

Nos Libérateurs

Some texts in english, which might be used for projects concerning the Second World War, and more specifically the exhibition *Nos Libérateurs*.

From **Never give in ! The best of Winston Churchill's speeches**, pages 257-8. Published by Hyperion. ISBN 0-7868-8870-9

Dieu protège la France'

This speech, by the British prime minister Winston Churchill, was broadcast by the BBC¹ on 21 october 1940. The power and majesty of his words, reaching their crescendo in the final paragraph, gave courage and hope to all patriots, not only in France, but throughout Occupied Europe.

« Frenchmen ! For more than thirty years in peace and war I have marched with you, and I am marching still along the same road. Tonight I speak to you at your firesides wherever you may be, or whatever your fortunes are: I repeat the prayer around the Louis d'or, 'Dieu protège la France'. (...)

Remember we shall never stop, never weary, and never give in, and that our whole people and Empire have vowed themselves to the task of cleansing Europe from the Nazi pestilence and saving the world from the new Dark Ages. Do not imagine, as the German-controlled wireless tells you, that we English seek to take your ships and colonies. We seek to beat the life and soul out of Hitler and Hitlerism. That alone, that all the time, that to the end. We do not covet anything from any nation except their respect. Those French who are in the French Empire, and those who are in so-called unoccupied France, may see their way from time to time to useful action. I will not go into details. Hostile ears are listening. As for those to whom English hearts go out in full, because they see them under the sharp discipline, oppression, and spying of the Hun - as to those Frenchmen in the occupied regions - to them I say, when they think of the future let them remember the words which Thiers, that great Frenchman, uttered after 1870 about the future of France and what was to come: 'Think of it always: speak of it never.'

Good night, then: sleep to gather strength for the morning. For the morning will come. Brightly will it shine on the brave and true, kindly upon all who suffer for the cause, glorious upon the tombs of heroes. Thus will shine the dawn. Vive la France ! »

For more information about Winston Churchill: <http://www.winstonchurchill.org/>

¹ British Broadcasting Corporation

The Life That I Have

The Life That I Have is a short poem written by **Leo Marks** and used as a code. In the Second World War, poems were used to encrypt messages. This was, however, found to be insecure because enemy cryptographers were able to locate the original from published sources.

Leo Marks countered this by using his own creations. *The Life That I Have* was an original poem composed on Christmas Eve 1943 and was written by Marks in memory of his girlfriend Ruth, who had just died in a plane crash in Canada.

On 24th March 1944, the poem was issued by Marks to Violette Szabo, a French agent of Special Operations Executive who was eventually captured, tortured and killed by the Nazis. It was made famous by its inclusion in the 1958 movie about Szabo, *Carve Her Name with Pride*.

The text of the poem reads as follows :

The Life That I Have

The life that I have is all that I have,
And the life that I have is yours.

The love that I have of the life that I have,
Is yours and yours and yours.

A sleep I shall have, a rest I shall have,
Yet death will be but a pause.

For the peace of my years in the long green grass,
Will be yours and yours and yours.

For more about Szabo and other women who worked for the SOE (Special Operations Executive):

<http://www.64-baker-street.org>

For a long and fascinating story see : The White Mouse :

http://www.64-baker-street.org/agents/agent_fany_nancy_wake.html



On the next page there is an outline of the work of **Noor Inayat Khan** whose complete story is also on the Baker Street site.

“I wish some Indians would win high military distinction in this war. It would help to build a bridge between the English and the Indians.” These words of World War II heroine, Princess Noor Inayat Khan, could not have been more prophetic. In fact, at the end of WWII it was Indians who outnumbered even the British as the largest recipients of Victoria and George Cross medals, the highest British awards for bravery.

Noor Inayat Khan

Although Noor Inayat Khan was deeply influenced by the pacifist teachings of her father, who was from a princely Indian Muslim family, she decided to help defeat Nazi tyranny. So on the 19th November 1940 she joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF), and was sent to be trained as a wireless operator. Later she was recruited to join F (France) Section of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) and went to various SOE schools. During this time she adopted the name Nora Baker.

Though her training was incomplete and her superiors held mixed opinions on her suitability for secret warfare, her fluency in French and her competency in wireless operation - coupled with a shortage of experienced agents - made her a desirable candidate for service in Nazi-occupied France. On the 16/17th June 1943, cryptonymed *Madeleine/Nurse* and under the cover identity of Jeanne-Marie Regnier, Inayat Khan was flown into Northern France on a night landing, code named *Teacher/Nurse/Chaplain/Monk*.

She travelled to Paris, and together with two other women (Diana Rowden, code named *Paulette/Chaplain*, and Cecily Lefort, code named *Alice/Teacher*) Noor joined the *Physician* network. Over the next month and a half, all other *Physician* network radio operators were arrested by the Sicherheitsdienst (SD). In spite of the danger, Noor rejected an offer to return to Britain, and continued transmitting as the last essential link between London and Paris.

