was beyond human strength, and the means were insufficient. In particular the Prefecture refused to allow anybody to be evacuated.

"We are not here to take care of them but to see that they don't escape," said a police inspector to a doctor who had approached him.

"But if they die?"

"They will be left to die."

"But you will be personally responsible to the Germans."

This argument certainly worried the policeman, who raised his arms in a gesture of helplessness.

There were many who were seriously ill, even in danger, cancer cases, tuberculous cases, unfortunates seized by attack upon attack of angina, and others who had gone out of their mind to the consternation of their neighbors.

Then there were heart cases who felt themselves weaker than ever; mothers with empty breasts carrying pale infants in their arms, old people who craned their thin necks and fleshless features, a mass imploring mercy, begging for a word,

a reassuring look, a spoonful of anything. It was impossible to examine all these people or even to give them the illusion that one was looking after them.

Above all, it was necessary to show that doctors were present, that, abandoned by all and without anything, the internees still had doctors. A symbol sufficed.

Such a mission was heartbreaking. The doctors passed rapidly up and down the steps and along the benches, more slowly through the loges, feeling a pulse here, listening to the heart of those about to die. Hands snatched at their blouses. Supplications and groans filled their ears. They grumbled but as soon as they were alone they hid their faces in their hands. With worn-out nerves they waited to be relieved.

A miracle happened. The dying obstinately refused to die. To use the truck driver's language, "They didn't want to leave their carcass there." They wanted to go and die in some other place, in a bed, calmly, decently, politely, like human beings. To die, they waited to be elsewhere.

Even the candidates to voluntary death waited. The most desperate did not attempt to commit suicide. Some who had not done so when they were arrested, did so later.

For some days the medical profession had struggled with the Prefecture for permission to evacuate the most serious cases, without result. Doubtless it had consulted the German authorities and they had not replied.

During two hours of the second day cripples, having lost at least a leg, were allowed to be evacuated, but the permission was canceled immediately and if some were evacuated as cripples, it was because the doctor in charge pretended he had not understood the countermanding order.

Finally on the fourth day, instructions were received to

evacuate the cases that could not be moved and the women in labor.

Then only, as if some force hitherto contained had broken loose and was ravaging everything in its way, the furies of disease and birth-giving were let loose.

Foetuses decided to be born.

Little children with tuberculosis, like the thirteen-year-old Fainzyller girl, let their heads fall on a white pillow and closed their eyes.

A furious epidemic of measles broke out among the kids. This enabled little Ostrowiecki, aged four, Hasklovicz, aged six, Sommer, aged two, Klayn, aged three, Betty and Maud Frydmann, aged seven and four respectively, Jacqueline and Marcel Weltmann, aged seven and ten, Cecile and Betty Widermann, Suzette and Ginette Kornfeil and many others whose enumeration would be fastidious, to escape deportation for a few months. Some of them even managed, thanks to splendid devotion, to disappear behind the skirts of Aryan women into the mystery of the great French family.

Simon Mninski, two years old, had a phlegmon in the throat which was operated on just in time at the hospital, but Rose Lainwand who was eighteen and also had a phlegmon could only die on reaching hospital.

Grown-up people let themselves die even more easily. If Golda Hoffman was successfully operated for a cancer of the breast before being sent on to Drancy, many other cancer cases, some inoperable and others who could not stand the shock of operation, survived only a few days or a few weeks.

Moszek Landsberg and Moszek Rozemberg too were both out of luck. The former released from Beaume-la-Rolande on June 24, 1942, for an irreducible asystolis was arrested

again on July 16 and sent to the Vel. d'Hiv. His evacuation to a hospital was refused, he died on arriving at Drancy. The latter released from Pithiviers on June 10, 1941, as a hopeless case of pulmonary tuberculosis was also rearrested in the Vel. d'Hiv. raid and taken to Drancy where his last strength left him.

Evacuation went on. Everybody was to have the pleasure of finding refuge in fever and death. The Prefecture mobilized its cars and its trucks, and the Jews left for Drancy.

Privation, hunger, the absence of care, insults ("Remember," said a Police commissary, reading instructions apparently drawn up by the Germans unless he himself invented them in an outburst of Pétainism, "that you are to show no kindness, no benevolence toward these people. They are dogs and you must treat them like dogs"). The even greater insult of leaving people to macerate in excrements, none of these things by themselves can give a true idea of the scene that one saw upon entering the Velodrome from the Rue Nelaton.

It was unique. A dense crowd of people huddled together on the tiers of benches. It did not overflow them. It did not offer the aspect of life in the street or in a house seen in cross section. It was curiously motionless. Seated, it appeared to be plunged into some strange nightmare of waiting.

Only the children remained something like children. They played, they ran about, gathered in small groups, stretched their little legs as much as they could in the crowd. If one looked closely, their games were not the usual kind. Invented as a necessity they hid a deep distress of which I later had numerous proofs, but one might imagine oneself on some square or open space somewhere in Paris.

The grownups remained seated. They did not spend their

days and nights in silence. Far from it. A silence of depression and somnolence hovered for long moments that seemed centuries over the arena, the center of which was empty; then suddenly, without anyone knowing why, curious crises starting at one point on the benches would break out and spread instantly.

What had happened. What spark had given birth to the thunderclap. At what depth could such a convulsion be born in this amorphous mass.

These crises seemed inexplicable to the spectator coming from the outside who felt his heart squeezed as in a vice as soon as he entered.

Ah, an eyewitness surprised by the long silence and hysterical outbursts said: "These people are not French. That is clear. Imagine a French crowd in such a situation. First, more upset than frightened, it might waver but would rapidly recover, begin to feel its innate strength, to re-create its unanimity and it would explode for good. It would put forth its strength like dynamite. The benches would hurtle through the air. The glass be broken. The track and the arena invaded, the boarding torn up and there would be an irresistible rush for the doors. The guards would be overpowered and the street would come to the rescue."

