

six foot tall gals walking straight like a rod with three four calabashes on her head filled with all kinds of stuff with the largest on the bottom and the other ones fitting in the larger ones and a little girl perhaps 1-2 yrs old walking behind her mother with an empty half shell of coconut on her head learning how to walk so that it doesn't fall off, training to carry the bigger and heavier stuff later on. How many times I wished I would have a photo camera with me. Until they have their first kids the young girls have boobs they could stab your eyes out with them. Alas they get old very fast. They usually marry by the time they are fourteen and after the kids start coming those proud boobs become floppy pouches pretty soon. A woman in Sénégal who is twenty five looks like a fifty year old one in the West.

SEPTEMBER/26/D.B.

We got a card from home, the first one since we arrived in this hellhole.

SEPTEMBER/29/D.B.

Yesterday I was talking to Tibor when a Cpl. Chef comes over saying I hear you are talking Hungarian, where you from? From Sopron. Oh I was living there for six years. And what did you ^{do} there? He smiles and says, you wouldn't believe it. It turns out he was a PRIEST. The guy has what is called "saturnine goodlooks" and that's what got him in trouble of ^{course} with the women. He joined under false name because he comes from a very wellknown family in Hungary. One of his close relatives is a general another a prelate and another a judge. As regarding the women he was not exaggerating either. We went out with him a couple of times and we hardly sat down in a bar there were 2-3 woman all over him! I never saw anything like it. He is leaving soon for Mauretania. Another interesting guy here is a former swimming champ from Checkoslovakia. Boy does he ever look the rôle! Johnny Weismuller would be jealous. His name is Krebs. And a very charming friendly boy too. A few days ago one of the officers call him saying he would like to find out if there are crocodiles in the river close to the camp? Krebs says, lets walk down to the river, which they do. Krebs strips down to his shorts and dives in as the swimming champ he is and starts doing the

Australian Crawl in great form back and forth and up and down the river. He climbs out and says laughing, looks there are no crocks Mon Lieutenant as I didnt meet any! Big laugh of course. I hate to think of it what would have happened if he did.

Yesterday the Compagnie went out to the brousse (bush) to have instructions about our new Mauser rifles. The Lt. and the Adjudant gets into a long conversation and it transpires that neither of them know the first thing about the Mauser! The Lt. who knew that we were reserve officers comes over to me and asks me if I'm familiar with the Mauser ? I tell him not really as we had Mannlichers. C'est dommage.(its a pity). He walks over to Tibor and asks the same question. Tibor says about the same thing but the Lt. is not discouraged. Ça n'fait rien, tu va raconter quelque chose quand même. Vas-y ! (doesnt matter you can tell them a story anyway). He gives the Mauser to Tibor who walks out to the front of the mob motions them to sit in semi circle and "Listen UP!" He breaks the breach open smartly and starts his spiel with the chutzpah of someone who wants to convey the impression , I did this a thousand times before! Tibor is NEVER at loss for words and although some of the stuff he is dishing out is more for the Mannlicher than the Mauser WHO knows the difference? Occasionally he gives me a "how am I doing look?" So I give him a discreet nod and he goes on with ^{his} spiel. After he finished the Lt. says to Tibor : tu voi ? I told you you can tell them a story!

The Compagnie of Pubi, the ex priest is going to Mauretania "quelquepart". When the Compagnie Commander asked the Colonel which way they should go his answer was: Mais vous aller bien trouver un route quelque part, (surely you'll find a way somewhere!) préférablement où il y a un pont, et si il ya pas vous aller fair une! (preferably where there is a bridge, and if there isnt you will make one.) Dailleurs je vais vous écrire. (Anyway I'll write you.)

My old buddy Hans Nettel who was with me in the hospital in Saida , he with a boil on his tummy and I with scabies, is here too. One day when both Tibor and myself was fed up up to here I asked Nettel whether he would consider to go AWOL to Gambia, next door ? He said it was enough for him to be a Stranger in a Strange land once.

OCTOBER/8/D.B.

Yesterday some of the guys went to Peloton Two. If I'd have known that I'll be a Cpl for two years I would not have gone to Peloton One if they would have paid me. I even considered "remise de Gallon" (returning of grade) but it is almost impossible ^{without} going to prison first and that is too high a price to pay.

One of the sergeants who fought with the Legion in France during the Drôle de Guerre told me this story: the Germans blitzed a French town and a German patrol checked one of the hotels and found a French Colonel in bed with a broad. Said the German: you see Colonel THIS is why I am here in France : you can either fuck or fight but cannot do both in the same time.

The son of our previous Bataillon Cmdr. is 16 yrs old. When he was thirteen the Colonel took him with him to Tonkin. As I said before, in Tonkin all the guys can shack up with a native girl in town. This smart little SOB found out which of the Legionnaires was on duty and visited his "wife" for a little fun. The gals who were happy ^{to} co-operate for a little monetary present never complained of course. It was taken for granted by the Legionnaires that almost all their "wives" screwed around either for money or had a native boyfriend on the side. When Sonny Boy was thirteen and a half he got his first, but not last, clap for which the natives have a "kill or cure" medicine. Needless to say that he also drank his share. By the time he was fifteen he had secondary syphilis. Now he is seventeen and looks like a forty year old roué. (rake). He drinks his two liter wine daily and a respectable number of apéros, beers etc.

OCTOBER/11/D.B.

Yesterday we had an Air Raid Alert! Resemblent slowly-slowly. They fetched the machine gun also at leisurely pace and walked out to the brousse likewise... ils fait chaud dans cette putain de patelin, hein ? (it is hot in this whore of a dump, hein ?). They put the anti-aircraft machine gun under an acacia tree with the exclamation that the tree offers natural camouflage! As I've nothing to do with anti aircraft defense having a mortar, it was no skin off MY ass but just as curiosity I asked the guy in charge

how is he going to see, never mind fire, at an aircraft thru the canopy of the tree? On se démerdera. (we'll manage). - So they sent to the armory for ammo. The trouble was that the key to the armory was kept by a Sénégalaise who arrived after more than an hour. Then we had to wait more for the Sgt who is in charge of the ammo. Then it turned out that the ammo for the submachine guns are kept in machine gun belts which weighed in at 70kg each. They dragged these boxes out and start transferring the ammo from the belts into the submachine gun magazines. And two hours after the ALERT we're more or less ready to fire - thru the canopy of the acacia tree! So what? We're gonna ask the planes to return a bit later. God help us all if we EVER have to fight a REAL war with this sorry assed mob trying to impersonate an army!

OCTOBER/14/D.B.

Yesterday we got our Daily Standing Orders for the...WINTER, resulting in later Réveillés and shorter siestes! Only a Vichy asshole of a Colonel could do something dumb like this who should have NEVER been posted to the Legion in the first place and never would have been in the olden times when only the crème de la crème of St.Cyr (French military academy) was eligible for the Legion. The "winter" here is just as hot as the summer with the difference that there is almost 100% humidity all the time. Everything is moist, including our skin and the ground is steaming after tropical downpours. Everything rots and gets moldy. General Sir sits in his office under ventilators, with the windows darkened and announces that it is WINTER!

OCTOBER/19/D.B.

I got a letter from home. All my friends were taken to labour companies to the Mármaros Mountains which are snow covered the year round. They are building roads there for the Germans, live in wooden shacks without heat of course and freeze or starve to death. Compared to THAT this is a holiday here.

Somebody must have enlightened the Commanding Officer and the WINTER Standing Orders were cancelled and the sieste is untill 15hrs as before. But WHO was the MORON who wrote the

original Orders in the first place? And what other idiocies will he commit resulting in worst catastrophes and loss of life ? I heard it was Mohammed who raised hell about the WINTER orders resulting in their cancellations. As I said before the Old Timers are OK, the trouble is when the assholes sent by the Vichy shit-headed swines take over.

OCTOBER/21/D.B.

Well, I lost my virginity! (never been in prison). The asshole compagnie barber, Lipani an Italian of course, almost all barbers in the Legion being Italian, de rigueur, was AWOL at the Evening Rollcall which is a serious sin in the Legion as it might or might not be the first step to DESERTION! As he is in my barrack he should have told me if he was "barbering" somewhere but didnt. Nevertheless I assumed that he forgot and gave him the benefit of the doubt as he is actually a good kid apart from being a compulsive poker player which is obvious to the naked eyeballs from the tattoo on his forearm saying : POKER S.V.P. - According to the REGS the Room Chief, i.e. ME in this case, is not responsible for the so-called "employees" like barbers, cooks, cobblers, medics etc to be present at Rollcall as it is assumed that they are "working" somewhere. It is exactly for this reason that only the guys with good records and being considered RELIABLE and not likely to go AWOL are chosen as "EMPLOYEES". Nevertheless the Duty Officer has to report them as AWOL if they are not PRESENT until it is proven later otherwise. - So the Duty Officer reports Lipani as AWOL at evening Rollcall to the office. Which in turn results in Mohammed calling me to his office asking me why I did not report Lipani AWOL ? I tell him that Lipani is the compagnie barber and as he knows "employees" are not my responsibility at Rollcall. Mohammed is leafing thru my Cahier de Chanson and gets this cockeyed grin on his face and says: according to the REGS Fuchs you are right, but I see here that you are still a "vièrge" which is "quand même DEGUEULASSE" after more than two years! "Alors je te colle huit jours quand même! Fout l'camp! (I see you are still a virgin after two years and this is really disgusting! So I stick you with eight days prison anyway! Fuck off!) Merci Mon Capitaine! De rien mon vieux! (thank you Mon Capitaine. Dont mention it,(laughing.)

Now, in another garrison eighth days in prison would have been no joke but here it is another story. The Maitre d'Hôtel of the prison is a German Adjudant Chef with some 20 yrs of service, his name is Fischer, who is a real sweetheart of a guy. The prison is always full because they have a better life there than in their own company. The prisoners go out on a little corvée of filling in pot-holes etc and nobody get a hernia, while the company goes out on maneuvers and other "military" endeavours in this lousy heat and sweat their balls off. In prison it is supposed to be forbidden to smoke and no wine with meals, the worst part of prisons for old-timers but Adjudant Chef Fischer has the tendency to be short sighted about these things. He sends the prisoners to the kitchen for the meals who manages to "find" a little wine most of the time. As for not smoking he came in one day while I was still there more disgusted than angry and said: I let you assholes smoke and what do I get for it ? One moron managed to flip the butt out the window just in front of Cmdt. Borgat when he passed by who came in very mad and chewed my ass out! Bunch of ARSCHLÖCHER what you all are! (assholes).

So after Mohammed deflowered me with great care making it look like a favour to me to boot, I got my kit together and report to Adjudant Chef Fischer for my eighth days without being responsible for Lipani and other shitheads. When Adjudant Chef Fischer sees me approaching he starts singing an old German nursery rhyme: Fuchs Du hasst die Gans gestohlen gib sie wieder her etc. ((Fox you stole the goose give it back etc.)). I say no I did not even see a Gans in this godforsaken shithouse much less stole one! So what the hell are you doing in my Establishment ? You are no jailbird! So I tell him the whole story and he just shook his head, looks like Mohammed was drinking a little too much again! Well, dont worry anyway. You wont stay here anywhere like eighth days. I need the space for better qualified candidates than you. What do you mean ? Leave it to me. So I find out that Cmdt. Borgat visits the prison every week and he has the right to amnesty anybody he wants, specially first offenders.

So I go inside the "hotel" and who is there but one of our celebrities, Müller better known as La Mul. La Mul is a former German Navy guy, all muscles, with some ten years of service in the Legion a "significant" part spent in prison including TWO séjours in the Compagnie Discipline in Colomb-Béchar which is like being the graduate of Sing-Sing in America twice over. Needless to say in every prison in the Legion he is a Celeberity and runs the show, like here too. La Mul is actually a wonderful guy and a very hard worker as long as he is SOBER. When he gets loaded he becomes a one man army and a terror. Which is why ^{he} is in prison again awaiting his transfer to the Compagnie Discipline, but this time in Sénégal he tells me he heard is a rest camp compared to the genuine article in Béchar, the Legion never had been here before and not being organized for such "special services" as he puts it. So I put my kit down on an empty bed and we go out for a pothole fixing party not far from camp where La Mul takes over the whole shebang and tells me, Caporal dont worry about anything. I know this game forward and backward from long experience (laughs). Just pick yourself a nice shady spot under a tree and relax. I know an expert if I see one and follow his advice. La Mul is no bully and he gets the work done mostly with laughs. We go back after "working hours" and I find my mosquito nets hanged up and my bed all made up at the best place by the window. I tell La Mul that this was not my bed and he grins and tells me, I persuaded the guy who had this place to switch beds with you and he agreed without any problems (wink). After I was living the good life thanks to La Mul and Adjudant Chef Fischer for three days, Cmdt. Borgat comes for his weekly visit and when he gets to me he says: Tiens, I havent seen you here before! Fischer whispers something in his ears and Borgat says Fuchs, prends ton fourbie et fout l'camp! (get your junk and fuck off.) Merci Mon Commandant.

A few days after Adjudant Chef "liberated" me Mohammed sees me in the court and asks me whether the eighth days are already over? I say no ^{and} tell him the story. Alors quand même il y a d'l'abus! (Hey, this is going a bit too far!) but he just laughs and says, anyway you are not a virgin anymore! Good ole Mohammed.

NOVEMBER/28/D.B.

Tibor has tummy ache since a couple of days. He went to medical visit and the toubib (Arabic for doctor) tells him there is nothing seriously wrong with him, take a rest. This toubib is not a bad guy but a little wet behind the ears yet, generally and specially regarding tropical medicine which is a rather difficult speciality even for more experienced doctors. Next day Tibor vomit and cant shit. Levine the medical student who lanced the boil with my modest help says he is 90% sure Tibor has appendicitis. Next morning Tibor returns to the medical dept but the toubib is not inclined to look at him and tells him to come back in the afternoon. However during the sieste Tibor made a turn for the worse and I asked Sgt. Chef Schatz to get the doctor to look at Tibor. Schatz who was a former officer in the German Navy looks at him and seeing his knees drawn up, his abdomen rigid as a board and Tibor in great pain agrees with me that he is working up to a peritonitis and there is no time to lose. We get him in the company car and rush him to the hospital. The Captain who is the Chief Surgeon and turns out to be an exceptionally nice guy from France takes one look at Tibor and says: a Salle d'Operation tout de suite! (to the Operating room right now)

The rest I find out later from Tibor who was told by the Captain after the operation. "when I opened you up I found your appendix gangrened, or more correctly there was nothing left of your appendix. Your peritonium was perforated and there was 600cc of pus in your abdomen which I suctioned out the best I could and after putting in two 35cm drains I wondered whether you'll live another four, five hours? I dont understand to this day why are you alive"? We heard later from the clerck at the medical dept that the Captain from the hospital called up our toubib and screamed at him so loud in the phone that they could overhear every word and that he called our toubib everything from a cretin to a "cordonnier" (shoemaker).

Tibor became something of a celebrity at the hospital being from the Legion and as the Captain came only recently from France Tibor was his first white patient. The Chief Nurse, Mademoiselle Malbèt, took a big shine to him and they spoiled him rotten.

Tibor, who never left a hole unturned if he could help it, went back to visit Mademoiselle Malbèt hoping to promote something but there was no go as she was in love with the Captain who was a very charming and nice guy.

NOVEMBER/11/D.B.

We have a new Adjudant who started to bug me from day one as he is a filthy anti-semitic Vichy bastard. A few days ago I went on sick call as my ass hurt and this filthy bastard tells me I'm reporting sick too often, when the FACT is that this was the FIRST time since I'm in the Legion that I did, apart from the scabies in boot camp about which he cannot know and even if did it was TWO YEARS ago. So I cancelled my "sick call" and went to the hospital unofficially to see the Captain who saved Tibor's shitty life and asked him to look at my butt which he did of course as he know me from visiting Tibor while he was there. Being twins is always a big circus. He said there is nothing much wrong, either I was constipated and hurt my rectum or I must have eaten something which was too hard. He gave ^{me} an appointment for it and I got better in a couple of days. He was right about being constipated which I still am from the lousy food and I lost some weight too, ditto.

NOVEMBER/19/D.B.

Gee, I didn't even "celebrate" my 26th birthday! Sure as hell there was nothing much to celebrate beside being still alive, which is nothing to sneer at - under the circumstances, considering that most of my friends at home are either dead or freezing and starving to death in the Marmaros labour companies for the goddamn Germans.

This filthy shithead of an antisemitic Adjudant is still bugging me. However the good news is that Cdt. Daigny who knows us from Marseilles took over the Bataillon. If this bastard keeps breaking my balls I'll ask him to transfer me to another company.

DECEMBER/8/D.B.

I'm on garde duty on the airfield here. Easy job as the guys know the drill I've very little to do.

DECEMBER/16/D.B.

We have in the company here a Hungarian aristocrat who being a lawyer (or so he says) is entitled according to European customs to be called "doctor".

So his full name is - are you ready? : Dr. ZIEGLER WERMESCHER GUSTÁV ENDRE MÁRIA no less! What his story is I dont know as he didnt tell me and I didnt ask of course. He told me that Trentis, the Italian guy who was with me at the Observers Course and dismounted that telemeter, died in Colomb Bechar. He gave some lip to another Italian, Sgt Bertucci, and I assume he also added some choice Italian expressions in their native language, who put him in prison and according to old Legionnaire traditions, threw a bucket full of water on him during the night. Poor Trentis who was already in a lousy physical shape from malaria and dysenterie got pneumonia and died. It is really a goddamn crime because he was a really charming highly intelligent and talented guy.

DECEMBER/26/1941/ D.B.

It's Xmas - for Crissakes! The folk is drunk or getting very close. We all got one liter white wine, one liter red wine, and one bottle bubbly for three. Food was also very good for a change and very welcome.

I'm bullshitting with one of the Sergeants who were in France with the Legion during the Drôle de Guèrre and tells me the following stories: At one of the crossroads there is an MP Officer directing traffic. Infantry this way, artillery that way, engineers that way etc etc. An hour later a car stops, an officer gets out, walks over to the MP, pulls out his sem-auto and shots the MP dead who turned out to be from the German Fifth Column. One of the companies get a new priest with the rank of Captain. After three weeks of looking after the emotional needs of the companie he also turns out to be from the German Fifth Column and likewise gets executed. We heard dozens of similar and stranger stories from the guys who survived and returned after the Drôle de Guèrre from France.

JANUARY/2/1942/DAKAR n'BANGO/Sénégal.

The "festivities" are over and non too soon. The whole crew is stoned officers included. The Captain's ordonnance "Weber, apport mon casse-croute.... surtout liquid puoi.." who is my buddy and member of my mortar crew pulled Mohammed out from under the table. The waiters in the officers mess "swept up" our Lt. in the garden in the morning. Some of the Sergeants beat each others bloody in

the noncom's mess, just for fun. My own Sgt. of the mortar crew Sgt. Fischer from Tyrol, Austria, with some ten years of service and in great shape and full of muscles, comes to ask me to fix his face which is sporting a nice size flap in his cheek. What happened Sepple? Well, having been all stoned out of their skull they decided that they will get into an empty room, turn off the lights and -let the best man WIN! Somebody - he has no idea who of course, took a bite in his cheek! "C'est la Nouvelle Année quoi!" (It's the New Year no ?) Sepple all I can do for you is wash it out with soap and water. Human bites are bad news because they are all infected. So thats what I did plus put a piece of gauze on it and fix it with an adhesive strip. I tell him if it gets worse he will have to see the toubib. "Oh Erwin mach dir keine Sorgen, Umkraut verkommt nicht!" (dont worry about it, weed is hard to kill.) As he has a constitution like a horse he healed up pretty well too. Apart from him there were at least half a dozen others who walked about with worldclass shiners.

Incidentally, being January 1942 means that I've another TWO years to look forward to! Is the bottle half full or half empty? Depends on in what mood I am. And what will happen afterwards ? Qui vivra - verra !

JANUARY/15/1942/D.B.

There is a Belgian guy here, his name is Marchand - sounds like phony to me taking into consideration his background - who is a very interesting case. This is his second séjour in the Legion. He is 30 yrs old and a former navy cadet with Lloyds of London. To increase his pay while sailing with them he smuggled whisky and Browning semi-autos from England to South America. He got caught and was fired and joined the Legion. There are a lot of Belgians here and they are even mentioned in the BOUDIN, The March of the Legion, and not in a very complimentary way either. After finishing his five years he opened a barbershop in Bruxelles - he is working here also as barber, one of the few who are not Italians. However running a barbershop didnt suit him so he closed the shop and signed on for another five years. He is well liked being a very friendly and funny guy also, a big talker. He has great plans

for the future! After he finished this second hitch he wants to Open an Export-Import business. MARCHAND & Cie. Modus operandi: Buy cheap - sell dear! What? Everything from what there is a surplus in one place and shortage in another. Buy textiles in Lyon, sell them in Algiers. Buy coconuts in Sénégal, sell them in Morocco. Etc. Simple? You bet. For the time being he has another two years to pull. He wants to offer us a partnership. - No mail from home, which worries me as there is war going on there. I hope the family is OK.

JANUARY/21/D.B.

One of our Lieutenants is fresh out of St.Cyr the French Military Academie, and of course he is still wet behind the ears. Unfortunately for him he is also a bit on the feminine side in his manners. As if this wouldnt be bad enough for an officer with the Legion, his name is one of those which can be also a woman's name in French if spelled differently : Michèl or Michèlle. All this promptly earned him the nick name of Mademoiselle Michèl! The old timers are making all kinds of naughty remarks sometimes out of earshot sometimes not but in all fairness to him he is a god sport about it considering it a fair price to pay I guess for serving with a "crack unit". Yesterday we were at the firing range and poor Mademoiselle Michèl couldnt hit the side of ^a barn! "Oh je n'sais pas faire une bonne tire, bonne sang!" he exclaimed dejectedly. I doubt that there is another person in the whole Legion who would use "bonne sang" as a sort of swear word which is more likely to be used in a girl's school. (Oh, I dont manage to make a good score for goodness sake !) All this of course resulted in big hoots and big laughs. -

JANUARY/23/D.B.

We're not doing practically anything since months. It's no wonder that the guys have no idea about soldiering when nobody teaches them anything. We've a good friend, a Belgian boy our own age, his name is Albert Delcourt. He is a very sensitive and somewhat shy boy from a good family with good education and very nice manners. His story is this: When he was ten years old his parents divorced, his mother being only 35 yrs old. When Albert was 18yrs old his mother kicked him out because she found out that Albert

had a girlfriend. Little later she relented realizing that an eighteen year old boy is not a child anymore and let him move back with her. Albert was away on military reserve duty and came home without notice and found a threesome in bed all of them slightly "inebriated" : his mother, Albert's girlfriend and his best friend. All Albert managed to stutter was: "on s'amuse bien il paraît". He packed up and joined the Legion. - Albert has a flair for cooking and invented a recipe for a wonderful jam from different tropical fruits and sugar. With the lousy monotonous diet we have, everything helps. He can also do a funny impersonation of Laurel and Hardy being a tall lanky guy with a long face. A good laugh also helps. All in all he is a really charming boy who helps making the time pass.

JANUARY/24/D.B.

This morning we went out on manoeuvre. It was fascinating to watch to say the least. First we were just running back and forth like the proverbial dog which lost its balls, as we say in Hungarian army. Fischer of the mortar group delicately inquires by a bunch of guys WHO are they ? They turn out to be the "enemy" and we're promptly taken POW's! This wouldn't have been such a great tragedy being only a few guys, but shortly afterwards another squad and another platoon and, more importantly the team of the Commander with his whole command group also joined us. This fortunately resulted in the manoeuvre being considered FINISHED and we all walked back to the barracks after a job well done! Except a bunch of guys that is which got lost as their skill with map and compass was not up to the task in the brouss. - Manoeuvre à la Lagion Etrangère s.v.p.

FEBRUARY/5/D.B.

This is the big Manoeuvre supposing to last one week of the 5/B/RAU(?) Reveille @ 0300hrs. At the second rest stop two things happen: 1.) it starts raining 2.) we realize that we are lost. The terrain is clay and soggy from the rain. At 1100hrs we arrive at our camping ground soaking wet. WE fix our tents and considering that it is "war" we're allowed NOT to align our tents à la WWI as we had to do up to now! Hey we're getting modern! In the afternoon we're mercifully left in peace. The most interesting part of the "manoeuvre"

sofar was that after marching for an hour and half one of our companie got lost for which we had to wait half hour in the pooring rain. Nobody said this is a perfect world, hey.

