

Aimé S. LEOCARD  
Villa "Dan-Pat-Liz"  
962, Avenue de Montferrat  
83300 Draguignan - France  
Tél. 94.68.05.73

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Gentlemen,

It's a great pleasure for me to meet you today in answer to the kind invitation of Major George E. SMAILES who asked me to tell you something about what the RESISTANCE Movement has been in FRANCE and more especially in this southern part of FRANCE during the dark years of the German occupation.

To begin with let me make some introductory remarks which may settle the limits of the statement I am going to draw up: I am neither a historian nor a judge; I can't be a historian because I don't have a global view of all the events; I can't be a judge because one can't be a good judge in his own case. Like thousands and thousands of EUROPEANS, I began to be a witness and then I happened to become an actor, I mean I took a modest part in the RESISTANCE Movement.

What do we mean by RESISTANCE ? It's the name given to a secret, political and military action led either by individuals or by groups during WW II against GERMANY and the dictatorship the Germans established in the countries which were occupied by their troops. For French people the RESISTANCE materialized with Gal DE GAULLE when he delivered on the B.B.C. from LONDON that famous speech of June 18th 1940 which was a call - I'd like to quote today -

"TO ALL FRENCH MEN:

FRANCE HAS LOST A BATTLE! BUT FRANCE HASN'T LOST THE WAR !

UNWORTHY MEN IN POWER MAY HAVE SURRENDERED BECAUSE THEY WERE PANIC-STRAWK AND SO DOING THEY HAVE FORGOTTEN WHAT HONOR MEANS AND THEY HAVE HANDED OUR COUNTRY OVER TO THE ENEMY AND THEY HAVE LET IT FALL INTO SLAVERY. HOWEVER NOTHING IS LOST !

NOTHING IS LOST/ BECAUSE THIS WAR IS A WORLD WAR. IN THE FREE WORLD, IMMEASURABLE FORCES HAVEN'T YET TAKEN PART IN IT. ONE DAY THESE FORCES WILL CRUSH THE ENEMY. ON THAT DAY, FRANCE MUST TAKE ITS SHARE OF THE VICTORY. THEN, FRANCE WILL RECOVER ITS FREEDOM AND ITS GREATNESS. IT'S WHAT I AIM TO DO AND I DON'T WANT ANYTHING ELSE !

IT'S THE REASON WHY I INVITE ALL THE FRENCHMEN, WHEREVER THEY ARE, TO JOIN ME FOR ACTION, SACRIFICE AND HOPE.

IT'S A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH FOR OUR COUNTRY.

LET US FIGHT ALL TOGETHER TO SAVE IT !

LONG LIVE FRANCE !"

In that speech, of course, there was the prophetic statement that "IMMEASURABLE FORCES HADN'T YET TAKEN PART IN THE WAR" ( which was a "WORLD WAR") and Gal DE GAULLE meant THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (He couldn't have meant RUSSIA as it wasn't and so far isn't a free Country and at that time RUSSIA was allied to GERMANY). Then there is a sentence which is the very essence of the RESISTANCE Movement with the words: ACTION, SACRIFICE and HOPE. These words were to be echoed by the famous ones of Prime Minister Sir WINSTON CHURCHILL to the British People during the Battle of BRITAIN : "SWEAT, BLOOD AND TEARS".

That appeal to French people may not have been very popular at the beginning: after what had happened to FRANCE - a defeat in just a few weeks'time - it may have seemed impossible to do something in a country which was occupied by German forces and which had at its head the ver



man most veterans of WW I considered as a real Patriot, PETAIN, the man who had been called "the Victor of VERDUN", the very man who had given up hope and had decided to consent to an armistice" between soldiers and in honorable terms" ( so he said) : more than half of FRANCE was to be occupied - ALSACE and LORRAINE were lost - , the French Navy was to remain in French harbors and the French Empire throughout the world was to stop fighting.