Moving from place to place, she managed to escape capture while maintaining wireless communication with London. She refused to abandon what had become the most important and dangerous post in France and did excellent work.



Finally Inayat Khan was betrayed to the Germans.

On or around the 13th October 1943, Inayat Khan was arrested and interrogated at the SD Headquarters at 84 Avenue Foch in Paris. Though SOE trainers had expressed doubts about Inayat Khan's gentle and unworldly character, on her arrest she fought so fiercely that SD officers were afraid of her and she was thenceforth treated as an extremely dangerous prisoner. There is no evidence of her being tortured, but her interrogation lasted over a month. During that time, she attempted escape twice. Hans Kieffer, former head of the Gestapo in Paris, testified after the war that she didn't give a single piece of information, but lied consistently.

On the 25th November 1943, Inayat Khan escaped from the SD Headquarters, but was captured in the immediate vicinity. After refusing to sign a declaration not to make further flight attempts, she was taken to Germany on the 27th November 1943 "for safe custody" and imprisoned at Pforzheim in solitary confinement as a "Nacht und Nebel" ("Night and Fog") prisoner, without any contact with the outside world and in complete secrecy.

She was classified as 'highly dangerous' and shackled in chains most of the time. As the prison director testified after the war, Inayat Khan remained uncooperative and continued to refuse to give any information on her work or her fellow operatives.

On the 11th September 1944 Noor Inayat Khan and three other SOE agents from Karlsruhe prison were moved to the Dachau Concentration Camp. In the early hours of the morning, on the 13th September 1944, the four women were executed by a shot to the head. An anonymous Dutch prisoner emerging in 1958 contended that Noor Inayat Khan was cruelly beaten by a sadistic SS guard before being shot from behind. Her last word was "Liberté".

An extract from **The Boy's Crusade, the American Infantry in Northwestern Europe, 1944 - 1945**
by **Paul Fussell**, published by Modern Library Chronicles 2003 New York. ISBN 0-679-64088-6.

Paul Fussell was drafted into the Army in 1943, aged 19. In October 1944 he landed in France, as part of the 103rd Infantry Division. He was wounded while fighting in France as a second lieutenant. Fussell suffered from depression and rage for years following his military service. In his 1996 autobiography he associated this condition with the dehumanization of his military service and his anger at the way the United States government and popular culture romanticized warfare. Since the 1980s Fussell has been an outspoken critic of the glorification of military service and warfare.

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Something of what an American boy aidman might experience is recalled by T/5 Leo Litwak. A few months before, Litwak had been a student at the University of Michigan. He was now, in the winter of 1944-45, an aidman in a rifle company fighting in the snow near the German border. As he says,

« I was an inexperienced nineteen-year-old kid. Only nineteen years old but I was called « Father » by a dying German soldier. We ... were marching through a bleak, snowdrenched forest.... Two German soldiers struggled through the snow toward the trees, maybe two hundred yards away. The captain told Rebel to see if he could hit them. Rebel knelt, aimed, fired. One went down, the other made it into the woods. The downed man waved at us and the captain told me to go to him.

The wounded German was no one to fear. I could see as we got close that he was an unlikely soldier, old and fragile, among the dregs the Germans were beginning to shove into combat. He must have been trying to surrender when we spotted him. He didn't have a weapon. He lay twisted around his right leg. He wore a gray wool uniform and cap, his eyes huge, his face pinched and unshaven, his mouth stretched as if shrieks were coming out, but it was a smothered sound, Ohhhhh, Ohhhhh. He saw the red crosses on my arms and helmet and reached for me and cried, « Vater ! » Father. A spike of femoral bone was sticking through his trousers. I slit his pants, bared the wound at midthigh. He'd shit small, hard, gray turds - what you might see in the spoor of an animal. The shit had worked itself down near the fracture. The stink was pungent and gagging. I put sulfa powder on the exposed bone, covered it with a compress, tied a loose tourniquet above the wound high on the thigh. He was graying fast, going into shock. He said « Vater, ich sterbe » Father, I'm dying. I stuck morphine into his thigh. He wasn't eased and I gave him another eighth of a grain. I watched him lapse into shock - lips blue, sweat cold, skin gray, pupils distended, pulse weak and fluttery.

I felt as if I, too, had been shot. I yearned for him to be dead so we'd both be relieved from his pain.

The living are complicated but the dead have been stripped of all meaning.

We saw them coifed in crab-shaped helmets, dressed in gray uniforms, mouth agape, gray teeth, gray hands, worn boots, no identities, indistinguishable one from the other, dead meat, nothing to grieve.

We were stupefied by the death we'd breathed, and stumbled toward combat clutched by the fear that we, too, could be made simple. » (...)