FEBRUARY/6/RAU-DIOUMOU.

Reveille at 0300 hrs. We return to the same place we were yesterday. Apart from two mules sinking in the swamp up to their bellies nothing news worthy happened. (In the Hungarian army the mule driver would have gone to prison mimimum for a week, after being taken to the armory for a beating with the rubber hose used for the water cooled machine gun). The good news is that the food is much better - sofar. Sgt. Fischer in charge of the mortar group whose cheek was bitten during the New Year festivities, and who is normally a very nice and easy going guy seems to have a bug up hiss ass and fast becomes a pain in MINE. (Bibi where are you NOW when I need you ?)

FEBRUARY/7/SAKAL-G'MICOU

Reveille @ 0230. We're marching uphill-downhill. At 1000hrs we arrive to this little village where there is little water and the little there is tastes of saltpeter. The lunch was a little "courte" (skimpy) our companie commander admitted because this time it was the kitchen which got lost and didnt have enough time to cook. We're supposed to have corvée d'lavage but when we arrive to the well it turns out there is hardly any water in it. Big swearing and grumbling as back in the good old times/cleanliness was almost a fetish with the Legion.

FEBRUARY/8/LANGA

Reveille @ 0100 hrs. This is one of those fucken days when nothing works out righth. We arrive at the edge of this so-called "town" which seems to be used as the open air shithouse, but they seems to have realized this only AFTER we made camp. So we get orders to move 100 meters further away. We hardly sit for five minutes when the NEXT order arrives: move 500 neters further away! Somebody was found with a better NOSE?! At last on the third try we make camp and have lunch at 1400hrs. We've corvée d'lavage and THIS time we even have enough water! Tomorrow all day REPOS! Vive la Legion!

FEBRUARY/9/LANGA

Reveille at a "civilized" time. I've a good wash and sleep till noon. At 1700 hrs we go on night manoeuvre prefixed with the usual whore-house and madhouse required for same. First "full battledress", then take off the gear and eat dinner standing up (good for the digestion ?) Then gear up again for the depart. We're running uphill-downhill in ankle deep sand for two hours, "to keep our feet in it" so to say even in the brousse in Sénégal. At long last we stop and make camp and go to sleep.

FEBRUARY/10/LANGA

We run around for another "maneuver", return to camp, put down our battle gear, and go to the METROPOLIS called LANGA for the usual fucken DEFILE de riguer after every "Manoeuvre" to celebrate the the end of the fucken war! From there we return again to camp to have the other Sine Qua Non of every end of Manoeuvre: Revue d'arms! (weapon inspection) Tomorrow we're supposed to have REST till the evening and then start marching homeward bound.

FEBRUARY/11/LANGA

Reveille at normal time and rest afterward. At 0100 hrs we strike this godforsaken camp and start marching homeward bound.

FEBRUARY/12/SAKAL-G'MICOU

Reveille @ 0215hrs, depart @ 0300hrs. We marche till 0700 hrs without rest stops. Are they afraid that the PULLMAN EXPRESS at SAKAL wont wait for us? Mademoiselle Michèl is running in front heroically carrying his Sam Brown belt, while we're marching in full battle dress behind him! He is asking Day WHY is his CHECH full of WRINKLES ? Day: I lost my travel iron Mon Lieutenant. Ne fait pas l'malin, hein ? (dont get cute, hein ?) What I dont understand is why this imbecile wet behind the ear Lt. is picking an oldtimer to bug who was already in the Legion when he was still playing with his pecker in the sandpit? Day has seventeen years of service and served in every colony including Tonkin. Beside French he is also speaking English, German and Latin. He had three years of medical school but started to drink heavily and had to leave. He is well read in the classic and when he is sober he can talk

about Darwinism, re-incarnation and just about anything else you want to. And with all the idiots here that imbecile Michèl just have to pick Day to bug. Pathetic. -

FEBRUARY/13/RAU-DIOUMIOU

Since we're on manoeuvre Sgt. Fischer is out of his fucken mind. He is constantly and consistently shitting his pants being scared that we'll be late everywhere. (As I said before: Bibi, where are you NOW when I need you ?)

Reveille @ 0500 depart @ 0600 hrs. Fortunately we're going straight back to DAKAR n'BANGO - home sweet home ! - without stopping at St. Louis for DEFILE! Cant fucken believe it! It is still dark and all the thorns on all the bushes are trying to tickle our eyes. They come up with the old time honoured and time tested glorious idea: make a shortcut! Needless to say the result is also the time tested one :we get lost.

FEBRUARY/16/DAKAR-n'BANGO.

Historic day! At long last they paid the long awaited ARREARS to our solde what the bastards were supposed to pay exactly ONE YEAR ago! If they would have paid it in Algérie we could have at least spend it on women and wine. All we can buy here is malaria and other similar specialities of the house.

FEBRUARY/28/D.B.

They asked again for volunteers for Peloton Two and we signed up again. Truth to be told - and I'm telling it - I was not very keen on it this time but Tibor is very impressed by the idea of being Sergeant of the French Foreign Legion!

MARCH/6/D.B.

Nothing so far about the Peloton. We're just hangin' around. There are some interesting people here. One is an American from the Navy Academy of Annapolis, Johnny Buttershow, who is a very talented musician, tapdancer and graphic artist, the other is a Scotsman who served four years with the Bengal Lancers in India and his buddy who also served with the Bengal Lancers for eighth years and twelve years with H.M. Navy.

MARCH/7/D.B.

The Cdt. just told Tibor we are not eligible for Peloton Two

because we dont have enough seniority as Cpl. HORSESHIT! We have ten months MORE than required. The trouble is that we're "sale juif". (dirty jew) which is against the Vichy rules. Filthy bastards. They have a fucken nerve! We cant go to Peloton Two but Tibor was sent to Peloton One as INSTRUCTOR! He is bitching but knowing my bro Tibor for 26 yrs I'm sure he is actually tickled pink!

MARCH/26/D.B.

Since the officer's wife arrived recently we never ^{have} enough water for our showers as the above mentioned ladies need the water all day long for their intimate female hygiene I assume. (We had a not very delicate name in the Hungarian army for officers wives related to their genitalia, but I better dont even try to translate it I think.)

APRIL/7/D.B.

Rumours: 1.) Germany gave 72 hrs to Italy to decide to chose sides, with them or against them. 2.) All French nationalities will be taken out of the Legion and sent with the regular army to Russia. AS the punch line of a dirty joke says: THIS I gotta SEE! 3.) We will get "Solde Colonial" This I would LIKE to see! (+40%)

APRIL/12/D.B.

It is not enough that they fucked us with the Peloton Two they even want me to work O.T. ?! They sent me to a swimming contest in the 100m race! Why ME? ("Also swam") And yesterday the Lt. (not Michèl) called me to tell me that he wants me to go to a course "Escrime à la Baionette!" (baionette fighting). I tell him this is not my speciality. He says he saw me and Tibor doing a demonstration of Escrime à la sabre in Ain-Sefra so I'll have to know baionette fighting too! I told him that the rifle is 180cm to my 170cm and weighs 4kg. He said: tu te démerdera! (you'll manage). I'd a good mind to report sick but it can get a bit hairy because if the toubib isnt going along with ^{it} I can get eighth days in prison for "consultation non motivee" (unjustified sick call) and the Lt. can put eighth more to it for "mauvaise volonté dans l'execution d'un ordre" and that is a bit too high price to pay. Actually the toubib is willing to give you a couple of days "Exempt de service" if you dont do it too often and specially for the old timers.

After you told him your phony story, and if he is in good mood and if you are not a known malingerer he will say something like: in other words you're tired, hein? Oui toubib. Bon...I'll give you two days off but I don't want to see your face for awhile... unless you're SICK! Fout l'camp. (fuck off) So I went down to St. Louis where I had to hustle down a 100 meter long piste (trail) to stick my baionette into straw people every now and then. Fortunately not one of them returned the compliment and I went back home. The Germans are fighting their Blitzkrieg with tanks and armor and we stick baionettes into straw figures with our WWI rifles. Le plus ça change le plus c'est la même MERDE!

Our food starting to become awful and as I'm broke most of the time, I'm most of the time hungry. The Bataillon in St. Louis eats better during the week than we do on Sundays! And we found out what was the reason for this little mystery? They put one of the cooks in prison because they caught him bartering a bit of rice for two eggs. However he was let go in a hurry because he made it clear that if he will be court martialled he won't go alone! To make a long story longer it turned out that 2000Kg (TWO TONS) of rice was missing from the store and there was of course NO fucken way that a cook would be able to steal two TONS of rice without the Chef Comptable being on to the game. Result: the whole sorry story was buried. - A few days ago I caught a 60cm long iguana and we fried it with Albert. The tail had real white meat like chicken! Yum-Yum! -

APRIL/16/D.B.

A book was published dealing with all the madness they did with the Legion in France. (Mémoire de L'Empire by G. Bonnet). Excerpts translated here : ... In wool coats they fight the enemy in shirt-sleeves.... with their archaic rifles they oppose submachine guns... after retreating six days covering 200 kms, eating three times and sleeping 16hrs they fight young soldiers who alighted from their trucks on the firing line..." - What else is NEW ? C'est la Legion!

APRIL/27/D.B.

Lately we're getting very sport oriented here. The clerck from the office come to see us saying the Old Man wants to talk to us. - Mon Capitaine ? As you probably heard there is going to be a sort of Sports Festival in St. Louis and I want you two make a little demonstration of sabre fencing. How do you know we fenced with sabre Mon Capitaine? Well, you're Hungarians aren't you? They all fence with sabre aren't they? That is a slight exaggeration. Well, did you? Yeah we did but not since we graduated from high school. But it says in your Cahier de Chanson that you graduated from Reserve Officers school too, surely you fenced there too? And I heard you bunch of savages also duel, still! Well, we're bound by the Honour Code as the career officers are but fencing is not obligatory on Reserve Officers school and if we are challenged to a duel we get a short course and we do the best we can to "defend the Honour of the Uniform". So you go down to St. Louis and fence! Entendue? (you heard?) Ça va Mon Capitaine but do they have the necessary gear ? They do I asked them. Well, Mon Capitaine as I said we didn't fence since high school, we need a little time for practice if we are not to make ourselves look ridiculous. He laughs. I know exactly what you're talking about. You get your mornings free and transportation to St. Louis for a week, that should do it I hope! Oui Mon Capitaine. Bon, rouler! So we go to St. Louis and the gear is highclass shit of course. the "sabre" turns out to be an "épée" which is "retrofitted" with handguard for sabre and the headguard and body guard is likewise for épée which is much lighter than for sabre fencing. There is no English word for "épée" which was a weapon favoured in France for dueling and which is basically different from "sabre" which is a sword. The épée is strictly for stabbing and useless for slashing, also it is much shorter than a sabre and rigid unlike a sword which is for stabbing and slashing. More importantly, the rules for sabre and épée fencing are totally different. With épée you score from head to toes but with sabre you can score only from the waist up. But as they say "à la Legion on se démerde" so we managed to make a more or ^{less} respectable demonstration of sabre fencing . First we demonstrated the basic forms of "slash and thrust" and then we did

a little "showbiz" fencing à la Erroll Flynn all "pre-cooked" of course and we got a polite applause for our effort - and we also got our mornings free of military ballbreaking, so everybody was happy, including the Captain who said, you see I said you'll manage. - Shortly afterwards we were both selected to participate in a sort of military pentathlon which was a real ballbreaker as it included a forced march thru various terrain including a long stretch of swamp of what we have in great abundance being in the delta of the Sénégal river, and which is also the exclusive supplier to the Legion - and natives - of the zillions of mosquitoes tormenting us. AS it turned out I did best in the event I expected to do worse - grenade tossing - and I did worse in what I expected to do best, rifle shooting. In all fairness to myself in this sorry excuse for an army it is not like in others where you get a rifle in the bootcamp and you keep it and "treasure" it and pamper it till you finished your service. Nope, in the good ole Légion Etrangère every time you go to the firing range you are awarded another rifle and as everybody who ever fired a rifle knows not two are the same, for which you compensate by firing a necessary number of rounds which enables you to compensate for that specific rifle's characteristic. So, as luck would have it I picked a rifle for this goddamn pentathlon whose barrel was as tight as an old hookers pussy in Cäsablanca's Bousbiere and I shot likewise. No matter, both of us managed to finish the pentathlon well within the allowed parameters so the family honour was saved.

We got a new Companie Commander who was serving with the BATDAF previously and he sure looks like a "mec dur"! (tough guy). BATDAF is the acronym for Bataillon d'Afrique and La Belle France using it as the dumping ground ^{of} juvenile delinquents, other young riff-raff and other selected petty criminals. They are sent down to Africa to serve in these penal Bataillons where they get "religion" by the loving hands of very tough cadres who tries to make sure that they have no hankering for a second helping after their discharge. As these units are out of sight and out of mind in Africa they are of ourse a Law into Themselves, the result of what was that stories about abuse, homosexuality etc was not unheard of to appear in the papers occasionally, which were usually suppressed

pooh-poohed and also explained away with the old saw: "On peut pas faire des omelettes sans casser des oeufs!" After all the boys who gets sent to the BATDAF are not exactly choirboys, n'est ce pas ?

So our new Captain - Capt. Foreman? - had to be a "mec dur" alright to handle these punks and their cadres to get results.

According to rumours, next month we're supposed to go on a one week manoeuvre by train. I can hardly suppress my joy and jubilation remembering the last one with its debacles and general fuckups. The other news is that Laval took over the Government in France.

Lately they're breaking our balls with all kinds of stupid little nitpicking. As I mentioned we don't have any electricity in our allotted mansions here, so we improvised using time honoured Légionnaire ingenuity by using empty cans of sardines etc to make oil lamps with any kind of vegetable oil and a piece of string as wick. Yes it makes more smoke than light but nothing made by man is ever perfect, beside this was all we had. Now all of a sudden they decided that these oil lamps will have to go because they smoke - surprise! - and it makes the walls of this mansion dirty! What we should use instead was diplomatically left unsaid, assuming that being Légionnaires we will manage somehow! We did by saying "qu'ils c'fait chier dans les doigts!" and keep using the lamps. (let them shit in their fingers).

APRIL/30/D.B.

another CAMERON! Reveille 0300 and depart for the compagnie at 0430hrs for the big Défilé in St. Louis of course. My luck holds out this time as being on duty I don't have to go. I had enough fucken défilées to last me the five years. Here are a few quotes from our new Compagnie Commander, translated into English, losing some of it's original flavour and flair: "Tomorrow is Cameron. I know what that means! One have a little drink...perhaps even two little drinks, I do the same if I've a chance, but tomorrow we're going to have all kinds of visitors here, from the military, distinguished people from the Administration of the town, civilians etc. BEHAVE YOURSELF! I don't want to see cadavers, stiffs and other shitheads dragging themselves around here in the camp. If you get dead drunk - I don't care. If you get falling down drunk - I don't care. But NO scandals!

Those who are still able I want them to take care of those who are not. Drunkenness WITHOUT scandals- and tomorrow everything is forgiven and forgotten! But drunkenness WITH scandals - and you will pay for it!" I've the impression that this guy will grab the folk by it's collective shorthairs in a hurry and give it a good stiff yank or two.

MAY/3/D.B.

Well, at least the "festivities" are over and nobody got killed, nobody shit his pants, or at least not in publics, although my old buddy and member of my mortar team confused his bed with mine, urinating on MY mattress not his. As he is a wonderful guy when sober and very bright too and a "gentle giant" who would not hurt a fly even when drunk - AND being Cameron too AND having been VERY apologetic and embarrassed we're still the same old buddies. All we did was change our mattresses.

There were also nominations to Sgts. from Caporal which resulted in some unpolite remarks as some of the new Sgts. were a joke even as Caporals. As long as we get these kinds of noncoms the NOUVELLE ARMEE will be a joke too.

Our Belgian friend Marchand who had big plans about an export-import Co. changed his mind for the time being anyway and signed on for another two years. "Rengagé pour la gamelle" as the saw goes. (re-engaged for the messtin) Or as we say in Hungarian: Never leave a wellknown trail for an unknown one! -

MAY/4/D.B.

2345 hrs: Sgt. Fischer comes hollering and waking me up to get dressed because there is an Alert! First I think he is drunk but I realize the other Platoon is also "Alerting". Next morning the whole compagnie has to "fall-in" in full battle dress. The officers are running about like the above mentioned castrated dog. We're issued live ammo too. I've no idea whether this is just an exercise or something more serious? Later I hear that the English bombarded Casablanca. Tibor comes back from the ammo store and tells me they dont know there more than we do either, except that it is NOT an exercise this time.

MAY/5/D.B.

Reveille at normal hour. Ressement. The whole garrison has to go into "AIR ALERT" mode. Apart from that nobody knows anything. It seems that the Alert during the night was a false Alarm. We're on ALERT MODE "just in case". If the manoeuvre is still on as it was planned the danger cannot be imminent, otherwise the whole 4me Demi-Brigade wouldnt go on manoeuvre 200kms from here by train, but if we dont, then there is something cooking in Denmark!

Sgt Fischer tells me there was a big boxon(whorehouse) at the ammo store for the distribution of the ammo. (what else is new ?) There are 90 rounds of shells for the mortar but only 68 cartridges to "airmail" them. Those without will have to be left for the ministration of Allah I guess. And anyway what are 90 rounds for a mortar? I need 3-5 rounds just to zero in the piece as the mortar has to be "bracketed" as an artillery piece, not like a low trajectory weapon.

MAY/6/D.B.

There is very unpleasant news. Geiter my old buddy and member of my mortar team, who peed in my bed during Cameron, was on garde duty at the airfield here. He went up to pull his turn - and just plain DISAPPEARED! Nobody saw him since. The whole companie looked for him but no trace of him was found. If this would have happened in North Africa we would have suspected that an Arab killed him just for his rifle, which is not unheard of even now after the colonization is over, but here in Sénégal it is a drastically different story. Not only that the natives are friendly but the Legion and the Sénégalaise troupes are great buddies since many years unlike the Arab Coloniale Troupes and us who hate each others' guts with a passion. Every time we meet a unit of the Snégalese troupes on the roads the same silly jokes getting the same silly laughs. One of us say in their pidgin French: Oh, moi connais toi! Toi gagner manger caporal ordinaire! (Oh I know you! You are the one who ate our mess Sergeant!) - We contacted the police also but the Chief guaranteed that NO native was involved. (They have their informers between the population of course.)

The fact that Geiter was an oldtimer with years and years of service in every colony and a "Gentle giant" who was well liked by everybody without enemies, what is called in the Legion "un type sérieux" no screwball, makes the whole sad story even more of a mystery.

We're preparing for the Big Manoeuvre so there cannot be any immediate danger here of any kind.

MAY/6/D.B.

Reveille for the maneuver 0300hrs. The mule driver arrives late but compared to the others he is Speedy Gonzales, come to think of it he happens to be Spanish too. The other pack animals for the machine guns arrived after my beast of burden was all loaded up including my medical kit which I sneaked into an ammo box. At 0545 hrs we arrive at the train station which looks like the market place in an African town at the BIG market day! I don't know whether I should laugh or cry. Everything helter skelter on top of each other! Enormous wall to wall confusion and madhouse, every unit is rummaging around for his stuff. Sometimes I wish I would never have served in the Hungarian army so that I wouldn't realize what a sorry travelling circus I got myself into here for five years. It gives me the heebie-jeebies to think of it that I might have to go upfront with this crew and RELY on their logistic etc. It took an hour and a half to load a few mules and horses with their gear into the cars. The rest of the Bataillon is nowhere to be seen. At long last they arrive at 0700hrs and start loading and we leave at 0900hrs! From Reveille at 0300hrs to leaving at 0900hrs= SIX HOURS! Verily a CARICATURE of an army to use the word "army" carelessly. I'm lucky to have a whole car for my mortar team and the machine gun platoon for myself with just one horse as this whore of a nag is very anti-social with other horses. Needless to say that back home the fucken horse would have been either trained to embark "in-good order" or would have been sold for dogmeat long ago. You cannot have a goddamn horse screwing up the loading of a whole Bataillon. All the officer's horses and pack animals were regularly trained and acclimatized for loading and unloading from trains on a regular basis. The skittish ones got blindfolded and lead up and down on ramps sprinkled with straw, first on the

ground, then on inclines of greater and greater degrees, until the fucken horse was willing to walk up the same incline necessary for embarking in a "Six horse-fourty men" type of railroad car or became dogmeat. - Here these poor assholes leave everything to luck and chance and then they are surprised if they have a madhouse when they have to load horses. We trained our pack animals for noiseless walking during night maneuvers and other stealthy approaches with their hoofs braided with straw. Nothing exactly new either as Old Sun-Tzu wrote about this very same trick in his ART OF WAR more than 2000 years ago. Soldiering is a serious business you cant leave to chance if you want to survive. -

We didnt eat from 0300hrs to 1100 hrs anything. Another master stroke of logistic in PEACETIME conditions! Lunch was: a piece of grizzle impersonating meat, half a laddle of potato salad turned sour, and a piece of bread. If we're going to be fed like this during this fucken manoeuvre we're in no danger to go back overweight! Disembarking takes place again with the standard three ring circus and chaos. The good news is that our camping ground this time is very nice with beautiful mango trees providing shade for our tents. To make up for our lousy lunch the dinner is much worse! ONE egg for TWO, ONE box of sardines for TWELVE(!) and ONE can of "sing" (corned beef) for SIX, and a few boiled potatoes! If this godforsaken, fucked up caricature and excuse for an army cannot afford to feed us like soldiers should be, we should all stay the FUCK home instead of going on "manoeuvres".

MAY/7/TIVUVEM(?)

Reveille @ 0700. B'fast lousy both in quality and quantity (same remark as above). After we enjoyed the highligh of the manoeuvre! While in our permanent garrison D.B. the officers are living of course in St. Louis not like us in our rabbit hutches without lighth and water, here they have big round tents called in Legion lingo MARABOU which is Arabic for those white mausoleum-like buildings you see everywhere in North Africa for burying dignitaries.- These marabous are actually very comfy because they're designed specially for hot climates. They're about four meter diameters, 2.5m high, with their side walls to be rolled up during the day for catching whatever breeze there is and two big flaps opposite sides

as doors. Mademoiselle Michèl also has one of these, furnished with a campbed, wash stand and portable lantern and also a footlocker. We all sleep under mosquito nets of course buckass nacked. So: the companie "fell-in" awaiting Mlle Michèl's inspection who in turn will present it to the Companie Commander. Suddenly one of the tent flaps flies open and Mlle. Michèl TEARS out of the tent buckass naked screaming, and what passes for him swearing, wanting to know "WHO was the salaupard (bastard) who put this filthy snake in my tent?!?" I was always interested in snakes so I ask him whether I can have a look ? He agrees warning me to be careful. As I'm fully aware of the fact that there are at least TEN kinds of venemous snakes making their home in this hellhole called Sénégal, including mambas, cobras and other unfriendly species, Mlle's warning was not exactly a necessity if valid. So I ask him where the snake is and he tells me under the footlocker which is standing on logs to get it off the ground and the humidity. So I go in the tent and keeping a polite distance peek underneath. Sure enough there is a baby python having it's sieste after having swallowed it's breakfast of two rats and one dead one between it's coils patiently awaiting it's turn. Pythons are completely harmless critters unless they are BIG and HUNGRY when they are bound to tackle stuff they cant even swallow - but hey find this out too late. So I grab this little python carefully and gently and take it out to show it to Mlle Michèl and explain to him that this li'l snake is harmless to humans, while he still keeps a respectful distance. I also tell him that snakes are not like dogs and you cant put them down somewhere and tell them to "stay" and they will obey. Snakes are dumb critters and deaf too, so you cant teach them anything. They just have enough "brains" to feed themselves and survive. As I said snakes cant hear but they pick up vibrations. You must have taken something out of your footlocker and slammed it shut and this guy sticked his head out to find out who disturbed it's sieste... and the rest is history! "T'a exactement raison"! says Mlle Michèl. (you're exactly righth). So What do you want to do with this critter Fuchs ? If I were you I would put it back under your footlocker and if this little guy finds the foodsupply

and the ambiance satisfactory it will stick around and keeps the rats and other vermin from bothering you. Fuchs tu fous pas ma gueul, hein ? Mais non Mon Lt. the natives do the same. (Fuchs you dont pull my leg hein ?) Bon, so put it back, which I do.