However Gal DE GAULLE said "No" to the military surrender of the so-called French Government with Mal PETAIN at its head. So doing, he condemned any "collaboration" with the enemy either it were recognized or imposed upon the VICHY Government. Though the RESISTANCE Movement was to remain a minority in the Country, it developed little by little as the war was continuing, with less food for people and more hardships; then, when the war extended to RUSSIA, the communists decided that they were against the Vichy Government, too; then, the German troops invaded the South of FRANCE when the AMERICAN FORCES landed in North Africa in Nov. '42; then, the time came when the German armies could get no further and their troops and their allied as well -the JAPANESE and the ITALIANS- began retreating on the various battlefields throughout the world; then the Germans began to need foreign workers in their factories and they created an Agency called "SERVICE DU TRAVAIL OBLIGATOIRE" (S.T.O. (Compulsory Work in Germany) which quickly became unpopular and brought those who rebelled against it to join with the "MAQUISARDS", that is the armed men living in the woods or in the mountains; then, there was the infamous cruelty of political services of the Police and, last but not least, the deportation, the odious deportation of JEWS and GYPSIES, including children. I think that it must have been before the end of 1942 when the French "Gendarmes" arrested and brought to the "Velodrome d'Hiver" near PARIS thousands and thousands of JEWS who were to be deported to CONCENTRATION CAMPS in GERMANY. Now you may understand that a real deep hatred began to divide the French : there were those who were for the VICHY Government and we called them the "PETAINISTES" after the name of their chief, Mal PETAIN; all the others were called "GAULLISTES", or sometimes "TERRORISTES" - which was not true because the RESISTANCE Movement never used terror as it is done nowadays in various parts of the world to terrorize people and to obtain political demands by using violence and intimidation.

Now I must say - and I am sorry of it - there is a big difference between all the other occupied countries in Europe and FRANCE : in FRANCE, we had ~~had~~ a so-called French Government in VICHY, with a lot of Ambassadors accredited to it - including the AMERICAN EMBASSY (till Nov. 8th '42) for two years; for a lot of French people the Vichy Government may have looked as the real Government of FRANCE AND THEY MAY HAVE THOUGHT THAT THERE WAS NOTHING ELSE TO DO than to follow the "Government" while in all the other countries, the Legal Governments had fled to LONDON before the German Forces' arrival, in order to continue FIGHTING. Then, it was clear that from the early days of occupation in those Countries, "collaboration" with the Germans meant "treason". No wonder that the RESISTANCE Movement may have been more important in all the other European Countries than in FRANCE at the beginning of the German occupation. Everywhere a political Resistance against the dictatorship brought over by HITLER & MUSSOLINI's armies began to organize.



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In FRANCE, it was the beginning of various movements of RESISTANCE:

in the Northern Zone( that is the greater part of the country which was occupied for four long years: LIBERATION-NORD, L'ORGANISATION CIVILE ET MILITAIRE (O.C.M.) ~~et~~, le MOUVEMENT RESISTANCE (to which I still belong) and the FRONT NATIONAL (led by Communists);

in the Southern Zone : LE MOUVEMENT DE LA LIBERATION NATIONALE ~~et~~ M.L.N.), COMBAT and the Groups of FRANCS-TIREURS & PARTISANS (F.T.P.) which were under the command of Communists.

In June '43, all these organisms, under impetuous Jean MOULIN (who was the Representative of Gal DE GAULLE in FRANCE), united in a "CONSEIL NATIONAL DE LA RESISTANCE" (C.N.R.) in which political parties and Unions were represented. That was the time when assumed names and corresponding identity cards were used.

THE ACTION OF THE RESISTANCE MOVEMENT consisted in :

- 1) seeking all sorts of information, mainly about the German Forces;
- 2) organizing secret trips from one Zone into the other one or by helping volunteers to leave the Country and enlist in the FREE FRENCH FORCES;
- 3) preparing sabotages (mainly damages to the railroads) and factories): the Germans had to have the railroads watched at night by volunteers who walked along the tracks from one station to another, without any weapons by the way;
- 4) organising executions of traitors;
- 5) providing the "MAQUIS" with weapons, especially in the VERCORS (near GRENOBLE) and those "maquis" were important as they compelled the Germans to leave a few divisions near those mountainous parts;
- 6) printing and distributing - regularly- a great many clandestine papers : COMBAT, LIBERATION, FRANC-TIREUR, RESISTANCE, etc...;
- 7) After the landing of the Allied Forces in NORMANDY, on June 6th'44, the action of the RESISTANCE Movement consisted in an effective military action the effectiveness of which could be compared by Gal EISENHOWER himself to THE ACTION OF FIFTEEN DIVISIONS.

What part did I personally take in the RESISTANCE ?