The street, just to listen to it one felt those words were true. The crowd had gathered on the Boulevard and the Quai de Grenelle. It rumbled like thunder. It shouted at the police. It would not have taken much to send it into action.

But for long moments no noise arose from the building where eleven thousand unfortunates suffered, and when sometimes cries arose they sounded like a celebration in a madhouse. People were at a loss what to make of it.

This passive attitude, with its instinctive, quasi-organic awakenings without the creation of any collective conscience, with its doubts, its revolts, its decisions, its acts, was certainly the reaction of a crowd that was anything but French. The poor people who had been herded in the Vel. d'Hiv. were Poles or Russians, and the little lives they had lived for years in their quarter of Paris had not made them French. They reacted like Slavs of the days when Slavs did not react. Their trial did not unite them. It divided them, isolated them more deeply. They accepted it as the corpse accepts the gravestone.

But the children had grown up on the streets of Paris. They belonged to another people whose language they spoke without foreign accent, whose ideas, whose gestures, whose reactions were theirs. But they were only children and no one could expect them to take the place of their parents.

A brief anecdote to illustrate what I am saying. A doctor on duty is called to a young woman in hysterics. He finds himself in the presence of the three members of the family. The father is a Russian Jew. Seated next to his wife, with bowed head and the stubbornness of stunned resignation, he acts like any Moujik. He never opens his mouth nor raises his head when the doctor reaches him. Stultified, he waits, he has no idea what. He is bored at waiting for something he cannot foresee. It is impossible to get anything out of him. At the feet of this unfeeling man, the mother, a Polish woman, rolls and screams. Her hair in disorder, her eyes staring, she fights with some monster she does not know. She has taken refuge in a fit of hysterics to escape her fatalism that oppresses her. But her little daughter, a child of six, with clear eyes, measured tones and soothing gesture, takes her head, pats her shoulder, and begs her:

"Come, Mother, come, be dignified!"

"Be dignified" is there any phrase more French? Is there not in those two words all the radiance of our civilization, all the gentle grace, all the grandeur of our love of man?

What other instances could I add to this? There were many. During the consultation a little girl draws near the doctor, who feels a discreet tug at his sleeve. He turns or rather bends to listen to a tiny little woman not much higher than his knee, who says,

"Dear doctor, could you not go to see my mother who is over there. She has a cancer of the womb. You cannot leave her here."

As a matter of fact the mother had a genital cancer but the doctors could offer only a few words of hope.

There was . . .

Above all there were all those brats who tried to play, all those boys and girls who, each in his or her own way, sought to remain in tune with France, sought to find some way out of the mess, opined for this or that mode of action, discussed with more or less feeling. They introduced a French note into a foreign symphony that played the counter-bass.

There is face to face with the German, the unfathomable German who seeks to create a personality for himself by raining blows upon the backs of others, that French personality that we alone know how to recognize and appreciate and which is acquired—so human is it—by those who approach it with a virgin heart.

CHAPTER

X

# *July 5, 1943*

ONLY IN the light of day-by-day reports—the "Book of Hours" of martyred France—is the cruelty of German oppression made clear.

Take for instance what happened on July 5 at the Rothschild Hospital.

In its medical and surgical services the Rothschild Hospital in the Rue Santerre had for months had some patients who were interned, some who were free. Among the latter were both Jews and Aryans. The same was true of the internees, who were Aryans or Jews, women, children and men, cared for under the close supervision of police officers from the Prefecture, inspectors Dru, Roman, Merdier and their plain-clothes men with a few others in uniform.

In the German-Vichy prisons and camps, when one is not a Jew, one is a communist-Gaullist. So there were at the Rothschild, wounded men and invalids and women about to have children, evacuated from Drancy if they were Jews, or from the Tourelles prison if they were Gaullists, all to be returned to jail as soon as their condition would allow. All were in the same wards and under the same police guard, the Jews who, as someone said, had not gone looking for their trouble and

Gaullists who had done so to satisfy their consciences and their hopes.

At the beginning of July, 1943, the number of interned Jews under treatment at the hospital was about sixty-five. They lived in peace, as far as that is possible when one is ill and in danger of deportation. When they looked out of the windows they could see the clear summer sky and on the other side of a wall the trees that shade the Picpus Cemetery where Lafayette rests, in accordance with his last wish, amid those whose heads fell from the guillotine in the Reign of Terror. After the visit of Pershing, he awaits that of Eisenhower. The birds sing and life goes on.

But on July 3, rumors began to circulate. The system of Jewish internment was to be reorganized. A tremendous upheaval had already begun at Drancy. For from Vienna, where he had made good in the reprisal camps, to Paris where he was to do likewise, had come a certain twenty-eight-year-old Captain Brunner, to take charge of Jewish Affairs. There had been Dannecker, who tortured people as he spat upon them. Brunner hurts them no less but he wears a different mask: he always smiles and the broader his smile, the more you are hurt.

Brunner had got down to work at once. Drancy was not running well: it had become a well of iniquity, a disgusting place, a regular whore house where vice, robbery and corruption were rife. What else could be expected with inmates whose perverse and repulsive instincts were notorious throughout the world, and in charge of Frenchmen at that! The moment one lets this crowd alone, it returns to its vomit. That is so true that Drancy is unclean beyond words. Money Jews live there in opulence, despite the promiscuity and the dirt.

By the legal channel of UGIF and from secret sources they receive immense quantities of food of every kind, meat, chicken, quantities of butter, pastry, honey and all sorts of good things. They eat in a way that Goering might envy, and this Pantagruelic table is supplied by the ringleaders of the blackmarket. In a word, while our unfortunate country is dying of hunger, the Jews feast. What the virtuous Nazi administration considers the principal cause of famine in France could not continue. Once again it would punish the malevolence of the Jews, and save our country.