Mademoiselle Michèl later wants to have Revue d'Arms (rifle inspection) but Sgt.Fischer explains to him tactfully that first we have to wash ourselves and our clothes and then he can have his Revue d'Arms. This little imbecile of a Lt. told me yesterday that my tent is very dirty! Apart from the fact that the tent was issued in the last minute for this godforsaken manœuvre, there is barely enough water for our personal hygiene never mind washing tents. Mlle. has of course his personal ordonnance who does everything for him except wipe his ass and diaper him.

According to rumours the English occupied Madagascar and again bombarded Dakar too. -Dinner was a little better. After dinner Ressement, big running around and big whorehouse and we get orders to dig in at the periferie of this shitty little metropolis of a village. I dig my hole for the mortar and myself and take a nap till the morning. I made the whole a bit too snugg and also all kinds of creepy crows are commuting over me. However we both keep in mind to live and let live.

MAY/8/TIAOVANE(?)

The "manœuvre" starts @ 0600hrs and lasts till 1030hrs corresponding to the Standard Operating PROCEDURE: nobody knows what it is all about when it is already over. Something like briefing is unheard of here. We return to camp to eat and have sieste. In the evening we'll have another of these so-called maneuvers. I can hardly wait. Depart @ 1800hres we're forced marching for 5kms when the guy in charge realizes we're lost. Somehow we manage to stumble back to camp and go to sleep. There is a cold wind blowing.

MAY/9/TIAOVANE.

we take off @ 0600hrs and after marching 6hrs to the North we make a sharp turn to West, resulting in running smack into the defense position of the "enemy"! After a short firefigth the bugler blows " End of manuvre " may god bless him , and we toddle back to camp, hot, dusty and sweaty. Tomorrow Défilé in clean shorts,

clean gear and brodequins shined .! All this during manoeuvres if you please! I swear these people in charge have all gotten sun-stroked and are beyond medical approach!

MAY/10/TIVAOUVANE

I'm lucky to be Persona Non Grata for the Défilé as being a mortar man I've no rifle to "défile" with. Tomorrow evening we return to camp. I wouldn't have minded to stay here for another 1-2 wks WITHOUT manoeuvres of course, as the camp is very nice with the beautiful mango trees and their famous and appreciated shades all over Africa, the only trouble is that the water source is rather far and it tastes of saltpeter. If we want to get some clothes washed we've to give it a native gal and supply the soap which is very expensive and she will wash the laundry of her whole family and bring back our clothes half dirty and half wet.

Our new Captain from the BATDAF is behaving very decently trying to take care of us within the parameters of his authority and trying to keep the "chiqué" (unnecessary fuss) to a minimum. Obviously he is of the old school and an old pro. Mlle Michèl could and should keep his eyes and ears open and learn something from him. The poor little imbecile asked me yesterday why is my shirt dirty and torn ? Sgt. Fischer heard him and tactfully enlightened him that we don't even have enough water for our own personal hygiene much less for our washing our gear. Is this pathetic asshole convinced that I had to come to this travelling circus to learn how to keep myself and my clothes clean ?

Today we commemorate the memory of that famous French Amazon Jeanne d'Arc the saviour of Orleans and have a nice lunch. Thanks Jeanne we needed this.

MAY/11/TIVAOUVANNE

Reveille @ 0700hres. Revue d'Arms @ 0900. This is one of the many advantages to be a mortar man. You can clean the little beauty in ten minutes. This afternoon I re-created the famous Legion trick: I washed one shirt, one short and one hanky in one bidon (canteen) water which is 2 liters, in my messtin as washbasin and the surface of my shovel as washboard. The soap is so expensive here that we save the smallest slivers and put them in an old sock which we dunk into the water and rub it on our clothes.

And the best part of it is that it all came out cleaner than when I gave it to a native gal who washed the laundry of her whole family with my NEW piece of soap! This method is called here "Corvée d'Lavage individuelle" in other words : démerdez vous! (see previous explanation)

MAY/13/ T.

Reveille @ 0400hrs. Breaking camp and "Au revoir" to the lovely mango trees with its shades. Ressement and departure with the pack animals to the train station. All this of course "vite-vite" (hurry up-hurry up) without b'fast. We get to the station and look for our Pullman but cant find it. Turns out that the Loading Officer is not here yet. Everybody is grumbling and swearing why did we have to rush not even having time for b'fast ? At long last the Star of the Show, and it turns out that there is not enough space reserved for the machine guns and mortar with their gear. I've to return to camp with the pack animals, unload all the gear and send the animals back "nacked" to the station. After further hanging around and waiting we start loading at 0800hrs. We had to get up at 0400hrs remember? I bought in the morning some sweet potatoes from the gals for Fr 5 which turned out to be a very smart move because our lunch is lousy and at 0130hrs (as I said we got up at 0400hrs without b'fast). We arrive at 2000hrs and disembark with the usual whorehouse and badlam, accomplished by long practice. I load my mortar on my longsuffering, but not complaining, mule and everybody else can kiss me in my secret places! The rest of the Travelling Circus are still loading their|crap of course with dozens of the officers footlockers, washbasins, tents etc, etc. It is a sigh to behold! By the time we're "ca-y-est" (ready) the packtrain looks more like a gipsy caravan than anything else. Watching these pros saddling up and loading up with ^{the} eyes of somebody who did this a thousand times in the machine gun compagnie of a REAL army I'd the premonition of catastrophe, and it was not long in coming either. By the time the packtrain moved out they never for a minute were complete. One or more had to stop because something fell off the saddles. I saw one packmule standing there

with the packsaddle complete with all the gear still on it, hanging under it's belly, making the poor beast look like it was pregnant, because the moron of a muledriver didnt tighten up the strapp holding the saddle. I had to laugh so hard I thought I'll pee in my pants! I dont even want to think of it WHAT would have happened to the sad sack of a mule driver in the Hungarian army who "owned" such a sight! Being put in jail would have been his LEAST problem, that I know. Once I remember we were on manevre with the machine gun companie advancing in column with all the gear still on the ponies - we didnt use mules - and the Staff Sergeant an old lifer bringing up the rear of the last platoon, when we heard what sounded like a SCREAM from a man being strangled: HAAAALT! The Stuff Sgt. who was not more than 160cm with a little belly, came walking slowly holding a long handled shovel for trenching, in front of him as if it would be a venemous snake he can barely manage to LOOK at, much less handle, and starting his "prayer" (swearing) going on and on and on coming from many years of practice only a Hungarian lifer can manage to do. I dont think there is another lingo where you can say such filthy things as in Hungarian. After he finished with the preliminaries he told us in so many words that if we blankety blank CRIPPLES cant fasten the gear on a pcksaddle maybe we will be able to carry it ourselves:

OFF LOAAAAAAD.... GEAR! MANHANDLE.... GEAR! FORWARD.... MARCH! And the whole companie carried everything what is carried by the ponies till we dropped. When we couldnt march any longer the Staff Sgt. said : Listen UP you bunch ^{of} no good shitheads. The NEXT time you lose as much as an empty oil can you'll not only carry the fucken gear but the PACKSADDLES ^{to} too!

At long last we arrived "home sweet home" Dakar n'Bango. I unload my mule, put the mortar in the armory and hurry up to have a good wash hoping that Tibor kept me some food. No food as he have no money. I've to wait for "dinner" at 2330hrs which consists of a cold piece of grizzle, half a laddle of macaroni and a piece of bread. I'm mad enough to spit tacks and try to fall asleep. Vive la Légion fucken Etrangère!

MAY/14/D.B.

It is sunday and I've it up to here. I write three letters and do something what is strictly contra indicated in the Legion: contemplate the situation I'm in. Living like an animal day after day. Constantly sex starved. A "visit" to a cathouse in St. Louis is billed by the minute: 15 minutes=Fr 25.00. Books non existant most of the time, food barely enough to survive since the war broke out and Germany cum Vichy in La Belle France, which means of course no importing of anything, including food. Sugar is so expensive here that restaurants, cafes etc charge you extra for the sugar in your coffee. This originated in a the joke that if somebody did you a small favour we say, I'll buy you a coffee... without sugar!

We didnt hear anything about Geiter yet, the guy who disappeared while on garde duty.

MAY/16/D.B.

I heard there is a library in St.Louis I want to investigate. Slowly but surely we get "abruti par la Legion" as the saw goes. (mentally ruined). I've another 22 months to pull in this shithouse.

MAY/20/D.B.

They came up with a new gimmick: SPORT! They realize we get bored to death so they want us to become sporty! As one of the oldtimers told me, when I came here at the age of 22yrs "sport" was to crash stones for the roads we built. Now when I'm an old fart they want me to jump around like a young kid ? No wonder the guys go nuts. Another oldtimer told me when he was serving in Tonkin all of a sudden there was an epidemic of suicides. Guys jumping ^{off} roofs or jumped in the river infested with crocs passing thru the camp. Today it is Easter sunday and perhaps I'm going nuts too, I wrote to Trudy (see "Translator's Note" before). She doesnt have anything better to do than to correspond with a guy she hardly knows and havent seen since years? Tibor says you never know."Ce sont que les montagnes qui se rencontre pas" (only the mountains cannot meat.) Klein Erzsi married a Hungarian Adjudant of the Foreign Legion she corresponded with for three years and now she lives in Agadir.

There is a very nice intelligent guy here who drinks a lot but otherwise a very good worker and a serious boy. He says he could stay in the Legion for fifty years without going nuts because he never thinks. Once he told me how one Captain died of an "accident" who told him "tous les Légionnaires sont des enculés" (all Legionnaires are buttfuckers). - Since we returned from the Maneuvre the food is 50% better. Today for the Easter lunch we had: fishcakes, Salad Russe, roast beef, french fries, salad, honeycake and coffe.-

As I said the big general problem is the lack of "feminine compagnie" to put it politely. No wonder that some of the guys are using any "substitute" they can get hold of. Four legged, two legged and each other of course. It is an old tradition of the Legion to "intermarry". It was an open secret that one of the Bataillon Cmdr. (De Tich) had only young handsome ordonnances. When a new detachment came in he looked them over and took his new candidate to the quartermaster personally and told him : "Habille moi cet type en neuf et donne lui une culotte bien retaillee" (give this guy a new uniform with wellfitting pants.) This also became an inside joke. When somebody saw a handsome young kid somebody was sure to say : Habille moi cet type en neuf! With this kind of "good example" from the Commanding Officer it was no wonder that pretty soon the Bataillon had more than it's share of "married couples". The result was that when a goodlooking young guy advanced suspiciously fast in ranks, somebody was sure to say the French equivalent of : not what you know but whom you blow!
MAY/25/D.B.

Being Easter monday I'm B.S.ing with Day("I've lost my travel iron Mon Lt.")about the Old Days in the Legion. As he has seventeen years of service and served in every colony including Tonkin, he is well qualified. He says If I'd have come a little earlier with a little luck I would have been Sergeant Chef in five years even without going on Peloton. Somebody with a little intelligence who did not do stupid things, did not drink too much and generally stayed out of trouble had no problem getting promoted. If he did not mind looking into the regulations a little later being Sgt. Chef for a few years you would be promoted to Adjudant which was pretty close to god in the Legion. After being Adjudant for a few

years and staying out of trouble you were promoted to Adjudant Chef which is the BEST job in the Legion bar none! Being the highest ranking noncom and Senior non-commissioned officer you have NO work to do, as all the work is done by the lower ranking noncoms. As you are NOT an officer you dont have to do their kind of work either of course. If you were a little smart you found a wife whose family had some money or had some business you could join and you got it made. "Retraitable-Miséérable-Libérable!" Barca.(finished)

There is a Caporal here who got out of the Legion after eighth years of service with the rank of Caporal Chef which is something of a "honorary" rank here. When you are a Caporal with a lot of service but not smart enough to hack it as Sergeant they promote you to Caporal Chef. It is a good deal too, because you dont have all the hassle Caporals have but not being a Sgt. you dont have to do their work either. So this guy got himself discharged as Cpl. Chef. After hanging around for a few months in civilian life he realized that he had a better and easier life in the Legion. Lets face it eighth years of the Legion is not exactly the best way to prepare for the "outside" world with it's problems and all it's hassles. In the Legion he had foursquares including his pinard, his solde as Cpl. Chef was pretty good for pocket money and as I said he had very little responsibilities. So he decided to sign on for another five years. His previous service was taken into consideration and as former Caporal Chef they sent him to the first Peloton to be promoted Caporal again. AS it was realized that he was too old for Caporal with all it's hassles they promoted him again to Caporal Chef pretty soon. He is on easy street again. AS Day says, all he has to do now is wait to die of Delirium Tremens, or tertiary syphilis or senility. Meanwhile he has full board and lodging, his bidon quotidien(daly wine ration) and his gamelle (food). - For Tibor and myself this is not an option anymore, having realized what the "legendary" Foreign Legion became. We will finish our five years contract - if all goes well -"laisser passer, laisser aller" (let it pass-let it go) and then we will see what happens next.

MAY/26/D.B.

Well, we found poor Geiter's remains and after the hyenas and other animals got thru with him they were not much. We were on exercise right here around the camp when one of the guys shouted Le Bouque, Le Bouque (The Beard) which was his nickname because he had a nice beard. His skull was caved in from the back and it was obvious that somebody hit him probably with the butt of a rifle. He was chopped up because we found his legs and arms hidden under the piles of ammos kept on logs. His skull with his beard still on it was found in a trench we must have passed any number of times, by the guy who shouted Le Bouque. It is really a crime in more than one sense because Geiter was a Gentle Giant who never hurt a fly even when drunk. He was an Old Timer what is called here "un type sérieux", a wonderful builder and bricklayer and a reliable buddy. His skill in laying bricks resulted in a monument it turned out now, to himself. One of the officers here is a serious amateur astronomer whose hobby is to build beautiful sundials in every garrison he has served including one in our camp Dakar n'Bango with Geiter's help. We are not talking here about any little old sundial either. This is a real MONUMENT two meters x two meters square and one meter high with a beautiful copper sundial on top, this officer got made to his exact specifications. He had all the necessary instruments for figuring out the dial itself and he worked on it with Geiter for weeks, sometimes during the night, using the stars for whatever they were needed for calculation of this sundial. So my buddy Geiter has probably the most beautiful and original tombstone ever built. "Baruch dayin emet" rest in peace Old Buddy. No more Camerons and no more peeing in somebody else's bed either. What really happened and who killed him and why we don't know yet. The police was contacted and handed out they are investigating and our own people too.

JUNE/3/D.B.

They sent Tibor and myself to swimming instructors course! I can't stop laughing. We're just average swimmers, nothing more, doing the European style breast stroke, however we are not complaining.

Going swimming in St.Luis in this heat beats going on exercise all to hell and gone. Sometimes the ineptness and inefficiency of this army impersonators is not all bad.

JUNE/5/D.B.

Yesterday afternoon we left on "exercise" with the traditional boxon of course. Dinner and "casse-croute copieux"(big snack) was distributed five minutes before departure which gave us two choices: either to throw it away or put the fried potatoes in our pockets! As you can guess most of us threw it away. Can these pathetic shitheads ever do something righth? We depart and after marching for 45 minutes we stop. Are we going to stay here? Nobody knows as usual. As there is a cold wind going I decide to start to dig my hole for the night but what we call Arschbackengefühl in Vienna (cheek of ass feeling) tells me that we wont stay here I change my so-called mind and as it turns out my asscheek was righth, as we take off again. I ask Sgt Fischer where are we going and he says: à la recherche de l'ennemie!. Hein? Oui, oui! This fucken outfit never ceases to amaze me! We're in the brousse, pitchdark, with about 50m visibility at best. And the WHOLE complete sorry companie just takes off "to look for the enemy!" Just like that. It seems that the revolutionary infantry tactic of sending out recce patrols, to say nothing about flank security etc did not reach the Légion Etrangère yet! After twenty minutes of stumbling around we suddenly all STOP! Sgt. Fischer whispering in my ears: They are righth in front of us! It turns out the whole companie ran into a Bataillon digged in for ^{it} defense. The Companie Commander is not making a big fuss about however! "C'est emmerdant..enfin on va fair demi-tour!" (shit... we are going to make about-turn!) Which is what we did and walked back where we came from. Sgt. Fischer tells me to get my mortar into firing position! I ask him what am I ^{do} supposed to with a mortar in the brousse in pitch dark but he keeps this secret to himself. I put down my gear and go to sleep. At 0500 hrs Sgt. Fischer wakes me up and we start our "retreat" in "boxon complait" (complete whorehouse). The Man in Charge realizes that we retreated too far so we advance again. As it was said: variety is the spice of Life! I go into firing position and they start waving flags indicating machine gun and mortar fire. At 0800hrs

the bugler is blowing End of Manoeuvre, may he have glorious erections to his dying days, and we start marching back to camp. Needless to say nobody have the vaguest idea what was this madness all about? As I mentioned before, pre-maneuvre briefing and post manoeuvre de-briefing is something unheard of around here. WHY should anybody have the chance to LEARN something from a manoeuvre? Isn't enough to break the balls of the people as a raison d'être? To make up for all these shortcomings we have Revue d'Arms in the afternoon, a Sine Qua Non of every manoeuvre we would surely perish without, and our state of the art weapons of WWI wintage would succumb to instant rust!

Although I've met a few "characters" and some interesting people by now in this Travelling Circus the only person who can qualify as a true celebrity at least in his own country, is one of the best known and most famous ski instructor in Austria, is Loisl Pfeiffer from St. Ankton am Arlberg. A very handsome and charming guy and very good compagnie with his inexhaustible stock of stories mostly about the girls he "dated" and romanced and I believed him too because what the matadors are in Spain and the filmstars in Hollywood, the ski instructors are in Austria. As a matter of fact Loisl co-starred in a film with the famous Austrian filmstar and mountain climber Luis Trenker with another ski instructor whose name was I think Tony Matt, and the title of the film was: Les Trois Diable Rouge du Matterhorn. (The Three Red Devils of the Matterhorn.) - I still see after all these years poor Loisl standing on the sand of Sénégal in his starter crouch imitating the announcer: Meine Damen und Herren! Loisl Pfeiffer, Sieger der Kandahar, laufft jetzt Ihnen ein Slalom vor!" Zooom! Weg war ich! - (Ladies and Gentlemen! Loisl Pfeiffer the winner of the Kandahar competition, will run a demonstration Slalom for you now!" Zooom! and I was GONE!) As far as I know Loisl got in trouble with the fucken Nazis and had to get out. (Translators Note: A few years ago I wanted to find out what happened to Loisl and wrote to his hometown St. Ankton am Arleberg in Austria enclosing one of the photos he gave me but didnt get an answer at all. As the good ole Austrians are still enthusiastic Nazis, at least some of them as the Waldheim story proved it, I wouldnt be surprised if they still wouldnt have forgiven Loisl that he was against Hitler.)

JUNE/6/D.B.

We're on our way, making great strides to look like the army of Pancho Villa, not like the "legendary Foreign Legion" famous for it's spit and polish&fetishlike cleanliness. Yesterday orders came down that we have to wear one of our boxershort type underwear as "overwear" instead of our regular short! This is of course not supposed to contradict all the glorious posters exhorting "the impeccable look and comportation of the NOUVELLE ARMEE at all times."

JUNE/11/D.B.

The Companie Commander's latest UKAS is that everybody should be able to swim at least 50ms by the 1st of July! "Débrouiller vous comme vous voulez!" (Do what it takes). To get this remarkable feat accomplished we've five minutes of swimming every morning. The Adjudant realizing that this is a goal unlikely to be accomplished, decided to reach for the universal "carrot" of the Legion :WINE! Everybody who will teach somebody to swim before the deadline will get 2 liters of wine. Although I agree with the basic concept of the miraculous power of wine as a reward in this harddrinking outfit, I would have expected from an Adjudant to have a little better knowledge of human nature in general and of soldiers in particular. If he would ^{have} said " Any of you clowns who will LEARN to swim before the deadline, will get a bottle of wine" we might ^{have} had a couple ^{have} -or more - cases of drownings but everybody would RACED to the water the minute after ROMPEZ (dismissed for the day) and learned to dogpaddle if nothing better. Now, instead of "swim or drawn" the general reaction to the UKAS is "qu'ils se font chier dans les doigts."!(let them shit in their fingers).

This Captain is a fanatic on sports. He ordered the outfit to shout slogans like a bunch of goddamn cheerleaders before and after Education Physique (gymnastics). And guess what one of the slogan is ? All together now: J'AIME LES FEMMES ET LE BON WIN ! Tragically "les femmes" around here are receptive only to the kind of compensation the Phoenicians invented a littlewhile ago.

Today we've Revue de Matriculage which means that we have to mark every piece of our gear with indelible ink. There is only one little problem: not only that we dont have ink, indelible or other

but we dont even have a pencil. Débrouillez vous! - This is one of the many examples that since the filthy Vichy bastards are running the show, we've officers who dont have the remotest idea about the special chracter of this outfit and what is feasible and what is not feasible under the circumstances we operate here. When we had Revue de Matriculage in bootcamp at Saida they distributed indelible ink and a set of letters and lettering guides for getting the job done in good order . What we get from these pathetic imbeciles are orders without means to execute them and :débrouillez vous!.

JUNE/15/D.B.

We heard at last what happened to my old buddy Geiter. Three Spanish and Italian street punks from Moroccco, who slipped thru the wartime security check killed him. ^{one} One of them hit him on the head from the back and the others helped to dismember him and hide the parts. These creeps never admitted the reason why they did it, ^{but} knowing Geiter well I am sure I know what happened. Geiter, like all the other oldtimers detested these young punks who were, in their eyes unworthy to wear the uniform of the Legion. They must have gotten in an argument and Geiter probably said something what they considered an inexcusable insult (maricon?) and they decided to kill him. They will all hang of course and may they be slow roasted in Hell, the filthy scum what they are.

Today I'm on gard duty in the Armory. I heard yesterday one member of the garde got into an argument with the Sergeant and solved it by sticking his baionet in his belly with fatal results as the saying goes. It is one way to pass the time and break up the monotony.

Sgt. Chef Schatz, who took Tibor to the hospital when ^{he} had peritonitis, caught one of the caporals drinking the wine ration of his platoon , a sacrilege here, and promptly solved the problem in the old fashioned way by slapping him around with great flair. The moral is lower than a snake's asshole. (Actually a snake does not have what deserves to be an asshole. They do peepee and poopoo and have sex thru the same orifice ^{called} cloaca. YUCK!)

Our food is awful. For "dinner" we had a laddle of boiled veggies. YUCK!

JUNE/23/D.B.

My mood is lousy. Fortunately for the first three years I felt better about this outfit otherwise I dont know whether I would have been able to face five years here. The "Jewish Laws" of this filthy Vichy bastards didnt help much either. Jews cannot be promoted, to noncoms, and not only that they cannot be naturalized and get French citizenship but hey cannot even get a workpermit in France after five years of service, Certificat de Bonne Conduite(Honorable Discharge) as before.

JUNE/25/D.B.

We go on manœuvre. Reveille @ 0130hrs, depart @0300hrs. We're rushing thru the swamp in pitchdark, sometimes up to our waist in water. Those who cant keep up are left behind because these sorry morons who are in front "leading" never heard about one of the basic army rules that if a unit is traversing difficult terrains or obstacles the man in charge has to stop at the other end to make a rollcall so that he can ascertain that everybody is accounted for and have a chance to decide whether he should wait for them or proceed without them in extreme urgency or emergency. In this travelling circus these kinds of basic rules are unheard of. The result this time is that the whole packtrain with the machine guns and mortars are left behind. At long last we reach the road but return in the opposite direction, as we're supposed to ambush an enemy convoy carrying supplies to the "enemy". This was the theory. In practice the convoy already slipped thru and the bugler, my favourite cast of character, is blowing End of Maneuver . We return to barracks after "a days work well done." Hamdallah! (May Allah be praised!)

JUNE/27/LAZARETH

We were brought here as "Companie Estivage" which ^{is} something like recuperation/convalescence. It is certainly both timely and deserved after all the lousy food and all the ballbreaking we were subjected to lately, but something got lost in the execution because the sad fact is that we're not any better off here either. We arrive at 0700 and to my utter amazement and disbelief there is no madhouse, everybody has his designated place easy to find. I just cant believe it. What is going on here? Later I found out the

reason. Sgt Chef Schatz who is^a former officer of the German Navy was sent ahead as Bivouac Officer. I go and congratulate him and he says laughing: Manchmal erinnert man sich noch! (Sometimes one still remembers). The dinner is decent too but we've to be very careful with the drinking water as it is brought in by ship.