A modest part, I'm afraid. I was fifteen in June 1940. I couldn't understand that FRANCE could have been invaded in a week's time and that we had to surrender; my father (called up again in 1939), my grand-father, my uncle who had been soldiers on the front in WW I were sad; most of my friends were as sad as we were. The more I thought of it - of that defeat - the more ashamed I felt. Just imagine how a traffic-jam, an accident, or a heavy rain, or in Winter a heavy snow-fall can stop the traffic traffic on the roads... The bridges, at least most bridges, were still there ! Nothing had been done to stop the Germans during those crucial days of June '40. Wasn't there any hope left ? Then a shortage of food came, especially in the South of FRANCE, that part which was supposed to be free with a so-called French Government. I had, just like lots of students, to go back to high school in early October 1940. A few teachers were veterans of WW I : they didn't say anything <sup>about</sup> the "defeat". Then we heard that Freemasons, Members of Republican Parties had lost their jobs; Mayors, County-Councillors, Congressmen & Senators were dismissed when they refused to pay allegiance to the VICHY Government and they were replaced by people who had always been against Demo-



-cracy and who openly wished the Germans to be victorious !

BUT, .. ENGLAND wasn't invaded and the BRITISH PEOPLE was still fighting though the German Air Force bombed the BRITISH ISLES and especially LONDON and other Cities like COVENTRY, night and day. Then came the beginning of the war in the East against the Russians... All that time, we listened to the B.B.C. punctually at 9 p.m.. We had the latest news and the real ones (which you couldn't find in the papers sold in FRANCE) and we could hear comments and speeches by the FREE FRENCH. It brought us hope. Then, on Dec. 7th 1941, came that treacherous attack against PEARL HARBOR. The prophetic words of Gal DE GAULLE on June 18th 1940 "IN THE FREE WORLD, IMMEASURABLE FORCES HAVEN'T YET TAKEN PART IN THIS WORLD WAR. ONE DAY, THESE FORCES WILL CRUSH THE ENEMY..." We knew that the dawn of that glorious day had come. On the B.B.C., they told us what we should do : for instance, weeks before Nov. 11th '42, they told us to go and pray at the Monument to the Heroes of WW I (which can be found in every City, town or village throughout FRANCE), on Armistice Day, at 11 a.m., as we used to do before the war and they invited us to meet on Main Street that same day, in the evening, and sing our national anthem "LA MARSEILLAISE". Then I had an idea: I thought it would be something proper to do to lay a wreath at the WW I Monument. I visited a few Friends and a few people I knew and several shopkeepers and a week before Armistice Day I had collected 825 Francs.. I went to a flower-seller's I knew and asked her whether it would be possible to get a wreath for that sum of money; when the lady heard what I intended to do, she told me she was going to prepare the ~~loveliest~~ nicest wreath she had ever made. Then I met the Mayor, I mean the one we had till June '40, the very one who had been elected by his fellow-citizens: he assured me he and his City-Councillors would be proud to be at the Monument when I laid the wreath.

On Nov. 8th '42, American Forces landed in Africa, the greater part of the French Fleet in the harbor of TOULON being unable to leave scuttled themselves not to fall into enemy's hands and German troops invaded the South of FRANCE while Italian troops, too, were entering the RIVIERA they had been unable to take when they declared war to FRANCE and GREAT BRITAIN on June 10th 1944 ( which had been the object of a scathing phrase in one of President ROOSEVELT's greatest speeches: " On this 10th day of June, the hand that held the dagger struck it into the back of its neighbor".)

On Nov. 11th '42, at 10.45 a.m., I was at the flower-shop. I knew it was just a five minutes walk to the Monument and I had to be neither late nor early. On the way to the shop, I had noticed that there were a lot of people near by, though groups of more than three persons were forbidden; there were policemen, too, and, here and there, men from the "MILICE" (which was a special Police Force consisting mostly of men who had had serious trouble with the regular Police before the war. The flower-seller told me: "Aimé, you'll never reach the Monument by yourself. Let me carry the wreath in a big basket, as if I were taking it to a deadman's house. We left the shop at 5 to 11. When we came by the railings of the small park where the Monument stood, I took the wreath and I think that a large ~~and~~ silent crowd

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\* In fact, the Milice was created in Jan. '43.  
In Nov '42 there were men of the "Service d'ordre légionnaire"