But the misdeeds of Drancy are not confined to abuses of the table, was the way Brunner's mind ran. As everybody knows, Jewesses are lewd bitches. They give themselves as readily as they eat the bread of the French who are reduced to a ration of bran; they give themselves to the first comer, what am I saying, they take him by force for their own pleasure, but also to soil an Aryan. Everything is made to serve their lust, little children and *gardes mobiles*. Nothing stops them. Of their prison they have made a lupanar! Order must be restored forthwith, and our country saved again.

Strictly for your private ear (and I apologize for a defeatist complex) there are at Drancy a privileged few who manage to eat their fill; there are also some women who fall an easy prey to passing lovers, and some men to whom this is not displeasing. Under the sign of idleness, at the mercy of opportunity, poor people have been huddled together and they are not painted saints. He has been deprived of his wife. She of her husband and children. They know that nothing lies before them but deportation, and that such a future is worse than death. They live the day that is left to them and not its morrow. They are in a state of depression mixed with exaltation

and anguish where everything that had a value in their eyes is shattered, where all that is left is furious desire, an impulse to forget everything in the joy of the moment. They love as soon as they find a pair of arms. That is in no wise astonishing. The beautiful and aristocratic women of the Conciergerie, the Abbaye, and other prisons of the Revolution loved a great deal, anyone, anywhere. Do we blame them for it?

Something else happened at Drancy. Many were the inmates who had money on them and who learned that when they are deported they will be stripped of everything. So this money no longer means anything. As quickly as may be, it must be changed into smoke, into one's heart's desire, into pleasure, into a thrill, the thrill of gambling, of course. Opportunities and accomplices are not lacking. If for some everything has its price, for others everything can be sold. So the *gardes mobiles* who are not deported find ways of increasing their pay to no mean extent by minor infractions of the rules, they sell cigarettes, favors, are blind and silent, always silent. The more dishonest go so far as to recover by forced search the cigarettes they have just sold and intend to sell again to some other inmate. Another way of spending one's money is by taking chances in raffles which, in such mixed company, are run as in the lowest gambling joint. If not red-handed the Jews are taken almost in the act and they cannot deny that they rob each other and corrupt Aryans. It is at their expense that our country is to be saved for a third time, by the same operation.

So it cannot be denied. At Drancy people eat butter, men engross women, others rob fools but also and most often the inmates die of hunger, allow themselves to be beaten to death before they will tell where they have hidden their child, and

when the time for going away comes give to those who remain the few sous they still have in their pockets. But, as Kipling said, that is another story.

Thanks to Germanic hemianopsia, which only uncovers that side of the picture it wishes to show, Captain Brunner has taken rigorous measures. He has emptied the camp. A great number of inmates have been deported. The remainder have seen all correspondence with their families suppressed. No more parcels are to be received. The *gardes mobiles* have regained their barracks. In future the inmates will be guarded on the outside by a cordon of Nazis armed with machine guns and, on the inside, by a method dear to the Germans, by fellow inmates.

Inmates made responsible for order in the concentration camp. There is the whole secret of German genius. To cut the neck of a duck one is going to roast, is already something; but to get the duck itself to place its own neck under the knife is far better. One savors its consent as much as its flavor. Besides the work is better done. There are refinements one has no idea of when one is not a duck.

So among his victims Brunner chose guards who were to watch them. He invested them with an authority they owed to him alone, and with the fear he struck into their hearts. These guards will be free to come and go. They will leave the camp freely on a simple pass, they will perform the varied duties of adjutant, commissariat officer, mail distributor, liaison officer but they will always be hostages, they will pay with their life for the escape of even one of their comrades, and with pains up to deportation for the slightest infraction of the rules by anyone under their authority; if they themselves escape their entire family will be executed.

In view of the duties they have to perform they can but be hated by their comrades. To compromise them even farther Brunner chooses them from among veterans, decorated with the Legion of Honor for deeds of gallantry. Thus the pomp of our military glory is to be bent to tasks that can only besmirch it.

On July 3, late in the afternoon, confirming the rumors that were current, two men presented themselves to the inspectors of police responsible for the internees at the Rothschild Hospital, and acquainted them with their mission. They came from Drancy, duly authorized by Brunner. Jews and Veterans they were to organize the transfer of a certain number of patients to Drancy. The transfer was to take place two days later in the presence of Captain Brunner himself who wished to supervise the arrangements personally. Work was immediately begun. The Nazi authorities had decided that 70 per cent of the patients should be returned to Drancy. Everyone protested. There were patients who could not be moved, seriously wounded men, women only just delivered. It was impossible. The attitude of the Drancy delegates was curious. They showed themselves inflexible, but one of them named Meyer said nothing. He would have liked to arrange matters. He tried to be forgiven the part he was playing with evident repugnance. The other, a certain Hartmann seemed to think he had won the battle of Sedan and drafted Hitler's status of the Jews. His voice was loud and he loved to hear it. His decisions were quickly reached, he was ironical and insolent, gave orders and would admit of no discussion. He dealt at ease with this question of damaged goods, and he was especially proud to tell the professional policemen that their usefulness was ended, that all they had to do was to obey and

disappear, that henceforth all would run as it should, for he Hartmann . . .

When the liaison officers had gone, it was decided that nothing should be said to the patients before Monday, July 5, that they should be left to enjoy their Sunday in peace. The hospital staff was badly upset, but the police inspectors were overjoyed and made no attempt to hide it. They were different men. For months their chiefs, Roman and Dru, had made themselves feared by the patients. They were referred to with contempt. Suspicious, unbending, clumsy, sometimes brutal, they had been unable despite their bullying to prevent a few escapes made possible by the disposition of the premises and the daring of those who had won their freedom. But their supervision, at times defeated, had become more abstrusive, more meddlesome, more severe. They were afraid of losing their jobs, of being thrown into a Nazi prison, of finding themselves all alone with their consciences. The virus of defeat had not spared them.