JUNE/23LAZARETH

There was big hilarity in the morning during the Education Physique while shouting the cheerleader slogans. One of them is: CCE, AOE etc. One of the Spanish guy who had his ass full, shouted instead: CCE, AOE, fait chier, fait chier! (makes me shit). They hustled him off to prison but the Cmdt. seems to have a sense of humour and kicked him out.

JUNE/29/LAZARETH

AS we're supposed to be on convalescence/^créparation they're taking us on manœuvre with full gear including machine guns and mortars, thank god. To make up for this little inconvenience the lunch was lousy. In the afternoon the Colonel paid us a visit and they pulled out all the stops in the chiqué' (fuss) department including "lits carrée" on the ground, as we dont have beds of course. LIT CARREE is an old tradition of the Legion, meaning "square bed" and it means what it says too. The bed is made to look square by rolling up one of our two blankets at both longer sides into a sausage and after laying it on top of the top bedsheet, and putting the other blanket on top of this rolled up one, tucking it under the mattress to be tight as a drum. The top sheet is folded back on the blanket to a uniform distance. The beds are of course aligned to the centimeter and the folded part of the bedsheet likewise. It looks real sharp. In a regular garrison it's OK but in this "sal bled" where we sleep on the ground only an idiot Captain would order it, like this Vichy bastard. Uncle Colonel who was not born yesterday it seems, ask some of us judicious questions about our "well being" here while on convalescence. And we tell him the truth in a few wellchosen words. He obviously gets the message because he stands close to me when he tells our asshole Captain: You have to make sure that the men feel better here than in Dakar-n'Bango. In the morning you should have a little military instruction

and in the afternoon a little sport and bathing". It is obvious that Uncle Colonel is a nice guy but our Captain is a Vichy bastard.

JUNE/30/LAZARETH

In the morning we go on manoeuvre with full gear - Colonel be damned- and seven guys decided that they have enough of this kind of convalescence and reports/sick! Unfortunately the toubib must have been in a bad mood -Et Tu Brutus?-and his Prescription is:Eight days in prison for "Consultation non motivée" (unjustified sick call).

In the afternoon we're told that we'll have instruction regarding the indirect use of machine gun. Tibor is already licking his chops assuming that Mlle. Michèl will make a donkey of himself trying to explain this tricky subject and in all fairness to Mlle. he is not letting us down. . . . Hardly in his speech for five minutes or less it is already obvious to Tibor and myself that he doesn't have the vaguest idea what he is talking about. In all fairness to Mlle. the use of a machine gun by indirect firing is a tricky subject as it meant using the gun as an artillery piece for which a machine gun was neither designed nor . . . intended to be used, except as a last resort. We learned it of course in the Hungarian army but only the theory without actually doing it because there are two problems involved. As the good Book said there is a time and a place for everything and going into all the gruesome ballistic details this is not the place for it. Enough to say that one of the problems is that it takes an enormous amount of ammo to do it because if and when you use this method you have to fire at least six guns simultaneously otherwise you don't have a prayer to hit anywhere where you want. As a machine gun spits out about 500 rounds a minute we're talking here about 3000 rounds per minute and it is definitely NOT minutes what we're talking about either. The second and perhaps more important problem involves the aspect of safety margin which is unacceptable in your own country. When a machine gun fires long bursts-which is the only way to go with this case- the barrel vibrates like crazy, specially in the up-down vertical plane, resulting in an unholy number of stray bullets up to 4-5km.

As I said this is not an acceptable safety margin in your own country. Meanwhile Mlle. Michèl getting himself deeper and deeper into - for him - uncharted territory also known as terra incognita. Tibor and myself are faced with a delicate problem, which Tibor expresses with an old Viennese question: shall we enlighten him or shall we let him die dumb? (soll'n wir Ihm aufklaren oder teppet sterb'n lass'n ?) I vote for letting him die dumb but Tibor is adamant that if a graduate of the famous St.Cyr Military Academie is holding class he should either know what he is talking about or shut the fuck up! Knowing from past experience that it is useless to argue with him I suggest NOT to interrupt Mlle. Michèl but lets wait till the next cigarette break and then tell him tactfully what he wants to tell him. To this Tibor agrees. So during the next cigarette break Tibor walks over to Mlle, gives him a respectful salute asking for a minute to talk to him to which Mlle. agrees. Tibor explains that what he explained is not quite factual, mentioning that we were both qualified machine gun company commanders in the Hungarian army. Mlle. Michèl turns out to be a good sport and when the break is over he explains the situation to the outfit and turns them over to Tibor. Tibor explains the story making sure to tailor it for military morons and as the saw goes all is well what ends well.

JULY/2/LAZARETH

Continuing in the spirit of "convalescence" we're going on manoeuvre on the afternoon. After some bumbling and wandering about we settle down under a bush. According to rumours a "Group franc" (guerilla group) will try to infiltrate us during the night. As mixing it up with a guerilla group is not recommended for a mortar team I dig my hole and go to sleep. I wake up at 0400hrs but nothing moves nowhere so I go back to sleep. I wake up again at 0600hrs but everything is still quiet, so we wait. At 0730 hrs the bugler blows my favourite song: End of Manoeuvre. We find out later the guerilla group didn't find us. There are two possibilities: either they were too dumb or we were too smart. Either way we start back to camp. Mlle Michèl is leading the company and whenever Mlle. is leading anything, another fuckup cannot be far behind! And sure enough he lit out straight for the Marigot! (swamp). How is he to

get accross this damn swamp? The only reasonable decision would be to use the bridge of course, provided just for this purpose but that is in the opposite direction of Mlle's choice. He is looking for a ford to cross, by walking into the swamp and promptly sinking into the muck up to his balls which ellicits great hilarity

from the outfit. Mademoiselle gets down on all fours and after sliding and slipping around in the muck, giving it a good try he extricates himself, but not before he gets himself full of shit up to his waiste which is dripping off him after regaining terra firma. Mlle. realizing that he is not exactly the picture of "Command Présence" à la St. Cyr, passes the unit to the Adju-
dant while he is bringing up the rear skulking. Officier de la Légion Etrangère ?! Officier de mes couilles! (my ass). We toddle back to camp where we're ordered to fall-in for the daily quinin ration which we do. Trouble is there is no quinin. Better luck next time. We're all dog tired and fed up to here. Lucky we're on "recuparation" leave!

JULY/4/D.B.

we're back in our permanent garrison after we have been recuperated and reconvalesced à la Légion Etrangère and - survived it too. The Adjudant tells us that the Capitaine wants to see both of us. So we report to his office. "Is one of you interested in working in the office as Caporal Comptable (bookkeeper) Tibor immediately extricates himself by saying that since his operation for peritonitis he is forbidden to do sitting down jobs, which is news to me, but he is ^a fast study when it comes to "démerdez vous".

And you ? I tell him that I'm not interested in an office job either and beside I dont know anything about bookkeping which is god's truth. However if this is an "order" I'm not going to refuse it and go to prison. It is not an order but would you volunteer? Definetely NOT Mon Capitaine. Tant pis (too bad) because you're going to be Caporal Comptable from next monday quand même! (anyway).

(Translator's Note: I'm 100% sure I NEVER worked in my life ANYWHERE anytime as bookkeeper as I just hate numbers. I must have wriggled myself out of this job somehow.) What also pissed me off, that for the Peloton Two I was not good enough because I'm a

jew, but for this so called confidential job I'm allrighth ?! FUCK'EM!
JULY/9/D.B.

Alert/Reveille @ 0400 with worldclass whorehouse! The gear is kept in several stores and we've to run to 4-5 different places to get it. At long last we're "ready" one hour and fourty minutes after Alert! It is enough to make one cry or laugh. And this without the packtrain, which is kept in St. Louis necessary for the machine guns and mortars. Now I understand why our platoon leader Sgt. Baldenberger in Saida told us that "only the strongest and dumbest" are accepted for the machine gun companie here. The tripod of the Hotchkiss weighs 20kg and the gun 25kg. As this wouldnt be a killer enough to carry the poor bastards also have a carbine with their ammo to carry, unlike in every normal army where machine gunners carry only handguns. Small wonder that the poor bastards are never able to keep up with the rest of the outfit.

Mademoiselle Michèl stopped me in the afternoon and sort of engaged me in a "conversation" which I used to let him know what is on my so-called mind, specially when he implied that if we would sign on we could go on Peloton Two. I told him politely but firmly that we are not interested, merci beaucoup Mon Lieutenant.

JULY/2 /HOPITAL COLONIAL/ST.LOUIS/Sénégal.

It was my turn now to have my appendectomy in the same hospital as Tibor but unfortunately his surgical team was not there anymore otherwise I could ^{have} saved myself this interlude probably, as the appendix turned out to be normal. When I reported sick the toubib could not ship me out fast enough saying : I dont need the same story as with your brother! The operation was a success and the patient survived too but in the same time with my operation I also had amoebic dysentery which made the climbing on a bedpan with some frequency that much more interesting. I tried to stay in the hospital as infirmier (male nurse) but although the surgeon was all for it ("we need here somebody who is clean and willing to work") the Chief of the Hospital vetoed the idea.

AUGUST/3/D.B.

I was discharged from the hospital. "Meanwhile back at the farm" some dirty bastard stole my mosquito netz and my "planche de

paquetage" which is a very important item of our gear: it is a piece of board cut to the same size around which our clothes are folded so that they are exactly the same size for everybody. To steal something from somebody while he is in the hospital is about as low as you can get, which is typical of this outfit now. Is nothing sacred here anymore ? Not even the Planche de Paquetage?!

AUGUST/4/D.B.

I got 15 days of convalescence at N'DAR-TOUT although the surgeon prescribed 30 days. I'll see what I can do about this. Life is quiet and easy here. As there are a lot of us nobody gives a damn what we do. Ziegler Guszti our Hungarian aristocrat, brought me some sugar at cut prices from St. Louis where his unit is posted. There is in his Bataillon also a surgeon from the part of Checkoslovakia which used to be part of Hungary, so of course he speaks Hungarian with that cute accent all the people there are speaking. He is not working here as a surgeon however. As he said : I was the first assistant of Professor Adams in Prague and I dont have the ambition to lance boils for the natives here in their filthy hospitals. Cant say I blame him. His name is Rusznyák.

AUGUST/10/N'DAR-TOUT

Tibor visited me today. We've a new Companie Commander, another from the BATDAF. Tibor says there seems to be a new wind blowing from him. He got rid of all the guys he doesnt like and looks like he has a good taste. One of the first one he kicked out was the antisemitic Vichy bastard of Adjudant who kept bugging us two. He also got rid of two asshole sergeants and three asshole Caporals. He made a little "inauguration speech" the last words of which was: "Ce qui veut pas travailler- DEGAGER LA PISTE! (Those who dont want work - get out of the way!-) with the rest we will try to make something like a normal army!" Bonne chance Mon Capitaine! (good luck!)

AUGUST/16/N'DAR-TOUT

Yesterday I was hanging around the court when the medic comes at me full tilt asking if I had yarn and needle ? I gave him some and he took off full tilt back to the hospital. Later I ask him what was the needle and yarn for? He laughs and tells me that the toubib excised a cyst for somebody but had no sutures to close it.

As I said we're in good shape all accross the board!

AUGUST/19/N'D-T.

I got my convalescent leave extended for another 15 days as the surgeon prescribed it. Every little bit helps.

Rommel is able to get for his people in the desert 8 liters of water per day and we here in garrison are not even getting half.

I think there is a lesson in there to learn.

AUGUST/N'D-T.

Big Alert exercises all over the place. Is something cooking?

SEPTEMBER/2/N'D-T.

Two legionnaires drowned in the sea yesterday. Their outfit went swimming in low tide and were swept out to sea. If the natives didnt arrive with their pirogues (native canoes) there would have been more. One of the guys who drowned was an Adjutant who already saved one but when he went back the second time he didnt have enough strength left and drowned too. I was helping the toubib to do artificial respiration when Ruzsnyák came by wanting to see the victim's pupil. He gave it one look and said : gone. He was righth too although we kept on with the artificial respiration for two more hours according to the book.

SEPTEMBER/5/D.B.

The convalescence is over and I've it up to here although Tibor is righth to remind me that if we would have stayed home with all our friends we would be by now either dead or building roads in the Kárpát Mountains up to our ass in snow. Compared to that this is paradise.

SEPTEMBER/8/D.B.

This entry in the Diary is a Hungarian poem with the title: The Dispatch rider to Peking. No way can I translate it to English and do the original Hungarian justice as writing poetry is one of millions of things I cant manage. This is what it says: "Go to Peking Dispatch Rider but there is no letter today. If she asks just say I'm alive..." In the Hungarian there is an expression for a gesture of despair accompanying "just say I'm alive" I dont find in English.

SEPTEMBER/9/D.B.

They were asking for volunteers for Peloton Two again but we did not volunteer this time. We tried twice already and that was enough.

anyway with only 2½ years left it is not worthy to go thru the whole ballbreaking again.

SEPTEMBER/10/D.B.

Since we arrived here exactly one year ago-for better or for worse-everything got three times more expensive. one liter oil was Fr.7.50 and now it is Fr. 25 and this is true all along the line. Needless to say our solde is the same. We've an awful lot of sick people. The food is inadequate both in quality and quantity with our medical "service" to match. Our Colonel went to the hospital - nothing stay secrete here for long - and asked them NOT to repatriate so many people because we dont have enough left! (to do WHAT!?) They seem to prefere to let people croak before repatriating them from this hellhole.

The clerck from the office comes to tell me that the Captain wants to see us both but Tibor is on duty so I go alone. Caporal Fuchs Mon Capitaine. How much seniority do you have as Caporal ? Two and half years Mon Capitaine. And Peloton Two NO?! No Mon Capitaine. WHY? We already volunteered twice and were refused both times so there is no reason to insist. WHY were you refused? Because we're jewish Mon Capitaine. That's all? Oui Mon Capitaine. Bon, and I'm going to submit your name. Aller,Rompez! (dismissed) But Mon Capitaine we've only two and half years left, it's not worthwhile anymore. So WHAT ?! You're going to sign on! No Mon Capitaine. And I'm telling you that you'll go to Peloton Two and sign on! Aller circuler! And your brother is in the same situation ? Oui Mon Capitaine. So both of you to Peloton Two! TAILLE !! (beat it!) He is a Capitaine and a "mec dur" (tough guy) from the BATDAF and I'm a shitty caporal, can I argue with him? Typical,when we wanted to go we were refused now that we dont want to go we have to. On the other side it was decent of him to think of us and bend the rule on our behalf. The advantage of it would be that we wont have to go to build roads as the rumours have it. I dont have either the appetite nor the hands to work with pick and shovel and corns on my hands. Tibor used to say I have two choices for my career: either midwife or pickpocket.

SEPTEMBER/14/D.B.

La Mul, who took me under his wings when I was in prison for a few days is going up to the Companie Discipline here in Sénégal but he

is not impressed because from what he heard on the grapevine compared to the genuine article of Colomb-Béchar, where he already pulled two séjours, this is a restcamp here. They asked volunteers for escorting him and a few other candidates and Tibor volunteered as he is on good terms with La Mul who is a great guy as long as he is sober. When he is stoned he becomes a savage which is what happened now. He was stoned out of his skull and when he was taken to the office of the Duty Officer he beat the shit out of all the crew including the Duty Officer. The trip down the Sénégal river in pirogues was right down the alley for Tibor's streak of adventureship so he grabbed it. When he came back after delivering the whole team of celebrities without mishap he told me that as soon as they were in the boat he turned command over to La Mul as the Senior Mec Dur and everything went swimmingly down the river and a good time was had by all. La Mul petitioned Tibor to bend the rules a bit and allow ONE quart of pinard per day and Tibor said if he gives his word that there is NOT going to be any problems he is willing to look the other way.

SEPTEMBER/16/D.B.

If things will go on like this the only thing what will ^{be} left of the 4ème Demi-Brigade will be the memory. Almost every room has a couple of guys lying in bed with 2-3 blankets over him and with their teeth rattling like a castagnette from an attack of malaria. As for myself my legendary luck regarding health is holding out so far. The problem is that we're running out of quinin too. What makes the situation even worse is that due to the inadequate food we're all undernourished with very low resistance to disease. If you've an attack of malaria you lose 3-4 kg and with the lousy food it is almost impossible to regain it. In some companies 80% of the people are affected with malaria and we're here only since one year. If it is true what we hear that the séjour is supposed to be 2½ yr we're in big trouble.

My personal medical kit is growing accordingly which I consider money well spent. I also asked Diamant Laci's wife to try to get me the best textbook on tropical medicine she can find in Algiers.

SEPTEMBER/17/D.B.

I was told to report to St. Louis with my mortar. The pack mule arrived @ 0745 and we took off. When we got to St. Louis we hanged around and waited. Nobody knew anything about us so I decided to walk back

tqD.B. They had a whorehouse for many years and it looks the same
whorehouse will be part of this Travelling Circus for ever more.

SEPTEMBER/19/D.B.

They wake me up to go to St. Louis for a swimming contest! I tell
them that I was recently operated on with appendectomy but they are
not impressed. So I walk down to St. Louis again where I'm informed
that the contest is not today but tomorrow and besides they want
Tibor not me. Tibor ^{is} not swimming any better or worse than I do."

SEPTEMBER/20/D.B.

Looks like one damn thing after the other. Tibor is in the hospital
this time with bacillary dysentery (Shiga). The poor guy is passing
nothing but blood 20-30 times a day. He is weighing 48kg and looks
like Gandhi. The only food he craves are Hungarian dishes not avail-
able here of course. Ruzsnyák writes a prescription for Stovarsol,*
opium and bismuth, which we have to buy from our own money as there
is nothing available in the hospital. The "male nurses"
are dirty, arrogant and lazy. The food is barely edible even for the not
sick.

SEPTEMBER/24/D.B.

Reveille was @ 0500 hrs and this is shaping up as an interesting day. We're going to have a big exercise culminating in the main attraction of the show: final attack of the enemy position using LIVE ammo! For the un-initiated in military lore this sounds as a mild interpretation what was called in the IWW "the tragedy of the last six hundred meters" when the covering artillery is lifted and the sorry assed infantry is left to his own devices for pressing home the final attack on the digged in enemy. - Now lets not have here any misunderstanding however. We're not talking about here of a "wargame" as understood in a modern army which we're not by any stretch of the imagination. What we WILL have is the usual humping of our full bazar on our backs in what passes around here for "battle formations". When we arrived at our regular place we use for live ammo shooting at bullseye targets - "tombstones" are not known here- we'll form up in lines according to platoons and fire at the bullseye targets with the ammo allotted for the day. We were strongly reminded and warned to make sure that we collect every single empty cartridge and hand them in at the end of the exercise - or else!

(Translator's Note: I obviously cannot prove this but I'm firmly convinced that this utter and complete disability and unwillingness of The Management to retrofit the rules for the Legion, still lingering on from the days of what were delicately called Les Operations - colonization - and adapt new ones more in line with a modern army, was, if not the main reason, but surely at least a strong contributing factor for the fact that "The Legion moldered on the sidelines during most part of WWII" to use Professor Douglas Porch's words in his definitive book: THE FRENCH FOREIGN LEGION. - This almost maniacal pre-occupation and emphasis of being able to account for every single piece of gear and equipment at any time, any place and in any circumstances, not only of weapons and ammo but also of every piece of clothing and other gear, might have had a more or less, valid reason during those "good old days", which was that, rightly or wrongly, it was assumed that

whatever piece of gear was missing, was SOLD to the Arabs - the ENEMY. Taking into consideration the pittance the Légionnaires were paid in solde, this assumption was not at all farfetched. The Arabs were willing to pay for a mukhala (rifle) what amounted to a small fortune for a Légionnaire and for every piece of ammo in proportion also. The result was that any Légionnaire who couldn't account for any piece of gear but specially for his weapon and ammo was automatically court martialled and very severely punished for "trading with the enemy".)

Meanwhile back at the farm: As Mohammed was running the show everything went off, more or less, according to plans and best of all nobody got killed. By the time we were thru with the last phase of live ammo shooting we had of course hours of marching, running and crawling under our Ceinture Bleu, tired, dusty, sweaty with our tongues hanging out and our balls dragging in close proximity to the ground, with our bidons emptied of the last drop of lukewarm water and looking forward to a cold shower and a couple of cold bottles of beer in the canteen.

As it is the custom after the end of all live ammo firing, the bugler is supposed to blow "End of Maneuvre" and "All Clear" so that the natives know that they can come out and ambulate without getting their heads blown off by stray bullets. So we're all formed up "ca y est", ready for the home stretch and waiting for the bugler to sound off. NOTHING. We're all shouting, screaming and waving our képis for the idiot to blow his horn: NOTHING. Mohammed being an old timer figured out pretty fast what might have happened and calls me. Fuchs I'm told you're duty noncom of the day, pauvre con, (poor prick) so you'll have to stay here and find this vieux abruti (old senile idiot) and bring him home. He is probably drunk and sleeping under a bush somewhere. When you got him back to the barracks bring him in my office straight away and I'll have a few wellchosen words for him. Bon? Oui Mon Capitaine. Alors démerde toi. Oui Mon Capitaine.

To say that I was in the mood to strangle this old bastard with my own delicate hands is to put it mildly. What I would really wanted to do was skin him alive and salt him in for posterity.

As I said before, we were all pretty much done in and the prospect of looking for this asshole dragging my sorry ass around MORE in this sale bled while my buddies are taking cold showers and lifting a few cold ones in the canteen, definitely did NOT put me in a benevolent mood to say the least. So I start looking under the bushes and soon enough I find the old bastard just as Mohammed predicted, drunk and sleeping it off under a bush. As wake up call I give him a good stiff kick in the ass and when he arrives to vertical, more or less, I slap him about a bit to make sure he is really awake. I smell his bidon and sure enough it reeks of wine, but not a drop left. It is strictly forbidden to carry wine in the bidons but these oldtimers dont give a shit. Sometimes they get away with it sometimes they dont and pay the price. This guy was a good ten years older then I'm with some fifteen years of service in most of the colonies. What is called in the Legion lingo "un vieux abruti", an old senilized. This didnt dissuade me from teaching him a lesson he wont soon forget. I filled his musette (side bag) with rocks and stones and whatever empty space there was in his backpack I filled up with sand. This done, I explained to him that we're going to use the way back to the barracks to practice a little infantry tactic like advancing under machine gun fire, clearing barbed wire obstacles under fire and such. I asked him whether he understood me and when he didnt answer I backhanded him assuming that he is still not all awake. When I asked him the second time he answered righth away: Oui Caporal! Bon. Alors: Pas de gymnastic.... MARCHE! (On the double... MARCHE.) To make a long story shorter, by the time we got to the outskirts of the town he was rather subdued, shall we say. I emptied his musette of the rocks and his backpacks of the sand and told him to clean himself up. This done I marched him back to barracks and to Mohammed's office as he told me to do. Mohammed reamed his ass out with great flair coming from long parctice, telling him that he is ripe for Court Martial for three reasons: carrying wine in his bidon, getting drunk while on duty and falling asleep on duty. The old bastard says: Oui MonCapitaine, but Caporal Fuchs beat me up and put stones and rocks in my bags and made me run and crawl all the way back and that is against the rules too. Mohammed looks

at me with a sly grin and says, He is lying Fuchs isnt he? Oui Mon Capitaine! He snarls at the old bastard, Fout l'camp espèce de vieux abruti! When the guy left he tells me, Fuchs I know of course what the old salaud (bastard) said was true and as you know beating up people is forbidden in the Legion regardless what the books and movies say but I see your point in this case. Are you going to write him up? No, Mon Capitaine. As far as I'm concerned the story is finished. Bon, alors fout l'camp, but dont do it anymore. Non Mon Capitaine.

OCTOBER/1/D.B.