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was around me. When I arrived in front of the Monument, the Mayor, Mr Joseph COLLOMP and all the 27 City-Councillors were waiting for me; then, the Mayor and I laid the wreath and all of us - may be two hundred people or more - remained silent for a minute. The German COMMANDANTUR was just ~~two~~ two hundred yards away, in the best Hotel in town. When I was back to the gate two police-officers asked me to follow them to the Police-Station. I was to be questioned for several hours by the Superintendent of the Police. I was released in the early evening, just in time to go down to Main Street where a lot of people were gathering. We must have been a hundred or so at one end of the Avenue when we began marching along and singing "LA MARSEILLAISE": French policemen in uniforms were a hundred yard away across the roadway; behind them, were police-officers inspectors; farther were men from the "Milice" and we knew there may be some German soldiers at the other end of the Avenue, in front of the "PREFECTURE"(that is the Governor's house). When we came to the first line of policemen gave as many blows as we received; then, when we arrived in front of the police-inspectors in plain clothes, we happened to be seven of us left (all in our teens), all the others had run away. We weren't a match for the police-officers and soon we were arrested and taken to the Police-Station where we were to spend a long night, police-officers using their fists and a few black jacks to make us "understand" as they said that we shouldn't listen to those who were for the "capitalist, judeo-masonic" bunch of "the traitors of ALBION". Anyway, they released us in time to go to school the next morning.

Some time later, in a bookshop, there were a lot of pictures to praise the German soldiers and the "New Order" they were bringing to EUROPE; one night, after the curfew, one of the group of seven, CASANOVA Louis, and I decided to break that shop-window with big stones, which we did ... and which made a big noise, and then we managed to run away. A year later or so, in that same shop-window were displayed other pictures praising the S.T.O. (Compulsory Work in Germany); once again, we broke that shop-window.

On another occasion, three of us showed that we were young and could have a big laugh... and make a lot of people laugh : an Avenue had just been named after Mal PETAIN; we prepared a plaque made of wood with the words "AVENUE GENERAL DE GAULLE". At night, we borrowed a ladder in a warehouse and, with a few big nails and a hammer, we managed to pin that plaque at the beginning of the Avenue. Everybody could see it the day after as the Police took it off just before noon. Now it's sad to think that we are only two of us who may laugh when we recall that joke.

Then, on the 6th of September 1943, four of us decided to organize a Group of RESISTANCE which was to be called GROUPE D'AVANT-GARDE REPUBLICAIN (which didn't mean at all that we were interested in politics !); later we were to be tied to the CORPS FRANCS DE LA LIBERATION. I was mainly in charge of recruiting young men about our age as we thought it better not to include older people than us in our Group; little by little, we managed to reach two groups of thirty young men( what we call a "trentaine"; each "trentaine" was divided into five groups of six men called a "sizaine"; each man knew his direct chief and me (they didn't know however that I was in the Committee of the four founders).

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Our immediate job was to help those who didn't want to go and work in Germany, "the Réfractaires" to the S.T.O.; we hid them in small houses in the country and brought food to them till we could help them join the "Maquis" in the North of the County of Var. Then, we knew that, in an office, at the City-Hall, they had a card-index of the S.T.O.; we decided to destroy it. In the late afternoon, one day, one of us went and hid in the lavatory of that office. At 10 p.m., he opened the door for us and we put all the cards for the S.T.O. into bags and took them to a small house in the country where some of us spent a whole day to burn them in the fire-place... I must say that we had also stolen a type-writer we gave back to the ancient Mayor when he was back in office, after the Invasion of Southern France in August '44.

Later, we happened to have something very serious to accomplish; two Frenchmen in their late twenties - one a former philosophy teacher, [REDACTED], the other one a workman, [REDACTED], both working for the GESTAPO, were very ~~never~~ mischievous: they would come to farms, saying that they were hungry and that they didn't want to go and work for the Germans with the S.T.O. and they asked the farmers to help them to run away and go to the "Maquis". A few farmers were willing to help those so-called "Patriots" and in a short time they were arrested. Something was to be done to put an end to the crimes of those two traitors. They had a chauffeured limousine and their chauffeur was a soldier who was an Armenian in a German uniform. One of us, TERZIAN, was the son of Armenians and he could speak Armenian. So we knew that [REDACTED] AND [REDACTED] used to go to the seaside (to St-RAPHAEL or ST-TROPEZ) but they changed the itinerary every day or so. We had Sten Machine-guns and we were eight of us when we were told by their driver that they were to take the road from TRANS to LES ARCS on their way to the seaside. We decided that the best place to wait for them was at the top of the hill, a mile after TRANS. We hid in the holes which had been dug on each side of the road on the Germans' orders. After we had been waiting for an hour or so, we suddenly heard the noise of an engine, then a second one: two trucks - NO CAR ! - were coming and they were full of German soldiers. They soon stopped and some soldiers jumped down on the roadside. One of them must have seen one of us (we were four on each side of the road and each of us in a hole); he cried out: "ALARM ! ALARM ! TERRORISTS ! TERRORISTS !" By then we were already running towards the woods and that was the first time we could hear so many bullets whistle (I am sorry if I don't agree with a famous General - he was only a general at the time he pronounced these words - "There is something charming in the sound of the bullets"). We ran for our dear lives... and [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] lived a few more months till we arrested them in late August '44 and we took them to prison; they were judged and condemned to be shot.