They had shown it clearly enough, but now they were suddenly stripped of the odious mask they had not dared to refuse to wear and they were delighted. If Brunner's measures created new victims, thrust back into the German hell unfortunates who had thought to escape it, heralded new scenes of terror and despair, preluded further downfalls, they freed a few French police. They were going to be able to return home, to speak freely to their wives, to forget the vile abuses to which they had been forced to lend a hand. Their nightmare was ended. Between them and the Jews there would only be the memory of common events, of days shared together, of all they had passed through, of which it was forbidden to speak. They would forgive themselves the harm they had done the Jews,

because one had to earn one's bread and they did not know how to do so in a more decent way.

The police arranged with the welfare workers—enemies with whom they had immediately become reconciled—to distribute at once whatever parcels were on hand, to give to all a little of something, to empty the shelves of good things to eat.

The police helped in the distribution. They went from ward to ward. They acted like Father Christmas.

One of them, hilariously inclined, hummed as he passed by the cots:

"Saturday night, when work is done"

and told the patients,

"Have a good time. No one knows what tomorrow may bring."

They were altogether too kind. Men who had always been looked upon as enemies were fraternizing. They were doing it with so much conviction, so openheartedly and with such relief that it seemed suspicious. It forced them to lie. They were not there to announce the transfer to Drancy, so they hinted that liberation was perhaps near, that things could not go on as they were. The police knew everything. The police understand many things without seeming to do so. They even understand that from time to time a letter can reach a patient without passing the censor. A little more and they would have been undertaking forbidden missions. That was because, as policemen, they were about to leave and no longer thought it necessary to hide that one had always been on the side of human beings, that one's task had been irksome.

Sunday, July 4, was also a happy day but from the morn-

ing of the 5th anxiety increased from hour to hour, from minute to minute so much so that there was no room for anything else. Everybody was at his post. Everything had to be ready for Brunner's visit was announced for half-past eight. The patients knew that a certain number of them were to be removed to Drancy, but as the choice would only be made by a doctor from Drancy in the presence of Captain Brunner, all had their parcels ready and all contributed more or less to the excitement. To each and everyone, the broad lines of misery became more and more glaringly apparent. Some were prostrated and could not even express themselves, others cried to heaven, protested, wept, let loose an unimaginable flood of words. Some retained a glimmer of hope. Others more than a glimmer. As a rule they wanted to believe that after all they would be spared any further hardship. They wanted to believe, but they did not dare to.

Time passed. As the authorities did not appear it was thought for a time that it was a false alarm. The German had wanted to amuse himself by keeping his victims in suspense, overlaying his nightmare upon their repose. Some imagined he might have changed his mind. Finally the telephone announced Brunner's arrival for half-past eleven. All the hospital staff including the police did their best to allay the anxiety of the patients, to calm the poor people who waited for their fate to be decided, but who no longer hoped for justice or mercy.

At last Brunner appeared in a Nazi salute. Arm outstretched he passed through the hall. He smiled, master of the situation. It was an entry in uniform of the grand days of Nuremberg. He sent for the doctors in charge of the various services. He received them in the court, under the trees. German was spoken, for Brunner spoke no other tongue. One of the doctors,

by no means the boldest, offered to act as interpreter and had to translate a neatly turned little speech.

I shall try to report it, but without the servility of the doctor-interpreter. I shall try to penetrate the thoughts of the fair-haired boy of the Brown House, thoughts he was probably incapable of expressing clearly. One is sometimes at a loss to get one's bearings in the confused speech of the Germans, which like a water-logged moon is surrounded by a deckled edged halo. But facts never fail to make it clear.

This is what Brunner imparted:

"To kill, and particularly to kill you and yours is an easy task. It is true we are charged with exterminating our victims, and do so with a mastery that surpasses that of Sioux Indians or Chicago gangsters. It is true we have exhausted the most ferocious methods, and the cannibals of Anglo-Saxon philanthropy, who are trying their best to list our crimes, make me smile. They are by no means at the end of their labors . . . or of their perverse delight. It is a sphere in which we have achieved much. That however is not our German manner, it is not what I would call, if you will allow me, our German genius. It is too easy, it is almost too superfluous, too amateurish to speak frankly. Our ways are stronger than such trifling.

"Thus I, in whom all Gauleiters see a coming man, have set up a system, a purely orthodox Nazi system, and decided that whatever I do against you will be done with your assistance, that you yourselves will apply my system and I believe you will do it better than anyone because you will be obliged to do it, you will run grave risks if you do not do it, it will be more to your interest than to mine to apply it.

"Whether you wish it or not you will help me, and you will help me better than anyone else. Of course, as you are

well aware, my essential aim is to exterminate you, but I intend to do so by methods with which you will willingly comply, and indeed anticipate.

"Thus in all places and at all times you will meet my wishes, you will do more, you will suggest methods when you do not impose them.

"How can my system be applied? It is childishly simple. On the one hand I shall make of each of you in particular a link which joined with other links will make a strong chain with which to bind you. Don't you see how clever it is? Now do you understand why I smile?

"Your captivity will owe its completeness to you yourselves. Is there anything like that in the organization of your damned democracies?

"Thanks to my system I have already achieved handsome success at Drancy. One day or another you will have an opportunity of judging for yourselves. But now I am dealing with the Rothschild Hospital that I have promised myself to organize to your amazed undoing.

"You have too many patients. I shall relieve you of some. This day will not pass without your services regaining their aspect of the happiest moments of peace. I undertake to restore to health a number of your patients.

"But I do not wish to take them all. My Nazi code based on scientific calculations reduces the number of your Jewish patients from seventy-five to fifteen. Those fifteen I entrust to you. You will smother them, you will importune them with your attentions. Let me at once tell you why. If one of them escapes, one of you will be shot. But he will not be shot alone. We are liberal, we give good measure. For a fault we do not shoot one man, we shoot several. By adding up the number of

members of your staff I find forty-two hostages for one patient. Forty-two will be shot for one escape. You can see how much self-interested support will be given you in future. Without difficulty you will replace the French police which is not serious. You will do better with the utmost ease.

"Permit me to dwell upon the excellence of our method.