An extract from **Colonel Champrosay - a champion of Free France** by **Bim Chanler**. A home-published biography, of which there is a copy in the groupe Marat archives.

Twenty-year-old American Artillery Officer Bim Chandler was in Algeria in 1943 with the Allied Liaison Service attached to the Free French, the 1^{re} Division Française Libre. He spoke fluent French with an English accent. In the American army, junior officers didn't have orderlies, but when Chandler met Champrosay, the latter insisted this was ridiculous and Yombie was seconded to look after the young American...

From pages 14 to 15

« I was aroused next morning in a small whitewashed room in a small whitewashed villa by a very nervous black Senegalese soldier, who identified himself as Yombie. He handed me a heavy enamel mug (of British army origins) filled with hot coffee and said he would be back soon with my shaving water. He spoke in « petit nègre » a pidgin patois (moi il-y-a gagné cigarette pour toi) that took a bit of getting used to. For the next nine months, until the « blanchissage » of the division when all its black African troops were repatriated because they could not tolerate the harsh winter weather of the Vosges Mountains, Yombie was my faithful servant and friend.

A native of Upper Volta, he had been drafted in 1940 and thought of me as another foreigner put upon by the French. What did we care if the Germans won or not, we lived far away. He would be glad to see me in his village, might even lend me a wife, but would not welcome the others. In his tribe you could have as many wives as you wanted, but you either had to buy them outright with cattle or pay for them on the installment plan by working two weeks out of every two months for the girl's parents. Yombie had three wives and worked six weeks out of eight to pay for them. He admitted it was a bad deal.

At first glance Yombie's appearance was a little frightening. His front teeth were filed to points and the tribal scars on his cheeks were elaborate. Each community had its own pattern, so you could tell where someone came from. These scars vary from a simple hash mark worn by inhabitants of the oldest villages, to extremely complex designs covering most of the face and forehead. Yombie's were in the middle range and involved both cheeks. He told me that his village was three days walk from Koudougou. « Where's that ? » I asked. « Only about a week's walk from Ouagadougou. » « Never heard of it. » This brought on gales of laughter. « Never heard of Ouagadougou ? You don't know anything. We have a king and queen there ! »

I once asked Yombie how old he was. « Forty » he replied, producing his military I.D. card, though he could neither read nor write. « No, no that's when you joined the army. What I mean is how many years since you were a tiny baby until now ? » More gales of laughter. « How do I know. Perhaps my mother knows. That's the stupidest question I ever heard. What difference does that make ? » I was hard pressed to answer.

When Yombie and I parted, he gave me his 'chechia' and I gave him my silver ring. The chechia was a round red hat with a little beret tail on top that he kept a needle and thread stuck in. The ring was embossed in heavy relief with the great seal of the United States. My hope was that it might make Yombie important enough in his village to get him off some of that work for his wives. »

From **Slaughterhouse-Five** or THE CHILDREN'S CRUSADE: A DUTY DANCE WITH DEATH by **Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.** A FOURTH-GENERATION GERMAN-AMERICAN NOW LIVING IN EASY CIRCUMSTANCES ON CAPE COD (AND SMOKING TOO MUCH), WHO, AS AN AMERICAN INFANTRY SCOUT *HORS DE COMBAT* WITNESSED THE FIRE-BOMBING OF DRESDEN, GERMANY, «THE FLORENCE OF THE ELBE», ALONG TIME AGO, AND SURVIVED TO TELL THE TALE. THIS IS A NOVEL SOMEWHAT IN THE TELEGRAPHIC SCHIZOPHRENIC MANNER OF TALES OF THE PLANET TRALFAMADORE, WHERE THE FLYING SAUCERS COME FROM. PEACE. (This was the note added to his name on the 2000 edition of *Slaughterhouse-Five*) published by Vintage, 2000, U.K. ISBN 0 09 980020 9

Kurt Vonnegut was born in 1922 and died in 2007.

Slaughterhouse-Five, now considered one of the best American novels of the 20th Century, is a post-modern anti-war science fiction novel dealing with a soldier's (Billy Pilgrim) experiences during World War II and his journeys with time travel.

Kurt Vonnegut's experience as a soldier and prisoner of war had a profound influence on his later work. As a private with the 106th Infantry Division, Vonnegut was cut off from his battalion along with five other battalion scouts who wandered behind enemy lines for several days until being captured by Wehrmacht troops on December 14th 1944. Imprisoned in Dresden, Vonnegut was chosen as a leader of the POWs because he spoke some German. After insulting some German soldiers that were guarding him he was beaten and had his position as leader taken away. While a prisoner, he witnessed the fire bombing of Dresden in February 1945 which destroyed most of the city.