Yesterday Mohammed and Cmdt. Borgat visited Tibor in the hospital which was very nice of them. As I said the oldtimers are still OK it's the new crop of Vichy bastards which are the problem and the pain in the ass. Two days ago these morons accomplished another master stroke. At 1400hrs in the worst heat and during the sieste they made Ressemblent specifying khaki pants and dress shirts(!). Nobody knew why. This meant of course that everybody started to get ready at 1330hrs. Then at 1400hrs we were advised that Ressemblent is going to be at 1500 not 1400hrs. With big screaming and bitching we take all our gear off. Five minutes later the Duty Cpl is screaming: En tenue! (get dressed) Everybody puts on the whole shit again. Fortunately I've permission to visit Tibor in the hospital so they can all kiss my ass with all their madness and whorehouse - this time. I heard later that after "fall-in" at 1500hrs, they took off at 1700hrs to the airfield here where they "attacked" a group franc (guerillas) which came accross the marigot (swamp). For THIS they needed to put on khaki pants, instead the usual shorts
*Stovarsol=Meta-acetylamino-para-oxophenyl-arsenic.

and our best shirt! Looks to me that we've a a lot more people walking around between the ranks of the officers with sunstroke than we realize. Or drunk? Or both?

OCTOBER/2/D.B.

I visited Tibor yesterday and he feels a bit better and has a little more appetite too. As soon as he is able, he gotta get out of this filthy hospital with it's dirty, lazy and arrogant "infirmiers" (male "nurses") and go on convalescent leave where it is at least possible to buy some edible food. All the oldtimers who were in Tonkin keep saying that although the climate was difficult there too, otherwise it was Paradise compared to this hellhole in every other aspect. The solde was much higher and the cost of living was very low and you could buy anything you wanted or needed from food to "Wives" to fancy uniforms made to measure you name it. One of the Hungarian guys told me when he was in the hospital with malaria the Regimental doctor came on his daily rounds and asked him what would he like to eat? The guy said goose liver would be nice. (famous delicacy both for the Hungarians and French by old traditions) And how many can you eat Mon petit? One would be fine Mon Colonel. And what would you like to drink with it Mon petit? a little champagne would be nice Mon Colonel. In no time the infirmier arrived with the goose liver and the bottle of champagne. The champagne is also an old tradition in all French hospitals where they are served champagne as the first "food" they are allowed to eat. Tibor got it too after he was operated on with peritonitis. It makes very good sense. All carbonated drinks, served ice cold in small sips, has the best chance to stay down even with nausea and the glucose in the champagne is a fast "pick me up". The guys who served in Tonkin all said the Annamites (Tonkinese) are the best nurses in the world because they are spotlessly clean and hard workers. We should be so lucky! These guys are dirty and lazy as they come and arrogant to boot.

OCTOBER/5/D.B.

The Peloton Two was presented to the new Capitaine and we told him we dont want to go. He said he has to accept the decision of the former Capitaine. This guy seems to be a "gentry" and again have been "selected" by the Vichy crowd. This is not the type of officer they posted to the Legion in the old days.

We're told to be at the Bataillon Office @ 1615hrs. We're all there waiting but nobody shows up. At long last we're invited to inspect our new barracks. They are all freshly whitewashed - except those of the Peloton Two! Good start. Apart from this and the fact that nobody knows why we were called everything was perfect and we are told to get lost. (As far as I can see we are not the only ones who are lost. This sorry outfit is LOST in more than one way). The good news is that the Cadre (staff) of the Peloton seems to be OK. One of them is Sgt. Monarcha we know from the bootcamp of Saida. He is an exceptionally nice, polite and well educated guy from Checkoslovakia a bit like Sgt Palotay was. Definetely head and shoulders above the average Legion noncoms. - The motto of the Lieutenant seems to be: "Doucement le matin- pas trop vite le soir!" (slowly in the morning -not too fast in the evening.) This suits me just fine as I dont have the "courage" anymore for breaking any records.

OCTOBER/27/D.B.

The Peloton is supposed to be in process but sofar it is good only for a laugh. Tibor is supposed to get fifteen days of convalescence but sofar nothing. He sure need it as he lost a lot of weigth. I'm worried that something big will come up and he wont be able to take part and we'll lose touch with each other. The food is awful.

We just get enough to keep from starving. We've pumpkin as "hors d'oeuvre", pumpkin as main course and pumpkin as dessert.

The Lt. of the Peloton is not impressed with my "instruction general"! (general education). WHERE do they find these pathetic nit-wits now? My Hungarian diploma is the equivalent of the French "Bacc" and the American B.Sc. The French "Bacc" is admitting students to St.Cyr, their famous Military Academie. We had four years of mathematics up to calculus, four years of geometry(plane and spherical), four years of chemistry (two inorganic, two organic), four years of two foreign languages (French and German) four years of world geography and four years of world history, eighth years of art, even one year of philosophy in the last year. Apart from this I'd a certificate from the Reserve Officers School where I graduated in the first ten of a class of 250 candidates. And this poor misbegotten cretin sneers at my "education general" as not good enough for a SERGEANT in this sorry

assed impersonation of an army ?! Is he looking for University Professors ? It boggles the mind. HOW do these imbeciles get posted to the Legion now which was always considered reserved for the "crème de la crème" of St. Cyr ? -

According to rumours the Peloton will be over on the 9th and we'll go back to our own units. This must be the first TWO WEEK Peloton in the history of the Legion. Fortunately I knew better than most of the others and did not bust my ass fancying up my place.

NOVEMBER/13/M'BOUR

On the 10th we left Dakar-n'Bango cum the usual boxon of course "destination quasi inconnue" (destination unknown) considering the Anglo-American offensive. The "organization" is beyond belief here. Even at the first rest stop they didnt find the water they expected to find so we kept on marching. In the evening we arrived at our projected camp where we hungrily and impatiently are waiting for our "dinner" which turned out to be the same pumpkin we had to eat only all day with the difference that this time it is so bitter that we have to throw it out. Fortunately we find out that we can buy food here IF we have the money. The prices are of course high but nobody cares about that. We're HUNGRY! Tibor and I buy a gamelle (messtin) full of cottage cheese and sour creme - which looks like the stuff at home, for Fr.60, half a pound of dried bananas for Fr.30, two beignés (sorta doughnuts but not sweet), two bottles of beer and we stuff our faces all day. Lunch is also a little better: macaroni instead of the fucken pumpkin and I make a Hungarian looking and tasting dish out of it by dumping the cottage cheese and sour creme on it. YUM-YUM! Tibor arrives by truck and tells me that all North-West Africa is in English-American hands. (Translator: Operation TORCH?) According to rumours we'll move on and dig in.

NOVEMBER/15/SIDI-BOUGOU

We arrived in this metropolis yesterday, which is situated "en plein brousse." (in the middle of the bush) This in turn resulted in the embarassing fact that every corvée (work detail) which went out got duly lost and got back to camp 2-3 hours late. I'd a hunch that this is going to happen because we lit out without maps and/or compasses hoping to follow our nose back to camp. When it was obvious that we

are well and truly lost, our Sgt. took out his compass and after consulting it to a respectable time period and looking suitable serious, he declared where NORTH is, worthy to the oracle of Delphi. As this didnt exactly solved our problem we graciously accepted the offer of a friendly native to be our seeing eye doggie back to camp. I decided to be responsible from now on for my own problems of orientation which can get hairy in a brousse with minimal visibility where the standard method of map and compass is very little help as there are no "point de répairs" (reference points) one can use for triangulation. In the brousse you either mark your trail the old fashioned way by bending or cutting down branches or you do what is called a Bilgeri Sketch which was invented years ago by a Norwegian army officer who got lost once in fog. You have to mark down every compass bearing and count every step you marched on that specific compass bearing. It is a bitch of a job of course but in bad visibility it is -"the only way to go". - While we're at this fascinating subject perhaps I'll be allowed to digress a bit more and say that the "natives" dont navigate by so-called "sixth sense" either. What they do is when they arrive to a new campsite they go out in a certain direction to a SHORT distance and go back to camp making sure that they will remember everything they saw, heard and smelled. Next time they go a little further and do the same. And so on and so on. Then they go into another direction and repeat the whole process untill they are familiar with EVERYTHING at the distance they will go hunting etc. If you dont believe me read the book -unfortunately out of print :NATURE IS YOUR GUIDE by Paul Gatty the greatest navigator of modern times who was the instructor of the Canadian Air Force during the war and the navigator of Wily Post during his epochal round the world fligth and many others.

Meanwhile back at the farm: All North Africa is in English-American hands which means for us that we're completely cut off from all lines of logistic and re-supply. What I would like to know is WHAT are we supposed to DO here all by ourselves in this situation and in this shithole? For the time being we're supposed to build our huts to live in. This could be fun except for the fact that every bush and tree which could be used has thorns of every shape and length which seem

to have developed a great liking for our legs and we're wearing shorts and putties only. The food is lousy and here they dont even have the excuse that they cant buy anything because there is plenty of it available IF you have the money, which we seldom do, but THEY should.

NOVEMBER/17/SIDI BOUGOU. 1942

And it was twenty seven years ago today that the whole problem started! I was born. If Tibor wouldnt have reminded me I would have forgotten about it. In a more serious vein, Admiral Darlan signed the Armistice one week ago in the name of all French Forces in North Africa, with the English-American forces and we're part of this deal too of course and Vichy can go and FUCK himself! So what the fuck are ^{we} waiting for to start fighting at long last on the Allied side against the filthy Nazis? Is perhaps General Boisson planning to fight alone against everybody else? All the strategically important points are in Allied hands. The logistic and resupply which was cut off till now only with France is now cut off even with Morocco and Algérie. So WHAT are we waiting for or expecting to DO here? Even now we barely get enough food to keep from starving. Today "lunch" was a laddle of "soup" of boiled veggies. Fortunately we're not doing here anything so at least we dont waste whatever little energy we still have. This does not mean of course that the complimentary warehouse would not continue. Now that we more or less installed ourselves in our home made huts, built trails, digged latrines, etc etc, we were advised today not to make too much fuss because in a few days we're leaving! Why? Where? Nobody knows of course. Le plus ça change le plus c'est la même bordel! By the time we got the place a bit liveable, at least by Legionnaire standards in Sénégal, by fixing our huts under the shade, water is not too far and if we have money we can buy something edible to eat too. Now lets not assume of course that this is Paradise on earth. There are all kinds of creepy-crawlies sharing the Old Homestead with us, like 20cm long centipedes which make nice blisters when they commute over your skin, also we got good sized toads which has the unpolite habit to do peepee on your face while you sleep, not to mention 20cm long black

scorpions, the largest beasties the oldtimers saw even in Tonkin. Their sting is not fatal to grown ups but it hurts plenty and causes high fevers too. Kids can and do die from their stings. The first time we saw ^{one} was when a little kid was hollering and pointing at the ground: Il y a pas bon, il y a pas bon! And there was that big black monster of a scorpion scampering around. WHEW! (not good, not good!) From the beauties in the village you can get guaranteed syphilis for Fr.5.00. I passed. This kind of souvenir I dont want from the Legion.

NOVEMBER/19/SIDI BOUGOU.

We were told that the French Forces are fighting on the Allied side in Tunisia against the Axis Powers. This is good news indeed. Perhaps we join the fun soon and I'll get the chance to get into a little argument with the fucken Nazis myself at long last too. It would be sure high time, having sat out the war already much too long.

NOVEMBER/20/SIDI BOUGOU.

The Allied Forces accepted the responsibility of supplying North-West Africa with food and medicin. And why are WE waiting still here? WHY are we still sitting on our collective asses here in Sénégal?

NOVEMBER/21/SIDI BOUGOU.

We went on a little week-end march toward NIAMUING(?) and while underway the Lt. explained that this is an "important strategic strong-point"! Accordingly it is being hold(?) by one companie commanded by a Major. It also includes ONE battery (4 guns) of 90mm artillery. The coast is "defended" by a coastal battery consisting of four guns. Two ^{of} them sighted in toward the sea, one of them covering the coast itself and one of them sighted in on the bridge of MOULEM(?).

The coastal defense(?) consists of foxholes covered with STRAW(!) and armed with ONE lighth machine gun! At the water line there is a double row of barbed wire anchored to half rotten wooden stakes. The "strategically important village" is defended by a blockhouse armed with ONE 86 and ONE 37 cannon. It is enough to give you gas pains and nighmares in the same time. -

NOVEMBER/27/SIDI BOUGOU.

Hey, Allied Forces, how about sending us something to EAT? Or are we the Forgotten Army forever? Lunch was macaroni boiled in water and not even "...al dente!" For dinner we had pumpkin, also boiled

in water of course which was so bitter it was inedible and we had to dump it. But not to despair! The officers are not exactly starving, we're delighted to realize and report. They gave a Soirée for the ladies in the village as follows:

LA CARTE s.v.p.

CONSOMME FROID

HUITRES

GATEAUX DE VOLAILLE

CANARD AU SANG

TOURNEDOS

HARICOTS VERTS SAUTES AU BEURRE

FROMAGES

CREPES FOURRES AU MIEL

MOUSSE CHOCOLAT

The beverages I did not write down, sorry but I'm confident it wasn't water. This way you can survive even in Sénégal!

The Captain is again one of those Vichy supplied numbers of course. He is a "Gentry" who changes his uniforms three times daily in the brousse, parts his hair very carefully with a generous portion of brillantine anchored in place. The Officers Mess he located in "splendid isolation" from the "other ranks" à la St.Cyr, with flower pots as a fence! Whether his men are starving or not doesn't seem to be neither his responsibility or concern. These kinds of officers would NEVER have been posted to the Legion in the Old Days before the Vichy bastards took over, or if by some mistake one would have slipped thru he would have either gotten his shit together in a hurry or would have his aristocratic ass reamed out faster than he could have said Merde alors! - In this situation he can get by because we have nothing to do but wait to die of malaria or starve to death. "Out of sight - out of mind!"

DECEMBER/1/1942/SIDIBOUGOU

Tomorrow the Peloton de Malheur is re-started again. And a gratifying sight it is too. No gear, no material - nothing to work with and nothing to teach with. It is the same story as it was with Marnia. While the fighting was going on during the Drôle de Guerre in France we played soccer. Now while the fighting is going on in North Africa we're planting flowers for the fence of the officers mess

for the pleasure and delectation of their whores. Our food couldn't be worse if we were in a POW camp.

DECEMBER/7/M'BOULOU

The Peloton de Malheur is here since one week and the living conditions improved. We do nothing and learning of course nothing but the food improved and we're supposed to move out of here hopefully to the front. The only weapons we're supposed to keep are the 60mm mortars and the 25mm guns, so they are the only weapons we have to study and learn to handle. Everything else according to rumours we will get from the Americans and move to the front in North Africa, hopefully soon.

DECEMBER/8/M'BOULOU

Yesterday we were "familiarized" with the Report our Colonel sent up to The Brass and it is a BEAUT! What is called in army lingo COVER YOUR ASS! Not that I blame the Old Boy, although it is a bit too late. What the Report said was essentially this: if this sorry outfit of the 4^{ème} Demi-Briogade is ever expected to take part in the fight of North Africa two things have to be done: 1.) we have to be brought up physically to fighting condition because at the present we're nowhere close to it. Due to the blockade of resupply in food we're in a very weakened condition. 2.) We must be taken to a training camp where noncoms, officers and men should be familiarized with the methods and systems of fighting a modern war with modern weapons. Only after all this was accomplished can the 4^{ème} Demi-Briagde be expected to fight a modern war with a fair chance of success. - All I can add to all this is : AMEN!

The only problem is that to accomplish this cannot be done "overnight".

DECEMBER/17/SIDI BOUGOU

The Peloton de Malheur was disbanded the third time because we're supposed to go back to Dakar N'Bango - home sweet home - where we are to stay for another two months and from there we're to go to a training camp. I've heard today that they disbanded the Foreign Legion in Algérie, enlisting those of French Nationality into the regular French army and with the others forming separate Bataillons according to nationalities. As it turned out not a word was true of the whole story.

It looks like lately I manage to pick up all kinds of lousy bugs. Now I've in the sole of my righth foot a sort of goddamn worm, technically called a filaria, what they call in French "larbiche". This beastie is crawling around under the skin causing inflammation and infection and causing of course a decent amount of pain considering the sensitivity of the sole of the foot. The first time I got aware of it was when I woke up during the night having the feeling as if a fly were crawling around on the sole of my feet. Realizing that in this hellhole of a country there are all kinds of creepy crawlies besides flies I took out my flashlight to have a looksee. And nothing was there. So I went back to sleep only to be awakened later again by the same fantome fly. In the morning I was able to give it a better look by daylight and I saw that there is a red line following an irregular pattern. When this damn thing got worse and worse and the itching became pain I reported sick but the toubib was honest enough to admit that he has no idea what the hell it can be and suggested that I go down to St. Louis and show it to a pharmacist, which is what I did. The guy took one look and said: larbich and explained it that it is a worm. So, what to do? Go back to camp and show it to a native and he will give you a certain leaf and tell you how to use it. And again that's what I did as I don't argue with experts. The native gave me a sort of leaf which has some acidity similar to spinach. I was supposed to put it on the sole of my foot with a hot compress on top and do it every couple of hours and the beastie not liking spinach more than I do will come out soon. Which is what happened but not before the sole of my foot was full of pus and hurt like hell, so much actually that I had to lance it several times during the night to let the pus escape. I've shown it to the toubib who kindly offered to take the skin off but I told him only over my dead body! I already incised it and washed it out with peroxide and the worst thing you can do in the tropic is to create open wounds to invite MORE bugs. So what do you want to do? I said I want to stay off my feet for a few days. As he wanted to stay on my good side because he kept

* borrowing my textbook of tropical medicin my friend Dimamant Laci's
 *(Précis de Medecine Coloniale./Joyeux & Sicée/Masson.)

wife Bözsi sent me from Algiers, he gave me a week "exempt de service". (Translator's note: the scientific name of this beastly is Cutaneous Larva Migrans and it is widely available in the American South, like Florida. There is a modern drug for it called THIABENDAZOLE which if applied topically gets rid of the little bastard in a hurry according to MERCK.)

DECEMBER/23/DAKAR n'BANGO.

We arrived to home sweet home yesterday during the night escorted of course by the usual boxon perfected by long experience in this Travelling Circus during it's illustrious past going back to the mists of antiquity or at least to 1834. I got here by truck on account of my goddamn foot of which I'm getting by now a bit tired. The fucker heels up in one spot and starts in another. For an infection to heal up in the goddamn tropic it takes an eternity because as you know bacteria thrives in warmth and in humidity and the tropic supplies both in abundance and this hellhole specially so. - According to rumours we're going to Morocco on the 15th to train there for a couple of months with the new American gear and then we go UPFRONT! I hope to live so long.

DECEMBER/25/1942/D.B.

This is the fourth Xmas in the Legion. It was "celebrated" very quietly as there was no time for preparations and "horribile dictu" there was not even wine available for presents. Surely a very bad sign how the "mighty have fallen" on hard times. I heard today that Admiral Darlan was shot dead. - One of the Sergeants who just came back from Dakar told me that an American soldier (G.I.) gets \$10/day. As \$1.00=Fr75.00 this means that an American G.I. gets the same solde for ONE DAY what I as Caporal get for ONE MONTH! According to rumours we're going to Morocco on the 15th January 1943.

DECEMBER/27/D.B.

All the papers are giving big play to the landing of the Second Front, adding that there are not enough ships available at this time for the operation. Meanwhile there are commando raids executed against Dieppe and St.Nazaire. It looked to me like a "faint" to concentrate the Germans attention to the spot where the Second Front is NOT going to be established which impression seemed to be

confirmed by the landing of the Americans in North Africa with the "non existent ships". In the same time the English are pressing with their offensive in North-West Africa and the Russians with a big offensive in Russia too, to tie down German troops from being shifted to reinforce the Afrika Korps. Looks like the Axis Powers are getting their tits in a tight crack. This does not mean of course that "the end is near." I've a hunch that they still have a few surprises up their sleeves.

As far as the Legion is concerned our biggest problem is that we were never anything like a "modern army", trained to fight with modern weapons while the Germans are fighting since years with all the state of the art gear and their officers long learned all the tricks of the book. For the Legion to be brought up to scratch in time to come even close to them, even if we would get all the American gear we hear TALKED about only so far, is beyond the realm of possibility as far as I can see. This of course does not mean that we should not even TRY to do the best we can and keep sitting out the war in this hellhole learning how to stand at GARDEZ-VOUS. There are any number of "supporting roles" in an army we could do to replace the fighting units, like helping with logistic, guarding ammo dumps etc. Learning to drive a truck should not take more than a couple of months even for tyros. But there is no glamour in this of course.

DECEMBER/28/D.B.

The era of canards is starting again. Here are some of the more popular ones: 1.) We're going to stay here another two months to train with the few available modern weapons we have (60mm mortars etc) and then we'll go to Morocco to train with the other weapons and gear. I don't consider this a very smart idea as the most important step would be to get the whole Demi-Brigade OUT of this hellhole before we all die of malaria or starve to death.

2.) On the 15th there is a convoy leaving Dakar of which we supposed to be part of. This doesn't look likely to me as I can't see any signs of preparation for leaving any time soon. 3.) The Peloton de Malheur is supposed to be reactivated on the 4th January 1943.

The Demi-Brigade is supposed to be ready to leave on the 12th January.

JANUARY/1/1943/D.B.

Happy New Year to us! The fact is that Tibor and myself SURVIVED another year and not much worse for wear and tear either. This is I think more than our friends can say who stayed at home. "On the other hand" what the new year will bring ? Qui vivra-verra!

JANUARY/3/D.B.

Latest news: we're shipping out from Dakar between the 15th-25th proceeding to Morocco, escorted by 60 warships. We debark in Casablanca and proceed to EL-HADJEB (30 kms from Meknès) where the Demi-Brigade will be disbanded and made part of the 2ème Regiment Etranger. - The Peloton de Malheur will be reactivated for two weeks.

JANUARY/10/D.B.

The Peloton de Malheur is back in business and there is nothing like going back to basic just before shipping out! We're familiarized -again - with the finer points and mysteries of how to stand at GARDEZ-VOUS! (Attention!) This is considered to be the most important aspect of modern war we have to acquire as first priority! How to read a map, use a compass, First Aid etc etc... WHO needs it as long as we know how to stand at GARDEZ VOUS "by the book". As I said before it looks to me that more people had a heatstroke here than we realized. - According to the latest canard we are NOT going to EL-HADJEB but to bel-Abbe's probably this month. Just as long as we get out of this shithole at long last BEFORE we all croak of one thing or other of the long arsenal of tropical diseases, or lack of food, or both.

JANUARY 13/D.B.

The Peloton de Malheur is still in business, but we're supposed to leave on the 20th. According to the Lt. the Demi-Brigade will be part of an American Armored Division and most probably we're going to Tunisia. Sounds good except I would like to know WHAT are we going to do as PART of an Armored Division ? We dont know one end of a tank from another. The Italian radio had a fascinating little announcement: " The 4ème Demi-Brigade of the Foreign Legion was torpedoed with it's convoy at Dakar by a German U-boat and they all drowned like rats!" I hope this guy is not going to turn out to be a goddamn prophete but righth now "our death is somewhat premature".

JANUARY/25/D.B.

We're awaiting daily the order of our departure which is expected soon. According to the latest news it should be on the 8th of February. Where are we supposed to go nobody seems to know. The Peloton de Malheur was dissolved again and this time probably the last time. As for being nominated to Sergeants it supposed to take place on the 1st February. Even if this would turn out to be true I cant see that it will be much use by now.

JANUARY/28/D/B.

Yesterday we had our so-called EXAM for the Peloton de Malheur. I dont think you could have "introduced" a grain of oat-uncooked of course-in the assholes of the folk, as we used to say in Hungary. Tibor with his legendary luck got questions he could shake out of his little finger, to use another Hungarian saw, while my first two questions were neither in the Manual nor did we ever discussed. All the following ones however I handled with "effortless ease and supreme confidence", yeah. So we both passed with the proverbial flying colours upholding the honour of the family and proving - again- that "the two little jewish boys" can hack it in the Foreign Legion also. This situation brougth back memories of the final exam of the Reserve Officer's School in Hungary where Tibor picked the easiest questions out of the hat while I picked the most difficult one everybody dreaded: Establish the Defense Perimeter for an Independent Re-Inforced Bataillon in Bivouac 30 kms from the enemy. - The Commanding Officer of the School, Captain Árpád Miltényi, walked over to me and after glancing at the question I pulled, said with a little grin, Fuchs you already up to your neck in horse shit, so the only thing I can do is to promise that if the Brass is not going to interrupt you or heckle you I will keep my mouth shut too. He was as good as his word and I must have done OK because the only complaint I got was not to have ordered in the Standing Order the burning of all List of Requisition for food which would have given enemy agents the number of people in the Bataillon in bivouac. -

Meanwhile back at the farm: the latest news is that we're leaving this shithole on the 5th and shipping out from Dakar on the 12th,

destination unknown. The other canards are as follows: Everybody whose nationality is the same as the Axis Powers will be sent to an Internation Camp. C'est PAS le moment! (NO way!)