"It is child's play for a German to find the guilty, indeed we always find several who are guilty. They are pointed out in advance. Thus we obtain, either that the crime is not committed or that it is atoned for with all necessary publicity. Thus you gentlemen who hear me, you are all potentially and eventually guilty.

"Do you understand now why a smile lightens up my features as a Nazi leader, as one who thinks he knows something about Nazi education?

"Another day I shall initiate you in a further phase of my system for I have foreseen everything. You may go."

All the doctors could do was click their heels and return to their services. They broke their ranks discreetly.

Next it was the turn of Armand Kohn, the director of the hospital, to be put on the carpet. He too knew German, and had familiarized himself with the Nazi spirit by reading the *Frankfurter Zeitung* and *Das Reich.* He underwent a questioning that must count in the annals of his emotions.

"Are there any Aryans in your hospital?"

"Yes."

"Why are they here?"

"Some are free patients because they chose to come; others are prisoners placed here by the French police."

"Separate them at once from the Jews. The free patients are

to be placed in a separate wing. The prisoners must be removed by the police.

"Don't you find it intolerable that Aryans should cohabit with Jews?"

"But . . ."

"How is it, Sir, that you haven't already been shot?"

"I . . ."

"You are responsible for everything that goes on here."

"Of course . . ."

"Some Jews have escaped."

"But . . ."

"If at that time we had had the advantage of working together, it would now be materially impossible for you to be listening to what I have to say."

"I . . ."

"The opportunity is not lost, of that you may be sure. Just hope that it does not occur again."

Then with further smiles came the visit of the wards. Brunner knew his files. He had them by heart. He did not need, like Dannecker, to uncover the patients and tear off their bandages to see what was the matter with them.

Stopping calmly before a man who had been amputated, he asked at what date he had been admitted.

"When he was at Drancy, he took it into his head to throw himself from a window. He fell from the fifth floor. It turned out otherwise than he thought."

But an old woman, an old German Jewess of sixty-two who had tried the same trick and sustained such serious injuries that she could not stand up, was chosen to return to the camp.

"They left her all day where she crashed down. A day was

not enough. Now she will have an opportunity of seeing the place again."

Death had spared her. Brunner did not. Then he left in a truly ostentatious way, something like the way Hitler would like to leave the stage of history.

The doctor of Drancy, Dr. Drucker, recently released from a prisoner-of-war camp, was there ready to begin the examination and classification of the patients. He was helped by two Jews from the camp, Roger Levy and Jean Meyer, whose duty also it was to see to the transfer of the patients. All three of them were wounded veterans, all three wore the Legion of Honor. They had to draw up the list of those to be taken. Who to take? Who to leave? At first they thought of taking those who were the least likely to be deported, but then were they to load into the cars a senile old creature who constantly soiled her sheets, a cancer case with an artificial anus, a woman who had just been operated upon and was hardly out of the ether, a recently delivered mother with puerperal infection, a tuberculous child that looked like a specter and coughed continuously? Was one to take unfortunates who could not stand the trip? The most delicate moral problems arose. Those for Drancy had to be chosen without taking into account one's own feelings, nor solicitations, nor imperative considerations that might be dictated by compelling ties or by pity. One had to withdraw within oneself, knowing that on the decision hung the life or the death of the just or the weak, but that had to be forgotten and, without partiality, one had to show a spirit of justice recognized by all. Roger Levy wanted to take his own mother, a very old and charming lady, he found in the hospital after months of separation, but the others pointed out to him that she was the oldest of the patients and that

without indulgence being shown, she ought to be the last to go.

When the list was finally made up and the actual departure began, when the victims were grouped together and their packages taken down, there was a chorus of imprecations, frightful scenes of anguish and of hatred. Everyone sincerely believed he had the right to remain. Everyone had suffered too much physically and mentally, in his flesh and in his conscience, not to be thrown off balance, his reactions too warped not to see behind every measure an injustice and always an injustice.

People of social standing were indignant that they should lightheartedly be subjected to a trial beyond the strength of common man to bear. But, above all, poor Polish Jews, who had lived, turn by turn, years of flight from persecution, then years under French selfishness, without knowing the satisfaction that gives the quality of being French of old stock, could only see in their selection a conspiracy of big Jews, a further betrayal by man, a new crime of which the disinherited were to bear the blame. They gave way to gestures of hatred.

"Naturally," they cried, "it is we who pay."

They lost their heads. They insulted the nurses and the welfare workers who for months had cared for them. At last the cars, now under the control of the Drancy delegates, were quickly loaded, among others with a man who had lost both legs, a cancer case, a mother carrying a three-month-old baby in her arms, little children who had refound their childhood at the hospital, and bodies that were but shadows. The French police were present as spectators and looked on with the pitying eyes of mere rubbernecks.

Fifteen inmates remained in the hospital with forty-two

lives hanging on the deeds of each one of them. Without its being premeditated the forty-two made the others feel it, and it was awful.

A specter, a dying tuberculous lad that a breath of life and a terminal cystitis kept up and roaming in the night, was set upon by a nurse crazy with terror.

"If you get up again, I'll kill you!"

And the boy returned to his bed to try to die in peace.

One of the police inspectors who returned a few days afterwards to visit the hospital said to a patient,

"You didn't gain anything by criticizing us. You must admit you were happier then than now."

The people who returned to Drancy on seeing the camp of which they had only memories of horror were struck by four innovations.

Only collective parcels were received, but as these could be addressed to no one in particular most of those who sent parcels no longer did so, especially the most compassionate and most thoughtful.

Prisoners were flogged. Although a simple matter, no one had thought of it before Brunner. The flogging was done by Jews under pain of being flogged themselves and everyone had to look on.

The third innovation was almost touching. The enormous buildings of Drancy had been subjected to so many passing miseries that they had lost their pristine freshness. They had to be restored to their original cleanliness. Walls stained by tear-drenched fingers had to be washed, the sand in the court replaced by heavy and honest paving stones, the drab dormitories painted in blue and yellow. It was Brunner's idea. To whom would he entrust the work?