Later, in July '44, we were told that five Patriots who had been arrested by the GESTAPO thanks to informers were in the local jail. We knew that they were to be deported in a few days. One of the warders was a friend of us; he was to be on duty the next morning and he was to open the door to the garbage-man at 5 a.m.. We were three of us that morning - a larger group might have had more difficulty in avoiding the German patrols and the Milice



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patrols in the streets. We hid behind plane-trees (sycamores) in front of the jail. When the garbage-man rang the bell we were behind him and with our guns obliged him to walk in our friend, the warder, Mr VEYRET, put his hands up with the bunch of keys; all the keys were on the same side, only the key to the next door was above the others. We tied our friend and the garbage-man together with the ropes we had brought and we left the two poor fellows with gags in their mouths; we pulled the telephone wires off the wall and then it was easy to take the five men out of their cells; then we walked across the town to the hill-side where a group of six (a "sizaine") were waiting to lead the men we had set free to the "Maquis" near the village of AUPS. For that action especially, we were awarded the War Cross with a silver star.

We took part in the Liberation of our city and of some villages. In the afternoon of the 16th of August, I happened to be in a street near my parents' house; I hadn't seen my parents for months and decided to go and see them if they were home or at least some neighbors; then, I met the first four paratroopers of the 551st PRCHT. INF.: among them, my friend Joe CICCHINELLI, from SEDONA, ARIZONA (he is still alive and has visited me three times since then with his lovely wife Jane). We took 66 prisoners in the evening of that day, including a General (Gal BERRINGER) and several officers.

The day after, some paratroopers of the 517 PRCT saved our lives: we were on our way to FAYENCE (east, North-East of DRAGUIGNAN) in one car and two trucks when we saw American soldiers who had just taken a few mines off the road. You may imagine how proud I am to be a lifetime member of the 517 PRCT Association and I do attend the Reunions every two years in the States.

But I'm afraid I must come to a conclusion: Yes, the word RESISTANCE has something magic in it. As Vice-President of the "MOUVEMENT RESISTANCE" for PROVENCE & RIVIERA, I can tell you how close we feel to one another; happy events are important for us, but still more important are dark days. In that organization, we were 2,000 throughout FRANCE, only a few hundred were left after the war. Last National Meeting took place in CANNES last May: more than a hundred of us were there. What a large family !

In my study, I proudly show my visitors a congratulatory letter from President Ronald REAGAN ( for the Foundation of the SOUVENIR FRANCO-AMERICAIN, which is another story all by itself) and a card signed by the French Defense Secretary (in 1974) Henri DUVILLARD ; with the words : "Thanks to you, FRANCE took its share of the Victory", which was meant for all the "MOUVEMENT RESISTANCE".

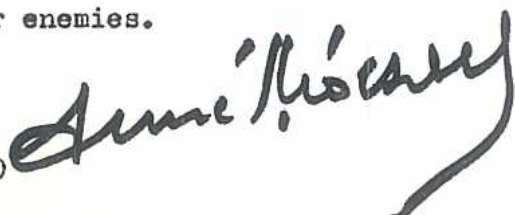
As ~~CHATEAUBRIAND~~ CHATEAUBRIAND (the French Romantic writer) had done in 1807 when he accused NAPOLEON of despotism, we, Members of the RESISTANCE, had condemned a regime for allowing " only the chains of the slave and the voice of the informer to be heard". More than anything else we were confident that, WITH GOD'S HELP, our ideals of JUSTICE, FREEDOM and DEMOCRACY would help us to triumph over our enemies.

May the younger generations have the same faith.

Thank You.

DRAGUIGNAN, FRANCE

Aimé S. LÉOCARD



Friday, October 16th 1987.