- 2.) We debark at Casablanca.
- 3.) " " " Agadir
- 4.) " " " ?
- 5.) We go upfront to Tunisia
- 6.) " " " to the Balkans.
- 7.) " " " to the Peloponesos

Qui vivra-verra!

FEBRUARY/3/D.B.

The bivouac detachment left this morning. We're supposed to leave on the 6th. About our nomination to Sergeants nothing sofar. It should take place on board the ship for "administrative reasons". About American weapons and gear also nothing sofar. According to rumours some units of the Legion is already fighting in Tunisia - with our WWI vintage rifles. Seems to me that we're not leaving this week as the companies have to pull garde duty as usual.

FEBRUARY/4/D.B.

According to latest news we're leaving on the 10th-finally. We had an embarassing little episode. Our Capitaine, the gentry with the brillantined hair and three changes of uniforms daily was "relieved of duty". Not only that he stole the companie's money - he had to pay somehow for those little Soirées for the ladies, n'est ce pas ? - but he also couldnt pay off his outside debts. Looks like this is becoming something of a tradition lately. First the Caporal Comptable sold a little rice on his own initiative, then the Chef Comptable (Chef Meyer) did it, then the Chef Comtable enlisted the willing help of the Companie Commander and split the profit, and now this gentry joined the fun too. No wonder that the other companies ate much better than we did.

FEBRUARY/6/D.B.

Revue de DEPART! We're supposed to leave any day now - WHERE?

FEBRUARY/10/D.B.

Looks like before leaving they want to demonstrate that the old whorehouse is alive and well and unlikely to change. We had to go

to the airfield to say Farewell to Uncle General @ 0800hrs. For this we had to have Reveille at 0500hrs. Tenue: Khaki pants, winter coats (wool), Ceinture Bleu, Képi Blanc. In the last minute somebody realized that the lighth machine guns were forgotten! Mad dash to the armory otherwise Uncle General wouldnt have left I assume.

FEBRUARY/13/D.B.

FOURTH year ANNIVERSARY in the Foreign fucken Legion! We had big Defile yesterday to honour a high American Officer. All the other Colonial Troups wore shorts and shortsleeve shirts except the Legion of course. We had to wear wool pants, wool pullovers, wool winter coats, with the flaps tucked up as in the book and needless to say the "legendary" Ceinture Bleu! All this in this fucken heat! The ambulance followed us to pick up those who fainted and it was busy too. Our departure was postponed AGAIN! Nobody knows why and for how long?

FENRUARY/19/D.B.

We had a "Special Attraction" today. General de Brigade CORNET was named Honorary Foreign Legionnaire 1er Class! Our little Polish/Jewish tailor sewed on, with shaking fingers, his stripe next to his General stars, followed by a 2 liter bidon pinard hanged around his neck from which he duly drank one quart righth there like a good sport. After all this accomplished without mishap we all paraded in front of the new Honorary Légionnaire 1er Class Général de Brigade Cornet.

Apart from this we're impatiently waiting our departure from this hellhole, preferably BEFORE we starve to death. Since weeks our "lunch" is the local red beans and dinner the local semolina. To have a little variety the next week lunch is the local semolina and the local red beans for dinner (no we dont have gas masks for the nighth). In a more serious vein, we're surviving only by spending all our "generous solde" on food sold by the local beauties. 1kg dried bananas are Fr 50. They last about two days.

FEBRUARY/21/D.B.

Official news arrived yesterday that we're leaving on the 24th. Followed by the Official News that NO, not on the 24th but on the 26th. Unofficial news from the ordonnance of the Major said that

we're leaving tomorrow at 1900hrs with destination to bel-Abbès.

FEBRUARY/25/S.S.ATHOS II

We left this hellhole on the 23rd at long last and I didnt observe anybody shedding tears either. Needless to say, but I'll say it anyway, confusion, whorehouse and madhouse reigned supreme before and during preparations and as for the embarcation itself words fail to describe it and you had to see it and participate in it to be able to believe it! A Travelling Circus I used to talk about would have been better organized and prepared and I've a hunch that even a tribe of gypsies breaking and changing camp would have presented a more organized situation. But as they say in German: Schwamm drüber! (wipe it off the board).

What I still couldnt figure out is WHAT were we supposed to DO in Sénégal in the first place? WHY were we sent to this malarial hellhole? (Translator's Note: Years later I heard that the reason for being sent to Sénégal was to keep us out of the beady eyes of the filthy Vichy bastards. Well and good, but WHY exactly to Sénégal? Why exactly to the colony famous for its lousy climate? And IF it had to be in Sénégal WHY had it to be shmack in the delta of the Sénégal river with it's malarial swamps ?! Was this just an oversight? We will probably never find out.)

Meanwhile back in the farm: Reveille for departure was 0530hrs to "enable" us to leave camp for the train station of St. Louis at 1800hrs(!) where after two hours of hanging around we entrained into our usual cattle Pullmans - to spend the night in same in great comfort and luxury still on the siding of the station of St. Louis. We pulled out of the station of St. Louis yesterday at 0500hrs. "No cheers, no tears, we want to remember you just as you are"! And we arrived to DAKAR today at 0500hrs. The train stopped at the outskirts of the town which gave us the golden opportunity to shoulder our complete bazar and walk with it 4kms thus regaining our legendary walking legs à la Foreign Legion after the trip in the cattle cars. And I dare to question the ability of our Superiors to think of even the

smallest detail and opportunity to enhance our wellbeing?! What an ingrate I can be? Merde alors!

After arriving at the port of DAKAR we waited around for another two hours to be embarked into the HOLD of this luxury paqueboat called S.S.ATHOS II. Later I wondered whether they forgot the "P" in front of her name? We found ourselves in great comfort suitable for SARDINES. If we're going to be torpedoed, not exactly an unheard possibility for a troupe carrying ship in wartime, we will all drown like rats as the Italian radio announcer foretold it, because there is NO way that we can get up on deck from this HOLD on the ONE improvised WOODEN staircase which starts oscillating even when only a couple of people are on it in the same time.

Supposedly we're going to be "adequately" escorted, but what "adequate" means is open to interpretation and extrapolating from the other aspects of the "arrangements" so far, it is not very encouraging. From what we heard from the crew the previous convoy was also "adequately" escorted and from the 2000 people 200 survived. I don't consider this a very good odds.

FEBRUARY/26/43/S.S.ATHOS II/DAKAR

We're still sitting in port. As I heard there are 3500 people on this luxury liner/paqueboat which was built to carry 2000 "souls". Perhaps the discrepancy is the result that Foreign Legionnaires are not supposed to have souls and therefore need less space? Just asking. In the present wartime conditions this is not a question of comfort and/or convenience but a question of Life or Death. Although a little more comfort wouldn't be bad either. There are seven straw mattresses for ten bodies to luxuriate on. Furthermore not only that we don't have anywhere near enough lifeboats and liferafts for 3500 people but we don't even have enough lifejackets for everybody. - According to best available info from the crew there is a 90% chance that at least some of the convoy will come under U-boat attacks. To make up for all these little inconveniences and shortcomings the food is fit for pigs only, and small pigs at that. To take our so-called minds off all this, Colonel GABAS the pathetic moron what he is, ordered us to wear: Wool pants, wool pullovers and ... Ceinture Bleu while he and all the officers are promenading on deck in shorts and shirtsleeves and we swelter in the HOLD. VIVE LA LEGION!

FEBRUARY/27/S.S.ATHOS II

The convoy, consisting of 45 ships in all, picked us up today at 0900hrs. There are only two paqueboats. All the others are tankers. I fervently hope that the U-boat Captains will consider a tanker a more cost-efficient and worthy target for his expensive torpedoes than our paqueboat. The madhouse and the boxon in the HOLD is world-class. According to rumours, from tomorrow Tibor and myself will be posted to the deck as Observateurs! I sure hope and pray - I mean this only figuratively speaking - that it will turn out to be true. At least I'll have FRESH air to breath instead of a mixture of body exhaust of my fellow sufferers and will be able to turn around without invading the private territory of my next mattress neighbor.

FEBRUARY/28/S.S.ATHOS II

Sofar everything is quiet and there is no U-boat danger. After we passed the Canary Isles we'll breath a bit easier. During the night Signor Pocker s.v.p. Lipani who is camping out next to me and who was instrumental in helping Mohammed to deflower me when he was AWOL at evening rollcall, woke up with his teeth doing the castagnette, heralding in a competent malaria attack. So I took him to sick bay where the medic, following Standard Operating Procedure, handed him a jar to pee into which he did and promptly started to scream : Mammmmmma Mia! Now that we left that whore of a country I am going to DIE !? What happened was that the urine of Signor Lipani was like Chianti because he obviously had "blackwater fever" -technically called hemoglobinuria- which is sometimes a complication of falciparum malaria treated with quinin. We already lost about a dozen people in our unit from this. The reason for this complication is not known. As I said it is thought that quinin is the culprit. It is not known why some of the people are affected some are not. To ascertain the prognosis for blackwater fever the patient is required to urinate at frequent intervals with the urine saved for comparisons. If the urine gets clearer, less bloody that is, the prognosis is very good. If it gets darker the patient is not going to make it. Signor Lipani was lucky. His urine cleared up and he made it, to play more poker.

MARCH/1/S.S.ATHOS II

Nuit clam-RAS.(nigth quiet-Nothing to report.) We're about 170 Kms from the coast. Tonigth things are supposed to get more "interesting" as around Rio de Oro U-boat activity is expected.

MARCH 2/S.S.ATHOS II

Nuit calm-RAS. We're in the U-boat danger zone from now. Yesterday Air Recon picked up two U-boats but there was no contact. Everybody who has lifejacket is supposed to wear it.

MARCH/3/S.S.ATHOS II

Nuit calm-RAS. It is a funny feeling to go to sleep not knowing whether one is going to wake up in the drink, sailing thru the air or - in the Next World? Where are we going to dock we dont know yet. There is talk about Casablanca or Agadir. Somebody stole a piece of BREAD from my pack! It says a lot about our "nourishment" when a buddy is stealing a piece of BREAD from you!

MARCH/4/S.S.ATHOS II

Secteur calm-RAS.

I'm on the deck from 0700-2000hrs with Tibor. Nice way to pass the time on this godforsaken crate. Tibor is in his element bugging the crew for sea lore etc. We've another 1000kms that is three days to go. If all goes well we'll dock in Casablanca.

MARCH/5/S.S.ATHOS II

Secteur calm-RAS.

U-boat danger is over! Only air attacks are possible but not probable.

MARCH/7/S.S.ATHOS II

"Voyage terminé.-RAS!"(Trip finished-RAS.-)

We docked at noon at Casablanca. We had more luck than common sense. There were two U-boat sightings but no contacts.

MARCH/8/ En route to MEKNES by train.

I didnt have the time yesterday to continue to write in the Diary and it was a day I wont soon forget for several reasons. We docked at noon. The port looked a lot different than when we saw it last time going to DAKAR/Senegal. There are a lot of sunken ships both by the Germans and the Americans. The few remaining French ships are modestly hiding between all the Amrican warships.

One of the big one, JEAN BART with a big hole in its side. Between the ships there are a whole bunch of small American motor boats flitting about with young sailors on board all in good cheer with obviously not a care in the world! "Keep smiling!"

We dont know yet when we are going to debark, today or tomorrow? All of a sudden the duty NCO comes around screaming that we should be on deck in TEN MINUTES! Easier said than done. The whole Bataillon should get up on deck on these improvised wooden staircases in TEN MINUTES?! They are obviously relinquished whatever little brains they might have had to seasickness during the trip.

The whole IMBROGLIO looked like the evacuation of the Titanic or more so, but nobody played the pianer!(sic) Everybody is hollering, screaming, shouting, pushing, shoving, swearing, improvising such Legio specialities as : attend shuyya, nye ?! I guess this needs a little explanatin being a sentence of three words constructed from three different languages. "Attend" is of course French for "wait". "Shuyya" is Arabic for "little or slowly". "Nye" is Annamite(Vietnamese) for "will you", OK?, allrighth? - So what it all adds up to is : "wait a little, allrighth?" When the first guys get up on deck they are greeted by an NCO standing there with the good news that it is NOT our turn yet! Get the fuck back down to the HOLD! More screaming and swearing of course. When we disembark finally midst a scene . . . worthy of a lunatic asylum, which overshadows everything I've seen in this outfit, I lay my eyes the first time on an American G.I. who happens to be a young strapping M.P. (Military Police) wearing a practical, wellcut uniform and gear, making the impresssion of a PROFESSIONAL SOLDIER, and he is smiling too, probably at the archaic gear and uniform this Travelling Circus is wearing. It starts raining and he pulls out a little packet from his uniform extracting form it a RAINCOAT! How'bout THAT ? His ammo pouches and canteen are all attached to his "web belt" with hooks. Everything is well designed and practical. While I'm eyeballing what a MODERN soldier ready to figth a MODERN war should look like, an ambulance is turning the corner and can I believe my eyes? A beautiful gal in uniform is sitting behind the wheel!

She is well groomed with lovely dark hair down to her shoulders, lipstick and nail polish expertly matched.

It could be in a movie - but isn't. I realize it is the first time that I'm confronted with the fact that there is a WAR going on! Some of the Legionnaires are running over to this "apparition" driving an ambulance looking like a "movie star", acting like a stud noticing a mare in heat, trying to communicate with her in sign language gesticulating like a bunch of maniacs. She is smiling demurely and drives on. - We get our order: Materielle à la main! En avant - MARCHE! (gear in hand! Forward -Marche!) We take off to the train station loaded down like pack animals. We board our usual cattle Pullman which does not even have straw to lay down on, and we're again crammed together like sardines to make us feel at home I guess. They are distributing our "meal" : two eggs and a piece of bread but most of the guys are too tired to stand in line for this royal repast. The night is very cool after being used to the sweltering nights under mosquito netz for eighteen months in Sénégal. We're supposed to go to FEZ but nobody knows for sure.

MARCH/9/FEZ

We arrived yesterday at noon and had the traditional Prise d'Arms in front of the station. Our barracks are lousy made of wood. We're standing around with all our shit on our backs like pack animals in blazing sun after two weeks of our honeymoon voyage in the HOLD of the luxury liner S.S. ATHOS II and after two days of train trip in our cattle Pullmas without as much as a little straw on the floor. Suddenly, somebody who is carrying nothing but his uniform on his back remembers at long last that we're not so lucky and utters the magic words: Sac à terre! (Packs on the ground) We're waiting for lunch which is not bad but we're tired, filthy, sweaty, and up to here with the whole boxon and haven't got much appetite for anything. After lunch we're assigned to our places in the barracks. Two squads in a big room. No beds here either. First, one of the Squad Leaders is assigning the places according to his ideas, and we sit on the floorspace assigned. Then the second squad Leader comes in, who is not satisfied with the first squad Leader's choice and orders us to change our places and we sit down on our new assigned floor space. Then the FIRST squad Leader comes back again and notices that we're not bivouaced according to SQUADS

and orders us to change our places AGAIN! And THIS tore it for me! I grab all my gear and throw it in the middle of the room! The asshole NCO gives me a dirty look which I give him right back but he says nothing which is just as well because I probably would have ended up in prison and this time not for eight days either. They are distributing a little straw for our comfort and luxury. It isn't much but better than nothing. We also get two blankets as the nights are cool here. We're told that we can go out to town till 2230hrs. We change our clothes in a hurry and wait for the Passes. The duty NCO arrives to inform us that the Passes are cancelled because the Lt. already left and there is nobody to sign the Passes. Qu'ils se font chier dans les doigts! (let them shit in their fingers) We go out till the 2100hrs rollcall. What little we could see from the town looked nice. When we get back to the barracks the duty NCO is standing there with signed Passes! He can stick it up his buttfucked ass! When it comes to make badlam run amok and chaos these board-certified morons don't miss a chance! The town was full of G.I.s, some of them not feeling any pain either. They are all loaded with money too. A G.I. gets for ONE DAY what I get as Cpl. for ONE WEEK. The result is that all the prices are indexed to the G.I.'s solde from shoeshine to food to hookers who are doing a roaring business of course. We could just as well be made of glass.

We're supposed to stay here for two weeks "à titre de convalescence" (for recuperation). I spoke yesterday with a guy from the Regimental Music in bel-Abbès who knew Fehér Bandi and Coca from my home town. He said all that was left from their Bataillon in France was ONE officer and twenty others, so the chances that these two survived is slim. (Translator's Note: as I said previously I have met Fehér Bandi in Israel and I've heard that Coca died of some skin disease.) According to latest reports we stay here only fifteen days and then we go to Tunisia. One of the sergeants who got out of Tunisia with a legwound ^{said} there was NO American weapons or gear at all. They fought with their WWI vintage Mod 07/15 rifles and marched 35 kms/ day with full gear. As Napoleon said : A la guerre comme à la guerre!

MARCH/12/FEZ

It looks like we're going to stay here for 15 days. The cost of living is much cheaper here than in Sénégal even with the G.I.s generous way of spending their solde, because the law of supply and demand is not as much out of quilter as there. With the exception of soap and oil just about everything is available without problems and not for wayout prices either. Various kinds of cakes, tea, coffee, oranges and other fruits. I paid a visit today - in more than one way- to a very posh cathouse called Chevàl Blanche where I introduced myself to Lucienne, a very cute little Jewish hooker who took a big shine to me and gave me two cartons of CAMELS which are worth several times her "fee" on the blackmarket. Cigarettes are the only hard currency since the G.I.s landed. You can barter them for just about everything. - I just heard that Diamant Laci's Cie. is already at the front in Tunisia. I hope he is OK. I sent all my personal papers to his wife Bözsi in Algiers for safekeeping.

MARCH/18/FEZ

Yesterday while reading the paper I came across a very familiar name which was one of those cases of what a small world this is! A Russian paper quoted the Dairy of a German officer who died on the front by the name of Walter Heller. Walter was my boss for four years in the textile factory in my hometown, Sopron where I've worked as designer after graduating from highschool. There can be no doubt about this as I remember he told me once that he is always keeping a diary and there is no way that there are two guys with the same name keeping diaries fighting against ^{the} Russians, although Walter was from Austria not from Germany.

MARCH/20/FEZ

I had a little surprise when I changed my underwear today. Little beasties were busily commuting in the seams of my boxer short, which Tibor expertly identified as lice! So now I'm a LOUSY Foreign Legionnaire to boot! I promptly boiled everything which I hope solved this status at least. I must have picked them up in the lavabo when I washed my underwear.

MARCH/23/FEZ

We visited the MEDINAH, the Arab quarter yesterday and marvelled

at the gorgeous buildings and the intricate woodcarvings and decorations their fabulous builders and artisans have done hundreds of years ago. Sorry for not being able to go into this subject in a more knowledgeable and detailed fashion but the sad fact is that I'm not an expert in Arabic culture. Come to think I'm not an expert in anything. They are selling fabulous silver jewelry and the worldfamous Moroccan leatherwork of course and I managed to successfully haggle for a handworked, leathersack they use for hanging on the camels for clothes etc. I'll send this too for safekeeping to Bözsi. (Translaters Note: it is still hanging on my wall as I'm writing this, one of the few things I got out of the five years in the Legion, together with some woodcarving I bought in Sénégal from the "les Hommes Bleu" from Mauretania.)

MARCH/24/FEZ

Latest canard: We're leaving in 3-4 days but nobody knows where to?

APRIL/3/1943/EL AROUZA/TUNISIA !

The departure from FEZ was accomplished of course with the traditional chaos and three ring circus, improved and adopted as needed. The first action of "warlike activity" was observed "by this writer" this afternoon shortly after we got here when a English SPITFIRE shot down a German MESSERSCHMIDT without the Jerry having the time to realize it. The SPIT got into the classic six o'clock position above him, fired a short burst from his machine gun and the Jerry went down in flames. The pilot bailed out only a few hundred meters from where we were and landed OK. A Colonial Tirailleur started to run toward him thru the field and got both of his legs blown off by an antipersonnel mine for his eagerness. the Jerry is a "typical Aryan", young, blond, handsome - and arrogant. Another colonial is trying to take a hammer to his blond Aryan head but is restrained by "cooler heads".

APRIL/5/DJEBEL CHEFKOUMA/TUNISIA

Look Ma! At long last we're at the FRONT, sort of. On April 3rd we got off our trucks, being told that we're forbidden to smoke and talk loud and that we've to proceed at our traditional way: on foot! This would be OK if it wouldn't be for the strange fact that a STREAM of trucks and tanks are whizzing by with full lights on!

The Foreign Legion has of course sacred traditions to uphold so we're allowed to march 25kms to our specially reserved position behind a little hill. Half hour later our backpacks arrived by trucks with our tents, blankets etc which was almost something of a revolutionary advancement in Legionnaire technology. All this stuff came in handy, meaning tents and blankets, as the nights are cold here. We were even willing to forgive them, almost, that the dimbulbs loaded our gear helter skelter without any attention to unit "cohesion", so it took us forever to sort out our stuff (C'est la miègne tête de con la! De mes couilles trou d'cul! Va t'fair enculer par les zouaves Chéri!)

It is 0400hrs by the time we find our "designated destination" in Tunisia - at least until further notice. Next day we start digging in which is a ballbreaker as the ground is very rocky here. Fortunately I've a good crew for the mortar and they do a fair enough job under the circumstance. My number two guy is Eugene Dondeynaz the latest descendant of a long and illustrious family of professional mountainguides for the Mountblanc, built like a block of granite and solid muscle like somebody who had to start as porter, like all guides have to do, carrying the gear of the "patron" who hired him, beside all his own gear of course. More importantly he is a veteran of the Spanish Civil War as a member of the International Brigade. He is the only one of the whole crew who ever heard a shot fired in anger, and fired back too. Needless to say I'm neither too dumb nor too proud to listen to his advise. If all this wouldnt be good enough he is a terrific cook. Whenever we can "find" some meat, two or four legged, it is Eugene who cooks it using all kinds of wild grown herbs he can find. In one word he is the kind of guy who is worth his weight in gold in our situation.

As for being on the "front"...this is not bad as fronts go. We hear some incoming artillery but way, way off. There seems to be no enemy aircraft around at all only our own. Looks like we have complete air superiority which is very healthy stuff. The first line is about 25kms from here. We're in the second echelon reserve of our Division, so far without any specific assignment. Nice work if you can get it, but not much to be proud of to put it mildly.

The food is not bad - sofar.

APRIL/7/DJEBEL CHEFKOUMA/TUNISIA.

Djebel is Arabic for mountain. SECTEUR CALM - RAS. Judging by the music, our artillery must have changed positions "forward bound." No enemy air activity at all but we counted yesterday some 75 of our own bombers, most of them Flying Forts going toward Tunis. We gave them a big cheer and wished them godspeed. Otherwise RAS. Food sofar OK. Our WWI vintage tin helmets are shining like heliographs but no camouflage nets are provided. It is unofficially suggested that we amputate the tails of our shirts and "adapt" them for same. A La Legion on se démerde! Trouble is there is a little too much shit to get rid off lately!

APRIL/8/DJEBEL CH.K./TUNISIA

From today I'm on duty at the P.O. (Post Observation), as till further notice my services as mortar man are not required at this point in time. Gear supplied to perform my duties as "observateur": ZERO. What I'm SUPPOSED to have are: paper, pencil, compass, binocular and such. What I got was a WWI vintage double periscope, technically known as goniometre, which was used in trenchwarfare mounted on a tripod to pinpoint the position of enemy artillery etc. It would be better than nothing at least as long as we stay put IF the optical elements would work, which they dont. I see as well with my own glasses - which I'm wearing since 1930 when my mathematic professor promised me to slapp my ears off if I wont be able to answer his questions regarding the mysteries of SINUS/COSINUS and other horrors, marked on the black board. Sad to admit that the glasses didnt help much either, as math was the only subject I flunked.

According to rumours we're supposed to relieve our 3rd. Regiment in front of us. I've the impression that most of the show is pretty much over in Tunisia and the big attraction will be played in Europe and soon.