"Who is the best Jewish architect in Paris, the most famous?" asked the smiling captain.

"Fernand Bloch."

"Where is he?"

"At home, probably."

"Send for him immediately. I am going to intern him. He will work under my protection."

No sooner said than done.

The fourth innovation was the most Nazi. One saw inmates entrusted with a mysterious mission go off freely to Paris. What did they do there? They took long walks without any apparent aim, they went where they were willing that Gestapo agents should follow them. Then they would stop. They had met a friend, an acquaintance, someone they had once known. They drew near, shook hands. At once the Gestapo agents came up, and Drancy counted a new inmate.

Someone had forgotten his yellow star, or else he was in hiding, not cleverly enough to avoid a comrade in misfortune. He was wrong. He did not know Brunner.

The gesture of betrayal, Judas had made it long ago. But it was a rare gesture, a memorable gesture, not one that is made whenever one goes for a walk.

Is it astonishing that the system Brunner was given the highest award in the schools of the Nazi SS

CHAPTER

# XI

## *The Whistling Non-Com*

BRUNNER WAS by no means idle.

At Drancy, repair work was being rushed: sweeping, washing, painting. If paint happened to be lacking, it was enough for the master of the place, in his own jocular way, to mention deportation to the architects, and forthwith the dried up sources of paint began to run again. Jews always did know how to get things done.

And so the Jews' barracks, done over anew, in the midst of the fields and stucco houses of the suburbs, looked something like a garden toy just out of the store: an open-mouthed toad sitting on its cask. Jews were thrown into its maw, and disappeared in the creaking of wheels and rails of the near-by Corneuve.

The Germans were deporting as fast as they could. Deporting Jews, all Jews. Everybody was deported. Brunner was surprised that his victims were becoming scarce.

"What! Only that. You must find me more. Jews are good for anything." And he added: "See if I don't clean up Paris. I want all who can walk," ordered Brunner, who went on: "In Vienna, I deported an old man of a hundred and ten. He managed to get as far as the station."

Drancy saw those who spoke too much and those who spoke too little pass through and disappear. The French Jews and the others. For lack of victims they had to think of starting wholesale raids again.

Fifteen cases remained at the Rothschild Hospital. That was too many. They were gone over in detail. Dr. Drucker of Drancy was told to look into it. None of them could be moved. There was but one thing to do. Prepare a longer list for future deportation, including the hospital's outdoor patients as well as the bedridden.

Brunner was getting impatient. He wanted people at once. He had an idea. In the days when Jews were plentiful, a certain number of old people whose health was none too good had been evacuated from Drancy to a home for the aged in the Rue Picpus and an orphanage in the Rue Lamblardie. These poor people were living in peace. They had clung together, grouped by affinity. With tranquil eyes they saw the trees blossom, bear fruit, and life go on. They had been forgotten. No one was sure of that, but those who tended them had hopes.

In the second half of July, Dr. Drucker, in a melancholy mood, came to visit the home and the orphanage to prepare lists, to examine the patients who, in their surprise, insisted they were well.

A famous singer was in the home, in better times it had been possible to get her out of the concentration camp. Sensing danger, she had fled. Who was to pay for her? There was no time to think of that now.

On July 23 the old people marked for Drancy were moved there in the manner prescribed by Brunner.

The patients themselves had to see to the loading of the cars.

Nothing had been said to the victims, they were told only a few hours before leaving. There were thirty-seven at the orphanage, forty-one at the home. Their behavior was perfect. Many of them did not quite understand what was happening. They were accustomed to their companions, to the rules, to the hours for meals, sleep and recreation. They gathered in the halls. With the charming freedom from care of old age, they had been playing out their part. Now everything was upset again. But they had no clear idea of what was wanted of them, they would see later. Tears shone in a few eyes but were hidden. They stiffened themselves, they padlocked their hearts. One had to think of what was most urgent. It was hard enough at their age to make the move.

Already a crowd had gathered in the street, on the sidewalk, around the cars. The crowd remained silent but one could see it was hard put to hide its pity.

"It's old Jews they are taking off to Germany to kill them," muttered the rubbernecks of Picpus who, like everybody else, listened to the B.B.C. and liked to appear well-informed.

It was then Henri Levis-Dupre, who was one of the party, appeared on the threshold of the home. He leaned upon his crutches.

This man, an Alsatian, had a story. August, 1914, had caught him with his family in Strasbourg or Colmar. His father's business had not allowed him to move to France in 1870, but the Levis's had remained French at heart. When the war broke out, Henri Levis did not hesitate. Despite the grave risk, he made his way to France and enlisted to fight in our ranks. He was given army papers in the name of Dupre. He was seriously wounded in the legs and decorated. His loyalty to his country had made him a cripple.

Levis-Dupre appeared swinging on his crutches and bravely made his way to the sidewalk. His features were set and smiling. As he felt himself surrounded, carried forward by the sympathy of the crowd, he cried out as if to excuse himself:

"It is nothing. Long live France!"

As if suddenly they had found consolation in their trial, the old people repeated together:

"Long live France!"

And the crowd took up the cry with sullen violence, the crowd, all the crowd, even the police on duty.

As was her wont the matron, who of recent years had shared all the suffering she had met with and sought out, helped and comforted those who were leaving. She went from one to the other, getting them seated in the cars with filial pity. For each she had an everyday word. When her work was done, she moved away. She followed the deserted street and then took the Rue Fabre d'Eglantine.

A man stood at the door of his little store. She knew him. Last winter she had bought woolens from him to clothe abandoned Jewish children. She thought him a sad and soured man, unmoved by the woes of others, absent from the gathering of French hopes. The man greeted her.

"I was watching for you," he said simply and, as she looked at him in astonishment still taken up with the events that had just occurred, "you're interested in charity, aren't you?"

"Yes, but you know . . . those I help are Jews."

"They are the people I want to talk to you about . . . I have held back some wool . . . an old stock of knitting wool . . . It may be useful to you."