Vonnegut was one of a group of American prisoners of war to survive the attack in an underground slaughterhouse meatlocker used by the Germans as an ad hoc detention facility. The Germans called the building Schlachthof Fünf (Slaughterhouse Five), which the Allied POWs adopted as the name for their prison. Vonnegut said the aftermath of the attack was "utter destruction", "carnage unfathomable". In *Slaughterhouse Five*, he recalls that the remains of the city resembled the surface of the moon. The Germans put the surviving POWs to work, breaking into basements and bomb shelters to gather bodies for mass burial, while German civilians cursed and threw rocks at them. Vonnegut eventually remarked, "there were too many corpses to bury. So instead the Germans sent in troops with flamethrowers. All these civilians' remains were burned to ashes.". This experience was the inspiration for *Slaughterhouse-Five*, and is a central theme in at least six other of his books

From pages 107-108

«The temperature climbed startlingly that day. The noontime was balmy. The Germans brought soup and bread in two-wheeled carts which were pulled by Russians. The Englishmen sent over real coffee and sugar and marmalade and cigarettes and cigars, and the doors of the theater were left open, so the warmth could get in.

The Americans began to feel much better. They were able to hold their food. And then it was time to go to Dresden. The Americans marched fairly stylishly out of the British compound. Billy Pilgrim again led the parade. He had silver boots now, and a muff, and a piece of azure curtain which he wore like a toga. Billy still had a beard. So did poor old Edgar Derby, who was beside him. Derby was imagining letters to home, his lips working tremulously:

Dear Margaret - We are leaving for Dresden today. Don't worry. It will never be bombed. It is an open city. There was an election at noon, and guess what? And so on.

They came to the prison railroad yard again. They had arrived on only two cars. They would depart far more comfortably on four. They saw the dead hobo again. He was frozen stiff in the weeds beside the track. He was in a fetal position, trying even in death to nestle like a spoon with others. There were no others now. He was nestling with thin air and cinders. Somebody had taken his boots. His bare feet were blue and ivory. It was all right, somehow, his being dead. So it goes.

The trip to Dresden was a lark. It took only two hours. Shriveled little bellies were full. Sunlight and mild air came in through the ventilators. There were plenty of smokes from the Englishmen.

The Americans arrived in Dresden at five in the afternoon. The boxcar doors were opened, and the doorways framed the loveliest city that most of the Americans had ever seen. The skyline was intricate and voluptuous and enchanted and absurd. It looked like a Sunday school picture of Heaven to Billy Pilgrim.

Page 129 **Slaughterhouse-Five**

He was down in the meat locker on the night that Dresden was destroyed. There were sounds like giant footsteps above. Those were sticks of high-explosive bombs. The giants walked and walked. The meat locker was a very safe shelter. All that happened down there was an occasional shower of calcimine. The Americans and four of their guards and a few dressed carcasses were down there, and nobody else. The rest of the guards had, before the raid began, gone to the comforts of their own homes in Dresden. They were all being killed with their families.

So it goes.

The girls that Billy had seen naked were all being killed, too, in a much shallower shelter in another part of the stockyards.

So it goes.

A guard would go to the head of the stairs every so often to see what it was like outside, then he would come down and whisper to the other guards. There was a fire-storm out there. Dresden was one big flame. The one flame ate everything organic, everything that would burn.

It wasn't safe to come out of the shelter until noon the next day. When the Americans and their guards did come out, the sky was black with smoke. The sun was an angry little pinhead. Dresden was like the moon now, nothing but minerals. The stones were hot. Everybody else in the neighborhood was dead.

So it goes.

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'It was like the moon' said Billy Pilgrim.

The guards told the Americans to form in ranks of four, which they did. Then they had them march back to the hog barn which had been their home. Its walls still stood, but its windows and roof were gone, and there was nothing inside but ashes and dollops of melted glass. It was realized then that there was no food or water, and that the survivors, if they were going to continue to survive, were going to have to climb over curve after curve on the face of the moon.

Which they did.

The curves were smooth only when seen from a distance. The people climbing them learned that they were treacherous, jagged things - hot to the touch, often unstable - eager, should certain important rocks be disturbed, to tumble some more, to form lower, more solid curves.

Nobody talked much as the expedition crossed the moon. There was nothing appropriate to say. One thing was clear: Absolutely everybody in the city was supposed to be dead, regardless of what they were, and that anybody that moved in it represented a flaw in the design. There were to be no moon men at all.

American fighter planes came in under the smoke to see if anything was moving. They saw Billy and the rest moving down there. The planes sprayed them with machine-gun bullets, but the bullets missed. Then they saw some other people moving down by the riverside and they shot at them. They hit some of them. So it goes.

The idea was to hasten the end of the war.»

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On internet you can listen to Kurt Vonnegut talking about Slaughterhouse-Five:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/specials/133_wbc_archive_new/page6.shtml