APRIL/9/Dj.CH.K/T.

I saw an English submachine gun yesterday(STEN GUN) It is not exactly fancy but it seems to do the job, which is what counts. Supposedly it costs Fr.60 per piece and it is manufactured by everybody who can work with metal.

Otherwise: RAS. This evening we're going to a TWO day "combat engineering" course to identify and pick up MINES! There is no easier way to croack in this show anywhere! And one of these "fast courses" is making it easier still! You just learn enough to get your ass blown off. This course is in EL AROUZA and Tibor is coming back tonight from there. According to rumours there is a chance to barter a pistol from the Brits for bread because they have only hardtack. Sounds too good to be true.

APRIL/11/EL-AROUZA

The course lasted two days as advertised and it was wall-to-wall confusion, not advertised. I couldn't get a pistol but was able to "acquire" some British offensive handgranades Md. WP. We don't have anything like it, probably because in the IWW they did not need offensive grenades during trench warfare or perhaps they just didn't get around to make some since. Strange are the ways of the "military mind" a contradiction in terms if ever was one.

APRIL/14/EL CHEFKOUMA/COTE 408 (Cote=hill)

Tibor and myself are both in the P.O. weather is gorgeous and we are sunbathing luxuriously doing nothing. Vive la guerre! Food is also adequate both in quality and quantity - so far. We see some outgoing artillery fire behind a mountain 15kms from here.

APRIL.15/EL CH.K.

According to rumours we're relieving the unit in front of us tomorrow. I'd have no objection to this if they would be gracious enough to give us something a little more up-to-date than our WWI gear. There is supposed to be an offensive coming, against Djebel MANSOUR. Taking into consideration that Jerry is sitting there some time it is safe to assume that they are going to be waiting for us with the proverbial bated breath. I heard Diamant Laci is supposed to be here somewhere too. I sure would like to see him again.

The trouble was with the above mentioned STEN gun that according to the grapewine ^{although} most of the time it worked as intended, occasionally it did not, inflicting harm on the wrong side of the barrel. First we chalked these stories up to the usual rumours making the rounds with most new weapons, but soon enough I found out that the rumours were well founded. One day Sgt. Fischer of the "hardbitten cheek" came to see me with the righthside of his shirt dripping blood. Erwin, can you stick something on this little scratch? What happened Seppl? Ach, I was standing around holding this verdammte English ersatz for a Schmeisser (German submachine gun) by it's stubby little barrel at my side, when I saw a centipede hurrying along bringing back fond memories when one ^{of} it's family members made nice blisters on my arm, so I decided to hit it with the buttplate of this damn gun and BOOM! the fucken gun went off and shot me in the shoulder because the Englenders made the recoil spring probably from the same wire they use for making safety pins. So lets see it Seppl. He takes off his bloodsoaked shirt and sure enough there is a nice little groove about one cm deep and three cm long in his deltoid. I got my medical kit and poured some mercurochrome on a bunch of gauze-pads and bandaged it with his first aid pack telling him to come to see me in a couple of days unless he has a lot of pain and heat around the wound, bringing a new first aid pack so I can change the dressing. Ach Erwin nur keine sorgen (dont worry) it is only a scratch. Sure enough as Fischer has a constitution as a horse it healed what is called in the trade "by first intention" or "no problem". Seppl, you're lucky that this centipede was not walking around BETWEEN your feet! GottBEHÜTE, (God FORBID) says Seppl with mock-horror.

(Translator's note: Mercurochrome was in those days the allaround disinfectant, replacing at long last iodine of un-lamented memories.)

APRIL/16/EL CH.K.

Looks like the rumours of our relieving the unit in front of us was just that, as there is no sign of moving soon. According to the latest news the Brits are around Tunis already.

APRIL.18/EL CH.K.

we're supposed to decamp tomorrow @ 2000hrs. The 2nd Bataillon left this morning. They all carried TWO packs, TWO side bags (musettes) bidon and the whole bazar on their backs. By the time they got HERE they were all "dead" most of them sitting on the side of the road unable to march anymore. This is the way they are going to attack Djebel MANSOUR?! In all fairness to them the flag of the Bataillon was flying from one of their baionette's WWI style! The Jerry appreciated this very much too and promptly airmailed them a little artillery fire for their side of the hill! Yesterday one of our NCO's said : on va faire un petit promenade. (we'll make a little walk) The Lt.Colonel is passing by with his car, stops, and asks the NCO in a very angry mood : What do you think you're DOING here?! NCO: we just do a little walk. Are you out of your fucking mind ?! The enemy P.O. is just 6kms from here exactly opposite of this road! Get the fuck out of here IMMEDIATELY! - War à la Légion Etrangère s.v.p.-

APRIL/22/COTE 427

Day before yesterday we left Djebel CHEFKOUMA and we're here since three days. Fortunately we had to carry only our barda but even so we were dog tired by the time we got here because we had to climb this fucken mountain. Barda is an Arabic word and it is the favourite style of backpack of the LEgion because it is lighth and comfy to carry. It would be too complicated to explain how it is constructed without enclosing a sketch, enough to say that instead of the regular backpack the tent is used to roll up into it only the most necessary personal gear into something of a sausage and using the leftover part of the tent is twisted and tied to the center of the "sausage" and the two resulting flaps are used as the carrying straps to slip our arms thru, while the "sausage" is resting on our back. clear as mud ? -

We relieved the Tirailleurs (Colonial Troupes) @2200hrs. They told us that since two weeks everything is quiet apart from some lighth

artillery fire. Till yesterday there was no action but 2000hrs there was fairly heavy outgoing artillery fire for the Djebel MANSOUR, lasting till morning. There is a 75 battery firing behind me and we get some incoming artillery fire probably from a 155, so there is a lot of music all night. Last night Cie. Farrell sent out a recon patrol of 20 people which came back home without any trouble but what did they see or find I don't know.

APRIL/23/COTE 527.

Yesterday afternoon we were told to move out @2000hrs. We're authorized to jettison our gasmask to lighten up our load. Most of us did this already long ago. You don't have to be Clausewitz to figure out that if there was no chemical warfare up to now from either side it is not going to be any by now. Later we're officially told that we'll take part in the attack on Djebel MANSOUR obviously with our WWI vintage 86/93 model rifles, which will be matched with their usual flair from the German side by their state of the art SCHMEISSER submachine guns and other goodies. I can hardly wait! I'm just starting to bring down my mortar from our position when the Lt. arrives with the usual contre-order without which NOTHING gets done in this here man's army - using the word carelessly - to tell us that only tomorrow, that is today, shall we move out. Nevertheless it is already 1530hrs but so far nothing moved. Tibor arrives with the "travel instructions". The attack on the Djebel MANSOUR is ON. The Tirailleur Bataillon is in the first echelon, our Bataillon in the second echelon, with our Cie. in the second echelon of the Cie. Fire support will be provided by two hrs of artillery fire and some tanks. All this would have my enthusiastic and whole hearted approval if we would have something a little "younger" and more up-to-date weaponry than just our archaic WWI rifles to do it with. My only up-to-date weaponry consists of the grenades I "acquired" from the Brits during the mine-sweeping course, as my 60mm mortar is not for personal defense of course.

APRIL/27/COTE 462(264?)

We left Cote 527 four days ago. So far we never had any water supplied apart from what we could get from the streams and rivers and

water purifying tablets are unheard of in our part of the war. Nor were we fed more than ONCE in 24hrs either and that arrived during the night between 0100-0300hrs, everything cold and shrivelled up. On the other hand our fighting consisted so far of marching from sunup to sundown loaded down like pack animals. This part of the problem I solved by throwing away everything but what I considered necessary or useful. As the weather is nice by now I "lost" all my winter uniform including my overcoat except my wool pullover which might come in handy yet during the nights. So far we were in reserve and had only very few casualties from anti-personnel mines and light infantry weapons. It is just as well because our medical service is atrocious. It takes hours to realize that some people are missing and more hours to get the medic to the wounded. And all this while we're still way back in reserves! I'm writing this while relaxing next to my mortar. The first echelon is advancing very slowly because there is some incoming artillery fire. Miracles still happen! Today the FIRST time that our meal arrived at 1500hrs and still warm and with even a cuppa coffee at least warm not cold. I just heard that @1900hrs we'll return where we were yesterday for two days of rest. Although we don't deserve the rest for fighting we earned it for marching and for eating only occasionally. Tunis is deservedly famous in all North Africa for its amoebic dysentery but so far we were not supplied with drinking water even once. In all fairness to them we are allowed to drink all the water supplied by Mother Nature. La Légion se démerde! - PONT DU FAHS is 8km from here N/NE. According to news it was taken after hard fighting after the Jerries beat us back three times.

At 2000hrs we start our 'retreat' to a small stream where we'll rest for two days. I'll remember these five fucken kilometers for a longtime. We did a "shortcut" in pitchdark with the foreseeable result: got lost and marched /stumbled thru ditches, rocks, wadis and all kinds of shit for 15kms instead of the five we could have done on paved road! The pack animals got left behind, falling into the wadis, had to be retrieved of course, offloaded-reloaded etc. What a hopeless sorry bunch of worldclass FUCKUPS we really are.

Fortunately our food arrived almost warm at least and if we would NOT have marched/stumbled 15kms instead of only five it would have been perhaps even HOT! So our little extra 10kms was probably a blessing in disguise saving us from eating a hot meal just for a fucking change.

APRIL/28/COTE 462.

In the morning we dig in and I go down to the little stream to have a good wash and do my laundry and relax. We're lucky that this country have a lot of small streams otherwise we would be in bad shape hygiene wise. Yesterday a tanker from the Brits carrying water stopped nearby and we asked him if he could give us some drinking water? The bloke said he would be glad to but the water is not purified yet. When we told him that we never had any purified water since we came to the front he just shook his head in disbelief and let us fill all our canteens of course. There are armies and there is the Legion! This is the first time since we arrived to the front that we were actually served breakfast around b'fast time: black coffee! We dont want to get SPOILED do we?! In a more serious vein, this is surely a funny way to feed an army! And we're way back from the first lines too. And we're WINNING the fucken war and advancing all the time! And we have absolute air superiority since months. Can you imagine what this sorry bunch would look like in RETREAT?! Dont even want to think of it. I cant help wondering whether our Brass is too fucken proud to ask the Brits and Americans to let us have some food if we cant supply it ourselves?

APRIL/30/ "Somewhere around PONT DU FAHS/T."

We were ordered during the nighth to move back to our previous position. It seems the Jerries are counter attacking and we might have to relieve the Tirailleurs which had heavy casualties. For the time being we slept thru the nighth without any further attractions. And war or no war this is the last fucken CAMERON in the Legion for THIS Foreign fucken Legionnaire! And listen to this. It was in the French newspapers that : "The 4ème Demi-Brigade barely arrived to the front in Tunisia from Sénégal where they victoriously occupied DJEBEL MANSOUR. and continued their victorious advance with

their indomitable calm!" Merde alors!-Lies, nothing but lies! The truth was that by the time we arrived at the Djebel MANSURE the Jerries were nowhere to be found or seen! They boarded their trucks and left. Not one shot was fired from either side. -

We just got our orders to move out @1800hrs, direction PONT DU FAHS where the Jerries are putting up stiff resistance, using all their remaining material and people resources.

MAY/1/ around PONT DU FAHS./T.

Last nighth we returned the third time where we were! Everybody is ADVANCING except us who are "advancing backwards!" At 1130hrs we stop and wait in the rain when the happy news arrive that coffee is going to be distributed! And by golly they are as good as their word! The "coffee" arrives which is cold brown water without sugar. As I said they dont want to spoil us and get fat and lazy, hey! After marching for another hour we stop for three hours rest. I take a nap untill we start marching again. After changing position three times we go into "position". Sofar our whole fucken war consisted of marching, not eating and not sleeping enough.

MAY/2/T.

In spite of the fact that we were never anywhere near a firefigth the whole crew is dog tired and knocked out, which is no wonder. We're marching day and nighth with a few hours of sleep, with the minimum of food and the little there is, is badly prepared and lousy. Breakfast is a memory of happier times, not even a cuppa coffee. It is an exception if we have more than ONE meal in 24hrs. The most infuriating and disgusting part is that there is absolutely NO excuse for this disgracefully inadequate logistic in a VICTORIOUS army which long ago established absolute air superiority with convoys running day and nighth without any problems. When the Brits are changing positions they get on their trucks and when they arrive in their new positions they disembark to hot tea and hot meals waiting for them. When we have to change positions we march and the next meal arrives next day - cold if at all.

MAY/4/T.

We're here since four days on the plain before PONT DU FAHS. Ahead of us is No Man's Land. Last nighth a recon patrol went out

@2300hrs but found nothing and saw nothing. The Jerries retreated ^{the} to next mountain chain. I dont think we're going to run into any serious resistance before TUNIS and BIZERTE. According to rumours the Brits are 15kms from TUNIS. Looks like the Jerries are conducting an orderly retreat and leaving nothing important behind. They certainly have all the food they need or want as we are finding wonderful canned stuff of all kinds in their abandoned positions. Sofar we did not find anything booby trapped either. You can bet your ass nobody will find a box of sardines in OUR abandoned positions.

I've ten more months to pull in the "legendary" Foreign fucken Legion IF all goes well! And if all goes well we'll try to enlist in the Eighth Army with the Brits. As far as the Foreign Legion is concerned - I've HAD IT! J'ai compris! (I understood). I heard it from the Lt. yesterday that the Brits chewed the ass out of our Brass for not having requested artillery and tank support for the attack of the Djebel MANSOUR. As it turned out we had again more luck then common sense as I said before, the Jerries having been gone by the time we arrived.

(Translators Note re IF ALL GOES WELL: There were THREE things I didnt know : 1.) that four days later I was wounded. 2.) That seven days later (on the 11th) the Armistice was ON in North Africa. 3.) That only British Subjects could join the Eighth Army.)

MAY/5/ Before the Plain of DEPIENNE, T.

Not everybody is starving in this outfit. We heard that our Captain is getting parcels from home almost daily with all kinds of goodies. The old tradition of the Legion: "Le Capitaine a bien mangé - le Compagnie peut bien marcher! (The Capitaine ate well - the Compagnie can march well!.) I wrote yesterday to Laci's wife and to Klein Erzsi to Agadir asking them to send us some food if possible. Question is how good or bad the mail is for non-officers in this whorehouse?

MAY/6/Plain of DEPIENNE/T.

yesterday afternoon the 1st Platoon was ordered to send out a recon patrol during the night to the small woods about 7kms from here to sniff out if it is inhabited by Jerries and if affirmative try to bring back some prisoners for interrogation. Sofar so good. Weapons to be taken should be submachine guns (STEN), lighth

machine guns and handgrenades. Sofar sogood. Now comes the sofar not sogood part which immediately proves to the initiated what a pathetic and sad bunch of sad sack amateurs we are when it comes to modern infantry tactic of the most basic kind: This recon patrol will be "heralded in" by artillery fire which in turn will be launched by the upshooting of a RED flare s.v.p.! All this reminds me of a Hungarian saw "catching birds with drums!" The way I learned it back home was that ALL recon patrols should be conducted with maximum stealth and surprise, night patrols specially so and if the taking of prisoners for interrogation is required all this is of course even more obviously needed. And what is more, all this is plain common sense every boyscout should understand. Yeah, but we are NOT boyscouts, hey! We're the "legendary" Foreign fucken Legion! The toughest fighting fucken outfit in the world- at least according to all the movies and books and more importantly according to our own well developed Public Relation apparatus. Well, after the above mentioned "softening up" artillery fire is lifted, the patrol arrives at the group of woods, having had more common sense than luck, without casualties, as it was found later the terrain they had to traverse was a minefield. Well after arriving at the woods they ATTACK with all the screaming and hollering. The Book suggests for such occasions 'going back to "the mists of antiquity". And of course hails of fire from the STEN guns and light machine guns and throwing of handgrenades in all available directions, which unfortunately included one between the legs of the patrol commander! Fortunately he was smart enough to specify to take ONLY offensive grenades, gotten from the Brits, which makes a lot of noise but very little harm as it is made of bakelite instead of metal. So Aspirant COLLIN got his balls concussed only but no other harm done to his future plans in family planning. After all this foreplay somebody had the brilliant idea of looking for Jerries. As it turned out in VAIN. No Jerries were seen or heard which was not all that surprising considering the RED flare considerably announcing the preparatory artillery fire, assuming that there WERE Jerries there in the first place which was doubtful as they didnt find any sign of the woods ever have

been occupied. After they looked in every nook and cranny and decided to go back home they realized suddenly that a whole bunch of them are missing! Now the new search was on for the missing and in all fairness to them this time they are more successful: they round them up with the exception of one lost soul. The Lt. leaves a Sgt. at the scene of this crime to bring him back hopefully alive. The rest of the Ghurkas start homeward bound after a nights work well done. The trouble was that it was still dark so they got lost of course and kept wandering about till 0500hrs when mother nature came to their rescue, sunup being righth on time. In case anybody wonders HOW do I know all this when I was not there? Elementary, one of the guys who was with me at the Peloton Two for sergeants was one of the participants and told me all about it in more hilarious details than I did here. As one good deed deserves another the above mentioned raiding party was awarded with a REAL breakfast when they stumbled home, something practically UNHEARD of around here. And I heard later, Aspirant COLLIN the Heroic Leader of the patrol was awarded the Croix de Guèrre with Palm, no less! Probably to compensate him for the indignity of having his balls concussed by friendly fire! (Translator's Note: perhaps this is a good time to explain the decorations in the French Army - and Legion - about which there seems to be a great deal of misinformation and misundersanding here in America. To take it from the top: The highest decoration for bravery is the Légion d'Honneur au Feu, which is NOT the same as all the other Légion d'Honneurs awarded to famous entertainers, artists etc, etc. The Légion d'Honneur au FEU is the equivalent to the Congressional Medal in America with both having the same disadvantage: they are usually awarded posthumously except for the officers who are likelier to get it while still alive. It is not a perfect world. The second highest decoration for bravery is the Médaille Militaire au Feu. This also have another variety which is awarded for 25 yrs of "Meritorious Service" also called in the Legion somewhat indelicately : "Médaille des abrutis" (Medaille of the Seniles).

(I dont know the American equivalent for either these two Medaille Militaires). The third highest decoration for bravery is Croix de Guèrre avec Palm. Equivalent is Medal with Oak Leaf Clusters. The fourth highest is Croix de Guèrre with SilverStar(what Cdt. Daigny donated for me).The fifth and last highest is Croix de Guèrre with Bronze Star. All other medals are what we call in the USA "bin der" medals except the special medals awarded by foreign armies.

JULY/11/FEZ.

I didnt write in the Diary for two months but there were mitigating circumstances - as follows.

On May 8 th at 0800hrs, the next day after the above described nighth patrol, we were loaded up on trucks, something what didnt happen since EL-AROUZA, and we were transported to DEPIENNE which is a small village with a few houses and a small railway station.

I unloaded my mortar and took up firing position not far from the the little station. About five meters from the mortar position there is an old Jerry built trench, were my folk can relax when otherwise not occupied. It is early afternoon, weather balmy and everything is quiet all around us. Not one shot was fired sofar from either side all day. We're all expecting the final chapter to be written in this story here in North Africa any day now.

I'm walking back to the mortar position for my personal gear to take it to the Jerry built trench when all of a sudden it feels like if somebody would have hit me in my back with a very firm pillow and I hear an ear splitting noise as if somebody would have ripped a giant canvas next to me: RRRRRRUTCH and I'm flat on my ass! I bough it! I take a breath very slowly and carefully and to my utter surprise, without problem! Not only that I can breath but there is no bloody foam coming from my mouth, so my lung must be still in one piece and working fine. However, I cannot move either my left arm or left leg, which is not so good, but it is not so bad either because if my spinal cord would have been hit I couldnt move my righth arm and righth leg either. I feel no pain sofar whatever. Gene Dondeynaz about whom I wrote earlier who is my Number One in the mortar team and a veteran of the Spanish Civil war comes running at full tilt and tells me that he is going

to get a brancardier (stretcher bearer). He comes back in no time and they put me on the stretcher and start for the First Aid Station when all hell breaks loose all over the place from incoming artillery fire and the the stretcher bearer promptly drops the stretcher. Gene just as promptly tells him that the next time he stops he is dead meat! The guy who knows Gene's rep as a "bagarreur"(brawler) promptly picks up the stretcher and they take off with me on the run to the First Aid station where my buddy from the Peloton, Medic Sgt. Boyardjian greets me and puts a dressing on my "incoming" wound which he says is not bigger than the nail on a little finger and hardly bleeds at all. He also gives me a shot of tetanus and what must have been a generous dose of morphin. By then Tibor arrived too, who was not far from me and reassures me that there cannot be much wrong with me from the way it looks. I give him my personal papers including this Diary and after that I dont remember very much too well thanks to the shot of morphin. I seem to remember that I've spent the nighth with hundreds of other wounded in a big hangar like building where bedlam was running amok due to the large number of wounded. I also remember being cold as there were not enough blankets to go around. Later they loaded me with some others in an ambulance which took us to a British Field Hospital. I heard later that my #4 Man in the mortar team had both of his legs cut off by the same 88 shell which donated my splinter too and bled to death in the ambulance, poor guy. His name was Hühner from Austria and Gene didnt like him at all I've no idea why? He was a nice quiet guy who caused no problems. I heard later from Tibor that I was extremely lucky for being one of the first wounded, and of course having Eugene in my team, because later due to the heavy artillery fire the unit suffered almost 50% casualties and the wounded had to wait a long time to be evacuated. The goddamn Jerries knowing that they are at end of their rope wanted to use up all the ammo they had left over.

By the time I got to the British Field Hospital I was pretty well aware what was going on but still had not much pain. A young medic came and told me in heavy Brit accent:oon pouty operation only. He gave me a shot of Penthotal IV and I was gone with the wind. When I was awake after the op one of the nurses came to ask me whether I would like a mug of hot chocolate and

and a piece of fruitcake as I dont have any temperature or any other problem ? Did she have to ask me TWICE? Not bloody likely! I cant praise too highly the care I got in that hospital in every sense of the word. They were real PROS and worked like a DOG! All of them. Everybody got shaved and washed every morning and the food was first class too for a Field Hospital. Unfortunately one of the assholes from my unit started to bitch the third day that he wants to be evacuated to Algiers because his wife is there. Having a good hunch what kind of care we will get in a French hospital I told the asshole to shut his fucken mouth and count his blessing but he kept on wailing about wanting to see his wife! So the Brits kicked us all out. I tried to stay but they told me that I've no temperature and as I'm in no danger and they need the beds for new wounded they cant keep me. So I thanked profusely to all of them for the wonderful care I got and was waiting for further developments. They loaded us into an ambulance and took us to a so-called "Military Hospital" at LE-KEF after passing thru BOU -ARADA. In the Military Hospital the traditional French whore-house reigned supreme of course. The food was lousy with the general care to match, supplemented with generous doses of morphin all around whether needed or not, to keep us out of their hair. I politely but firmly declined explaining that I dont have that much pain that I would need morphin, which was of course true. Yeah, but the Captain said all chestwounds should get morphin. So tell the Captain I dont want any, ça va? They left ^{me} alone after that. I'm stupid or something? With my fractured rib strapped up plus the hemothorax and the pneumothorax my breathing was nothing to be proud of anyway without the additional morphin to depress it even more. What the dummies should have done they didnt which was to puncture my pleura to get the blood out before it coagulated. Fortunately I was only four days in this so-called hospital before I was able to get myself evacuated to Algiers by a small POTEZ plane with three others, all of us on stretchers. It was one hell of a trip too. This little plane which was big enough for four stretchers only was bouncing about like if we would have been DRIVING on a bad road. I was taken to HOPITAL

MAILLOT in Algiers which is a BIG military hospital with BIG
 whorehouse to match it's size. They had neither medical supplies
 nor decent food either. The little sulfa and other medical supplies
 they had they kept it for the most serious cases. Fortunately
 my wound healed without any problems or complications but even
 so if I didnt literally grab a nurse to change my dressing, it
 was not changed for days. While in that little shit hospital in
 LE-KEF during the four days, I was neither shaved nor washed ONCE,
 while the Brits managed both every day in ^{their} FIELD hospital. Here in
 this big whorehouse if you couldnt wash and shave yourself you
 were out of luck too. Once I asked for more macaroni. The answer:
 il y a plus! (no more) I went out and there in the corridor was
 a big pot full of cold macaroni. Fortunately Laci's family are
 visiting me almost every day bringing yummy Hungarian food.