And he mentioned a price that was anything but the real one.

"But that's not the right price."

"Take it, that's the price I paid for it."

And as the matron refused to accept this generosity which meant a heavy loss to the good man, he almost begged her to take it.

"Take it, I'll do my best to get you some more . . . I know what happened just now in the next street."

But Brunner was not satisfied. Drucker had spent three days to get him seventy-eight old people from the home and the orphanage, and at that what wrecks!

The German non-com who had seen them stumbling past the Drancy gates had laughed and said:

"Shock troops, what!"

As such a miserable force was being mobilized, why not use a longer yardstick? The doctors were no good, they wasted too much time sorting out the derelicts.

Always full of ideas, Brunner hit on something new. On July 29, as the Thursday visitors were being taken to the parlor, the Nazi non-com arrived at the orphanage of the Rue Lamblardie. He was accompanied by Dr. Drucker.

"I have come to fetch some of your internees."

And then, amid the troupe of old people who hurried to their rooms and dormitories and stood at the foot of their beds, the non-com in his natty uniform, elegant and carefree, happy and even jovial, gave proof of his inimitable talent.

He whistled. He whistled as one whistles to a dog and with a quick crook of his finger, motioned them forward.

With rapid strides he made his way, stopping here, not stopping there, and always his whistle and the crook of his finger made a victim.

"That one, I want that one."

"He has heart disease."

"That doesn't matter. Put him on the list."

He did not choose. He did not hesitate. His inspiration guided him. Between two whistles, one had a chance. It was a question of saliva. Woe to the old man whose bodily presence happened to meet the whistle. He was taken off.

Only one was spared. An old woman whose husband, a prostatic, was dying in the near-by hospital.

"All right," said the whistling non-com, "put her on the list for the next time. Her husband will be dead tomorrow."

The wife of the director narrowly escaped being sent to Drancy. She was bringing a paper to her husband. The non-com raised his finger but just at the right moment Drucker's back hid her, and an insidious question threw doubt into the non-com's mind.

In no time fifty-one old people were on the list for Drancy. A few moments later they struggled into the cars.

Servile as usual the Prefecture had placed the hospital, the home for the aged and the orphanage under the control of one of its higher officials, Monsieur D.

Monsieur D., a man of culture who had once occupied his leisure writing a book on "Courtesy in the Middle Ages and the Courts of Love," was one of the many licensed falterers that the Vichy government had appointed to positions where their zeal and devotion could usefully serve the invaders. M. D. went to the orphanage, shook a few hands, said a few kind words and graciously condescended to preside at the ceremony of departure.

After a few moments, he rose and smiling said:

"As all is going well, I leave you."

That none too happy phrase reminds one of what Scapini

—who was just like Monsieur D.—said on a visit to a prison camp for French officers.

As they muttered when they saw him shake hands with the Germans, he said:

"Does that surprise you?"

"No," they answered, "it doesn't surprise us, but it makes us feel bad."

The whistling non-com left the orphanage for the home. He was pleased with himself. His show had been a success, so much so that he did not feel the need to repeat it.

He went off to the home for the aged, swaying his buttocks.

"It's clean here," he said as he crossed the threshold.

And, as a gift of joyous entry, he took only some twenty victims.

And he left.

The few stray dogs nosing in the gutter and loitering around lampposts never knew what an artist was climbing back into the car with the white shield. That amazing man of the Third Reich hid from them a gift greatly appreciated by dog fanciers, a gift he devoted exclusively to old Jews, twice vanquished.

CHAPTER

XII

# *National War*

TAKEN FROM the lay of defeated France, the facts recorded in this book are nothing more than was current under enemy occupation. I might have written of atrocious crimes, of unimaginable horrors, most of which could not be verified in the present state of affairs. I have not done so. To use data fit only for an institute of criminology would prove nothing.

After peace has been restored, charges, investigations, trials, punishments will follow; light will be shed, light on monsters and monstrosities. Courts of justice and offices of facts and figures will submerge us. How monumental the structure will appear.

I have sought to call attention to something that might too easily be forgotten.

There was a time when the French were forced back upon themselves. No matter how deeply they, without realizing it, were still French, the first thought of all was how not to die of hunger, of somehow to escape forced labor in Germany (indeed it was this urge to escape that gave birth to the great movement of resistance and to the underground army). The most noble acts bore the imprint of selfishness. Everybody thought only of himself.

So the persecution of the Jews was of interest only to the Jews, although it caused untold deaths and suffering. Yet the Jews were directly part of the national struggle that opposed to the victorious Reich every shred of flesh of afflicted France.

Each and every Frenchman defending his own rights became an improvised soldier, and among those soldiers drawn into a death struggle in spite of themselves, Israel of France, the first and most severely oppressed, stood in the forefront.

No matter what aspect the problem assumed there was never but one problem, that of France.

Face to face with the German who seeks to be before being, the Jew has no being, is not and yet is. The Jew is a myth. The myth of German impotence.

There is no more useful myth.

"The Jew exists because I have failed. Every time I fail, it is the fault of the Jew. Each of my failures shows the pattern of the Jew, and all these patterns make up 'international Jewry.' "

If a German kills, never doubt his innocence! Pathetic but offended he faces his judges:

"He resisted me. The Jew killed him."

A German has a nightmare. On awakening it is the Jew that he accuses.

"He wanted to ruin me, to soil me, to kill me!"

"Who?"

"The Jew who hovered over my bed last night. That one, I recognize him."

"That cannot be, he was elsewhere."

"Then that one. All of them, for if it was not him, it was one of his."

With such identification the Jew can never be found. He is the enemy of course because he is made the enemy. Down

with him, if the army, industry, or ancient shibboleths are to be restored. Such the order. The tides and winds are invoked to kill him, but how can he be reached.

The Star of David was sewn on his left breast.

The hatred of the German for the Jew is not a hatred of man for man, of one kind of man for another kind of man, of the mongoose for the serpent; it is a hatred by order, obeyed with all the blindness of unabashed slavery. The German sees the object of his hatred everywhere, because he sees him nowhere. So on the strength of old and misty legends, he had to materialize him before his eyes. He marked him with the Star of David.

"It is an old Gothic custom," the German said with the indifference of a gargoyle.

Then he imprisoned him, tortured him, deported him, murdered him. That is why this book was written.

But first the hateful bully denied the Jew all the inoffensive rights of a decent man. He forbade him to walk in public places, to enter a library, to listen to a concert, to look at pictures, to go to market, to enter a train even if he had bought a ticket. But that was not enough. He held the Jew up to the ridicule of the crowd, to the curiosity of passers-by, to the insults of cowards.

Now we can tell a Jew at a hundred paces, we shall see he his an enemy.

I meet Mr. Strauss. I do not like Mr. Strauss. I do not trust Mr. Strauss. I even have a grievance against him. I do not like the way he does business. Everything about him is displeasing to me, his mien, his walk, his bearing, his endless flow of words, his versatility, his fearsomeness, the stand he takes un-

der all circumstances. He believes in principles that are not mine; what moves me leaves him cold, and the feelings that prompt me do not even touch him; his ideas are foreign to me, mine make him smile; we would not die for the same cause. He attaches altogether too much importance to money; he sees everything in terms of money. We do not speak the same language. We do not live in the same world. I can only feel repugnance for him. Am I to embrace him because he is a Jew? Of course not. Should opportunity offer, I shall say what I think of Mr. Strauss.

But perhaps he will manage to get himself liked, to fill the need for affection that is in him as it is in me, to appear to me other than he is, to see me other than I am, to conquer me. Yet it may be that he will not be able to.

But Mr. Levy is not Mr. Strauss. He, too, is neither of my people nor of my native land. I can see his faults. Of peasant stock, I do not like his build, the quality of his muscles. His mind seems to me too furnished, too sinuous, too enveloping, too flexible, too flowery. Is that any reason why we should not understand one another? From the first, I liked Mr. Levy. It was inevitable. His heart beats to the same emotions as my own. What attracts me, interests him. What hurts me, wounds him. His words awaken in me unknown echoes that are as music to my ears. His actions wear a halo I know well, for I have seen it around the actions of other men to whom I was attracted. Mr. Levy loves my world, and it is good in his eyes. My values are his values. They guide him as they guide me, and in their light we are brought together. What can I do about it?

My Aryanism that needs no urging gets on very well with

Mr. Levy's Semitism. It neither makes nor receives concessions. The universe has a value in my eyes and that value springs from me alone. It is mine. I have with me all men of good will.

If in the real Judea, now strewn with stones, Herr Hitler conjures up overpowering and international legions of errant phantoms which haunt him even in his eagle's eyrie, he should take a bromide and they will haunt him no longer. I can see no more kinship between Johann Sebastian Bach and Hermann Goering, than between Ezechiel and Mr. Levy. Nothing prevents me from liking Bach and ignoring Goering, or from passing up Ezechiel and enjoying the company of Mr. Levy.

But whatever the Nazi may do, it is not the Jewish husk that he strikes at, it is the kernel that husk contains, the message it bears.

The Jewish husk has borne many insults even in France. Many storms have beaten upon it. Many a whirlwind has sought to lay it low. Nothing that could soil or tear it has been withheld.

Do we wish to see it objectively?

The Jewish husk has made its choice. It covers a French heart. If our wish was that French Jews should be French, that wish has been granted. They have taken to us. Those who have been with us for centuries would never have known how not to belong to us body and soul. Our language was their language; our life was their life. They played their part in all our days, the most glorious and the darkest. Days that lifted up their hearts. Days that tried their souls. Our ruins belong to them, our glories are theirs. Perhaps a little shyness remained

that prevented them being lost in our mass but, by the very force of things, after our ideas they adopted our customs, after our customs they took on our reactions.

They had got to the point where I defy anyone to cite a French deed that a Jew has not done, a French thought a Jew has not had. We have studied in the same classrooms. We learned to read from the same books. Our writers, our painters, our architects, our landscapes, our climate, we have shared everything. We have warmed ourselves at the same fire, our heads have bowed beneath the same cares. We have made the same mistakes and had the same illusions. We have mingled in our pleasures, we have shed our blood together. Jews have died for their mother France as bravely as others, and when France fell we suffered together in the same inconsolable love.

Israel of France is French. There is nothing to add to that.

Besides what do peculiarities amount to, peculiarities that everyone has noticed and that nobody can satisfactorily define.

Israel of France is French, like Jacques Bonhomme and the companions of Joan of Arc.

Péguy, our Saint Péguy, was harrowed by the injustice done to Captain Dreyfus.

In that melting pot of France that was Paris and l'Ile de France, and which drew to itself one after the other all the provinces of our sunny land, Basque, Nice, Corsica, Alsace, Brittany, Flanders, in that melting pot fell also the Jews, and all together became French.

French to the core, Israel of France had the honor to bear our Cross when it was heaviest. What better patent of nobility.

But there are also the Jews who came to us much later, driven from their native lands by stupidity and brutality or merely attracted to a country they loved, among them the

long-suffering Polish Jews, those taskmen of misery, fashioned by it for its shortsighted needs, those Polish Jews of whom it might be said that they brought us nothing but their harried souls.

One must, as I have done in this investigation, approach them to understand how resplendent is France, how her rays penetrated the most impenetrable natures, how great a victory it is to become French, to learn how our leaven works.

The Cross they bore it, even the cross of war. It was given to one Zedelsohn at the Rothschild Hospital. He was brought in on a stretcher with his clothes and shoes on. They had not even taken off his handcuffs.

But the miracle of the little children of Polish Jews was even more astounding. The air of Paris, the schools, the streets, I know not what, seemed to clothe them with French flesh so that none could tell the difference, and their lips spoke French.

The Jews made their choice. They paid a high price. France would be in their debt, if a mother could owe anything to her children.