At long last I found out what actually happened to me.
 They made an X-Ray and the surgeon told me after reading it that
 there is a one cm square shell fragment sitting on the top of my
 RIGTH shoulder blade under the skin. It hit me over the LEFT shoul-
 der blade and went thru it fracturing my fifth rib. It ricocheted
 on the rib and traversing all the way to the top of my RIGTH
 shoulder blade, where it still sits today, WITHOUT touching or
 injuring ANYTHING important on it's way! The surgeon said he will
 never understand HOW this could happen? There is an old saw:
 Children, drunks and fools have a special god looking after them.
 He took off my dressing the first time and tried to puncture the
 pleura but as I expected the blood was already coagulated and could
 not get out a drop. He said it will be absorbed but will take a little
 time. To put it mildly. I asked him to let me see the wound. He said
 are you SURE you want to see it? It is very clean but it is not
 exactly a beauty. I told him I'm not the squimish type, so he got
 a mirror and told me to look. Whew! The surgeon in the British
 hospital didnt believe in debriding wounds half-assed! He took out
 all the track of the splinter down to the shoulder blade (scapula)
 leaving a wound about 10cm long, 2cm wide and down to the bone.
 As the surgeon said it was not "beautiful" but it was clean as
 could be and healed up just fine. -

for a month

After enjoying the TLC of Hopital Maillot^v I talked the surgeon into discharging me and let me stay with the family of Diamant Laci (Gedö) in their home in Algiers. He agreed and gave me 25 days of convalescence with the condition that I'll report every week for a looksee which I did.

One day while I was bullshitting with Laci's family in their apartment behind their beauty salon one of the girls came back to tell me that a Commandant of the Foreign Legion is looking for me! I go out and who is standing there? Commandant Daigny of my Bataillon! Was I speechless? To say the least. The first thing I asked him of course how did he find me? I was not in the 2^eme Bureau (Intelligence Service) for nothing he said laughing. I asked your frangin (bro) where are you and he told me. Go get dressed I want to take you out for an apéro(aperitif). Laci's family is floored of course as I'm. Caporal Fuchs is invited by his Bataillon Commander for an apéro?! WHO will believe me THIS in my outfit? So he takes me to a posh restaurant and after ordering two apéros he said: j'ai des bonnes nouvelles pour toi. (I've good news for you.) Both of you are nominated to Sergeant and you have a Croix de Guèrre avec Etoile en Argent. I think he must have heard my jaw drop because he had a laugh. Of course I thanked him profusely and also said that I see the nomination to Sgt. but WHY de Croix de Guèrre when I didnt even have the chance to fire ONE shot from my mortar? Enfin, you've been wounded and you have been a good Légionnaire all these years, c'est tout. - So what could I do than thank him again? After some more bullshit and finishing the apéro Daigny said, now you gotta run along because I'm waiting for somebody - wink. Daigny looks a lot like Garry Cooper plus enormous Gallic charm and panache added and has a well deserved rep as ladies man. So I thanked him again and went back to Laci's place where I'd to tell them the whole story of course and we had a drink to my nomination as Sergeant. Look Ma! I'm a Sergeant of the "legendary" Foreign fucken Legion! The little Jew from Sopron.

Four days before my convalescent leave ran out I got a telegram from Tibor that I should come back immediately otherwise

it cannot be guaranteed that we can stay together and be part of the Corp Expeditionnaire to Europe where the war was still on of course. How can I miss such a once in a lifetime opportunity?! So I hassle back to bel-Abbès and from there we came to FEZ. How long we'll stay here nobody knows for sure, but probably till the 14th of July and then we go to SEFROU to train with the new American weapons and gear we're really going to get soon this time. Nevertheless as I seem to have heard this same song before when we went to Tunisia, with our WWI vintage stuff, I will believe it when I see it. In bel-Abbès we met up with Dimamant Laci who is also in the Corp Expeditonnaire but I dont think he can come with us because he has only five more months left to serve.

JULY/26/BOULEMANE/MOROCCO

We got here this morning from SEFROU which is 70kms from here. The reason for coming here is that we're supposed to train on this rocky terrain for mountain warfare! And all this in ONE week s.v.p. I hope I can go to Agadir soon to visit Klein Erzsi from my hometown who is married to an Adjudant of the Legion who is very consideratly POW in Europe somewhere. I've ten days of "permission de detente"

from Tunisia, 2x6 days is due for every three months, and 18 days is due for Sénégal (one day per month). Whether I'll be able to get all this is another story because we have a new Companie Commander who seems to be bad news. According to the grapewine Monsieur le Capitaine Marquis de Montpézat a bastard and a former desk warrior to boot, with a pot belly yet, not the type who should be in the Legion and would have never gotten here in the Old Times for sure. He took an instant dislike to Tibor and me because we're jewish I assume.

JULY/28/BOULEMANE

I was sure that this filthy, potbellyed, antisemitic bastard of a buttfucked Vichy swine is not going to rest until he can put me in prison for some kind of trumped up charge and when it is a case of three GOLDBARS vs. one GOLDSTRIPE it is no contest. So, to get this story out of the way this is how Monsieur Le Marquis Enculé did it: The Bataillon came back from manœuvre two days ago with Cdt. Daigny in the lead on his horse. I happened to be on garde

duty for the Garrison and as Garde Commander I presented the garde, presenting arms, to Cdt. Daigny, dismissed the garde and saluted myself every Companie commander as they passed by, according to Regs. When Monsieur Le Marquis Enculé passed by at the head of the Companie I saluted him of course and he waved me over and when I got there he told me to be in his office next morning. I knew it is not for a friendly chat but I'd no idea what the fuck he might want from me THIS time? So I go to his office next morning and he starts snarling at me WHY didnt I present the garde for him when he passed by? I explain to this piece of shit of a poor excuse of an officer that according to the Regs the garde is presented only to the Bataillon Commander and the other Companie Commanders are only saluted by the garde commander which I did. He starts screaming at me whether I have the "culot" (nerve) to teach him the Regs etc etc? I tell him that I dont mean to teach him the Regs just quote them. He gets red in his fucken face and tells me that I've eighth days of prison "demande augmentation". I think I better explain this. The maximum prison time a Companie Commander has the righth to "donate" is EIGHTH Days. If he feels that the sin comitted deserves MORE, he can send the file up to the Bataillon Commander "demande augmentation" (asking for augmentation) or as we say in the Legion lingo: Demande beaucoup. If the Bataillon Commader thinks that the additional eighth days he is authorized to stick to it still not enough he sends up the file to the Colonel of the Regiment etc. - If the Companie Commander is not a pathetic asshole as Monsieur Le Marquis Enculé is, he is NOT going to send up a file to the Bataillon Commander unless he is SURE that the Bataillon Cmdr. is going to back him up otherwise he is going to look pretty stupid. If Mr. Le Marquis Enculé would not have been a piece of shit of desk warrior all his life he would have known that my "sin" by no stretch of the imagination warranted "demande augmentation" even assuming that I SHOULD have presented the garde. Being Sgt. the eighth days meant nothing more than not being paid for eighth days so I decided not to make a fuss about it. However two days later the clerck comes from Cdt. Daigny's office to tell me that he wants to see me. I've no idea what's up.

Go in, salute, Mon Commandant. Sit down Fuchs and tell me what is the story about this not presenting the garde to Capitaine de Montpézat he sent up to me for "demande augmentation". So I tell him the story adding that Monsieur le Capitaine is after me and my brother since the first day he took over the Companie. Daigny is no fool and he didnt have to ask why, knowing that this bastard was sent by Vichy. So Daigny tells me this: Fuchs I could take off those eighth days of course but I think it would do you more harm than good. The eighth days without pay you'll survive I'm sure. Oui Mon Commandant. Of course there is not going any ^{to be} "augmentation" from me. Bon, you can go Fuchs. Merci Mon Commandant. - I would have LOVED to see the face of this Vichy swine when my file came back to his desk from Daigny.

Rigth now what interests me is the Certificat de Hébergement from Erzsi which certifies that I'll have a place to stay during my leave. Today when I was again on garde duty Le Marquis Enculé told me :La Garde est mal ficelé! (the garde is not well put together.) Oui Mon Capitaine, and you can slide down my back and brake with your tongue when you reach my asshole, as they so delicately say in German.

About the American arms and other gear is nothing in sigth sofar. This needs a little clarification. The American uniforms arrived longtime ago but the Americans didnt authorize the wearing of the Holy Ceinture Bleu with their uniforms while the Legion High Command couldnt see the Legion without the Holy Ceinture Bleu! What our officers likewise couldnt stomach is the fact that the American uniform is the same for officers and enlisted men. (Egalité is fine - to a point.) At one of the Bataillons they wanted to take off the upper pockets from the enlisted men's uniform to distinguish it from the officers but the Yankees vetoed this too, god bless their democratic heart. We prefere to look like clochards (bums) in our rags but with the Ceinture Bleu! Needless to say the Americans are well aware of all this dumb skulldaggery so I'm not surprised that they are in no hurry to "include us in" the ranks of the fighting force. And I would not be surprised either if the latest rumour would turn out to be true which is that the whole Legion will be liquidated as not being fit to figth a modern war.

Yesterday it was in the papers that Mussolini resigned and General Badoglio took over and declared Fascism null and void.

JULY/30/BOULEMANE

We were on "manoeuvre" yesterday. Up the mountains, down the mountains but at least the lunch was OK. I was pooped out. Since I was wounded my left leg is still a little weak. The "manoeuvre" was tactically the same joke as usual, but what we got out of it was being dog tired, filthy, dusty and sweaty by the time we got back to our tents. This is very unpleasant as the water is in short supply being trucked in by tankers and there is very seldom anything left for personal hygiene beside drinking water. I guess they figure even if we could wash it wouldnt do much good as the next day there is another manoeuvre and we would get filthy dirty again, so why bother? I was lucky I didnt have to go on todays maneuver because the heel of my boot liberated itself and there is not a single spare boot in the whole Bataillon in this so-called army. A few days ago Laci had a similar episode when the sole of his boot fell off. The Lt. suggested that he sews it back on with wire! Laci said he is not a cobbler and if they want him to march they should give him another pair of boots! He almost went to prison for "Réponse incorrect". (wrong answer).

Yesterday Monsieur Le Marquis Enculé ordered the Compagnie to sing a marching song! Deadly silence followed so he ordered rifle drills and after that restarted the march and again ordered to sing, with the same results. When we got back to camp this piece of shit ordered more rifle drills before "Rompez" (dismissed). This filthy swine of a buttfucked Nazi bastard is hated by the whole outfit including the other officers who all ostracize him. I fervently hope that if we ever go upfront in Europe next time he comes with us. I'm a nice jewish boy and I've no intention to frag him but I've no doubt that at the first fire fight "line will form at the righth" to finish off this swine and not soon either. As if this piece of shit impersonating an officer wouldnt be bad enough the Lt. is a worldclass shithead too and a buttfucker to boot, whose "wife" is a blond creep he nominated to Caporal in Tunisia " for services rendered above and beyond the call of duty".(without vaseline?)

It was read in yesterday's Standing Orders that with the exception of Italians and Germans everybody should be liberated at the end of the five years service.

SEPTEMBER/17/FEZ.

I came back from Agadir yesterday where I spent the best month of my life with Erzsi, whose Adjutant husband is conveniently and considerately POW somewhere in Europe as I mentioned before. Lets "take it from the top" as musicians say because this story had more than it's share of little complications and difficulties. First of all Le Marquis Enculé was not inclined to give me all the thirty days of leave I had coming just as I expected him to do. Furthermore there was no official transportation available of any kind to get to Agadir. And the Companie clerck who was a nice kid, told me that according to Regs once the Pass is in my hand I'm considered being on LEAVE whether I can get away or not. I told him to let me worry about this part and just get the papers ready as fast as he can. I packed my German rucksack I "liberated" in Tunisia and lit out for the center of FEZ. We heard rumours that there are all kinds of convoys going up and down the coast and that the G.I.s running them are very easy going and let all kinds of soldiers to hitch-hike with them. So when I got to town I started to look for one of those monster GMC's they drove like crazy. Soon enough I saw one standing at the front of a bistro, where else? I went in and there was a lanky Yankee lifting one at the bar. I walked over and I knew by now that "Hi!" serves well enough for any kind of conversational opening and greeting in the same time. I offered to buy him a drink and started to explain with my lousy English plus sign language plus showing him my pass that I'm trying to get to Agadir to my girlfriend for my leave. His face lit up suddenly and said: GOTCHA! You wanna go fucky-fucky, righth? I admitted he was basically righth. He told me he is not going to Agadir but he can take me with him to the airfield where he is going and there I could probably hitch a ride with a plane going to Agadir. I was sure I did not understand him righth but he went thru the whole story again this time making signs with his hands like flying and vrooming the sound of engine, signalling the landing, saying Agadir, making signs with his arms of running pointing at me and making some obscene

universal signs with his fingers-laughing! Well there was no more place for misunderstanding, but I was still sure that this is too good to be true! We heard that the Americans sometimes let soldiers hitch rides with planes but nobody really believed this to be possible. So after finishing our drinks he drove me out to their airfield and took me to his Traffic Control Officer who fortunately spoke a bit of highschool French and was even more fortunately a friendly young Air Force Captain. He asked to see my Pass and looking thru his documents on his desk told me that I'm in luck there is a DC3 going to Marakesh tomorrow morning and I can go with them and from there I should be able to get a plane to Agadir. I still hardly could believe my luck! He wanted to give a cot in a tent but I asked him if he can show me the plane I'm supposed to take? He pointed to a DC3 and I told him I'm used to sleep on the ground and I'd prefer to bed down under the fuselage and not to miss the plane. He was amused but didn't mind. I didn't sleep a whole lot to tell the truth and in the morning one of the guys came for me and took me to the breakfast tent where I'd the first American breakfast of my life: pancakes, eggs, bacon, sausage with maple syrup, bread and butter and coffee! The maple syrup with sausage took a little getting used to but I admitted that maybe these Americans know something we Europeans DON'T! And I also found out at least one reason WHY they are winning the war? They eat WELL! So we all got on the plane and were waiting for take off when a highranking American Officer came thru the door and I thought : here goes MY flight and started to pick up my rucksack when the guy sitting next to me said : where the fuck are you going? I said this is an American Officer so surely he gets my seat. Sit the fuck down man! If the Traffic Control guy gave you this seat it is YOUR fucken seat. We're a democracy and this is strictly a first come, first served deal, man. And if the Colonel would be flying on duty he wouldn't fly this fucken plane in the first place. It took me a little while to digest THIS kind of democracy. -

So we get to Marakesh fine and I go to the Traffic Control Officer and tell him again my story. He looks thru his papers and tell me there is no flight to Agadir just now but the other side of the airfield is "your people" meaning the French Air Force and why don't

you try it there? I tell him that the French are not quite so informal as the Americans, that there is no way that they will let me fly on leave. He says, look what can you lose by give it a try? Hop in my Jeep and I'll run you over and lets ^{see} what happens? I'll wait for you and if it is no go we'll try to fix you up somehow. So he drives me to the Traffic Control Officer and tells me, this is YOUR people you speak the lingo go and talk to the guy. So I go in and there is a friendly looking young Air Force Captain and giving him a smart salute I say my piece: Sergeant Erwin Fuchs de la Légion Etrangère Mon Capitaine! He gets a big grin on his face and asks me what he can do for me? I take out my Pass and tell him I'm trying to go to Agadir for a leave to see my "petite amie". Sergeant, pour La Légion on arrange TOUT! (for the Legion we'll arrange EVERYTHING!) Sit down there and wait a minute. He starts typing out papers and when he finished he gives it to me with a grin asking : do you know what these paper says? No Mon Capitaine! It says, mon vieux, that you're a Special Courier with FIRST priority for the first seat on the FIRST plane leaving for Agadir, which is tomorrow afternoon. Not only that I thank him profusely again but I would even kiss his ass if he let me! Mon vieux, pour la Légion on fait TOUT! he tells me again. Well I'll goddamned! For the first time that it was an advantage to be a member of this Travelling Circus! They put me up for the night and next afternoon I get to Agadir. I enquire about the address of Erzsi and I lit out for it in haste, to put it mildly. We have a friendly reunion after all those years in Sopron and after a polite time I put my arms around Erzsi, being hornier than the proverbial goat, and after all those sex starved years in the Legion and a restricted diet of cat-houses, I say something like how'bout a little kiss Erzsi? And Erzsi promptly bursts into tears! Now, I had my share - or more - of being turned down by gals one way or other but never anybody bursts into tears and I really didnt know what is going on ? Erzsi tells me the story thus: I swear Erwin THIS aspect of the leave never even crossed my mind. As you probabaly know I was not the most sough after girl in Sopron having more brains than beauty and I was a virgin when I married my Adjudant husband of the Legion after

corresponding with him for three years. For him sex was a once a week affair taking five minutes and I never got anything out of it and could not understand to this day what was all the shouting about? I said, Erzsi I believe you of course every word and this is what we're going to do. I'll go for a walk and you make up your mind whether you want me to stay here or not? If you dont want me to stay here, please find me a cheap place where I can stay and I'll come by to visit you as an old friend from Sopron. But if you want me to stay with you, there is NO way that I can do it without sex. I'm young, I'm healthy and I'm sex starved after five years in the Legion what I'm sure you can understand. So I went for a walk and when I came back Erzsi was waiting for me with a big smile so I knew I was "in like Flynn". She said, I talked it over with my neighbor who is my best friend and she said, Erzsi if you send this boy away I'll never talk to you again - ever! It is just what the doctor ordered for you! - We're not going into all the intimate details of course but enough to say that Erzsi not only turned out to be a fast study but a very enthusiastic pupil to boot. When I told her this once she told me: I have to make up for lost time during your vacation Erwin. Time indeed fugit when one has a good time and soon enough the two weeks Le Marquis Enculé gave me approached very rapidly. And I got a brainwave. I wont let this Vichy swine rob me of my other two weeks vacation if I can help it. I though I figured out a way. I talked it over with Erzsi and we decided it is worth a try that I write to Cdt. Daigny and ask him to grant me the other two weeks. After I told Erzsi that Daigny was instrumental in our nomination to Sgt, and that he looked me up during the convalescence in Algiers, and that he took me out for an apero', Erzsi was convinced as much as I was that there is practically NO risk in writing to him and the worst that can happen is that ^{he} will turn it down. So we got together and composed a nice letter in which I explained that I've two more weeks coming but my Capitaine refused to give it to me etc etc. - Sure enough a few days later I got a Telegram from Daigny: ACCORDE-AMUSE TOI BIEN. Cdt. Daigny.- Erzsi agreed that this has to be celebrated immediately in a special way -which we did.

A few days later I got a letter from Tibor suggesting that I make the best of my vacation because when Le Marquis Enculé got a phone call from Daigny he damn near got a stroke screaming like a maniac that the minute I'll ^{be} back he wants me in his office from where I'll go straight to prison! He also told me that this latest little caper together with my hitching two flights on TWO different planes of TWO different airforces made me something of a legend in the company!

As the old saw goes everything good has to end and so my vacation with Erzsi had to come to it's end too, sadly but unavoidably. So we said a fond farewell, Erzsi shedding a few tears, sweet girl that she was and we agreed of course to keep in touch. (Translator's Note: there is nothing in the diary about the way I got back to FEZ but I know it was a combination of trains and hitching rides with American trucks. There is only one incident I remember clearly because it was unusual. I was standing at the road holding out my thumb for my next hitch when I saw and heard a tank coming from far of. First I thought surely a tank is not going to pick me up? But as it approached and seeing nothing likelier in sight I thought, hey, whattahell, if I got a ride from two airforces why shouldnt I try a tank? So when the guy standing in the turret came close enough I stucked my thumb out, and by golly the guy stopped, laughing like crazy asking: where you goin' buddy? I told him and he said he is not going that far as he is going to take "this baby" to the workshop for an overhaul but if I want to I'm welcome to climb up and hang on which I did. He let me off at a crossroad he said is very busy and I should get a hitch easily enough which I did. This got another big laugh of course when I got back.)

Monsieur Le Marquis Enculé was as good as his word and as soon as I got back he sent for me. By the time I got into his office his face was pretty red already and without missing a beat he started screaming at me like a madman wanting to know where do I got the "culot" (nerves) to initiate a correspondence with my Bataillon commander and on and on and on while I was fervently hoping that he will get a massive cerebral hemorrhage, also known as stroke, so that I could have the additional satisfaction of being instrumental in his much hoped for death. Unfortunately it did not happen, as I

said before it is not a perfect world. Le Marquis Enculé running out of steam dismissed me with: fout l'camp, espèce de petit salaud! (fuck off you little bastard!)

SEPTEMBER/18/FEZ

I've another 140 days of service and then "finita della commedia!" My aristocratic Hungarian friend Ziegler Guszti wrote me from Algiers where he is a civilian at this time that after presenting his "Certificat de Travaille" (work permit) he was demobilized, or more correctly "liberated" as we say, without problems. I hope Diamant Laci will be able to get us a similar document when the time comes for similar happy purposes. To pass the time I'm reading the old "Note de Services" here on the wall of the office. Here is a little beauty: "Le personnel de Garde doit être rasé de près et doit avoir les mains propres pendant la durée de service." (The Garde has to be closely shaved and has to have clean hands during the duration of the service".) Are they supposed to have clean hands ONLY when on garde duty? Just asking...

SEPTEMBER/25/FORÊT DE MARMORA/MOROCCO.

We arrived here four days ago and now just came back from what is called in the Legion Schwantzparade (penis inspection) and it was highly successful too, if that is the word in this context, eighty five people in the Bataillon solidly clapped up! The doctor is tearing his hair out but there is not a whole lot they can do about it. The routine in the Red Light District of FEZ is as follows: The Garde Commander is obligated to send everybody to the Cabine Prophylactique to "present arm" to the medic on duty. Diamant Laci was on duty there just last week and sent one of the guys to the medic who told him : fout l'camp! (fuck off) Laci asked him why did he sent the guy away without looking at his gear? No electricity! We're here since four days but nobody had the chance so far to wash as much as a hanky! There is only one well with water fit to drink and the nearest stream for doing the laundry is 5kms from here. Is any of our officers interested in it whether we have a chance for washing ourselves and doing our laundry? Nope, what they are interested in is that our tents are lined up and that we wear our Holy Ceinture Bleu. As I've only 140 days left I hope I'll survive somehow anyway.

SEPTEMBER/26/FORET DE MARMORA

Today during the "Visit de Pistage" (see Schwantzparade) they found seven guys clapped up in our Compagnie who were sent to the hospital. Le Marquis Enculé told the doctor not to send them to the hospital but treat them as outpatient because he needs them! So seven more guys can spread the clapp in the cathouses. We heard from the Garde Commander who was on duty last night that this buttfucked, potbellied Vichy swine came back during the night with a common whore in tow and gave order to him to call the garde out and Present Arms to him and his whore during the night and in pouring rain! What did this poor Compagnie do to deserve this piece of shit of a disgrace to the uniform as a Compagnie Commander? Where are you Mohammed now when we need you ? Even if drunk.

OCTOBER/9/AIN DIAB(nr.Casablanca)

We're here almost two weeks now but why is a wellkept secret so far. according to previous rumours we were supposed to put trucks together but then again what do we know about TRUCKS? Mules perhaps, but trucks? Two days ago we went to the shore for a swim and guess what happened ? The same sad story what happened in Sénégal. Anybody with eyes in his head could see that the time was not suitable for swimming because it was low tide and the sea was pretty choppy too but Capitaine Enculé said "ca n'fait rien" and ordered us in the water, but THIS boy was just sticking his toes in there knowing better. Our Adjudant, another board certified asshole this poor sadsack compagnie has more than it's share of, chimed in with his order: when I blow my whistle I want to see everybody in the water! And whistle he did. As two days ago ten guys were "restricted to barracks" for one dumb reason or other the guys had little incentive NOT to comply. A few minutes after entering the water three of the guys started to scream for help because they were sucked out to sea. One was saved but two others drowned and not even their body was recovered. This whole idiocy was nothing short of criminal negligence for which Capitaine Enculé should have been Court Martialled because the bathing season was longtime over being october, there were no more lifeguards on duty and even during the bathing season there are always a couple of drowning because the sea is very dangerous here.

If this hamster cheeked moron aka Capitaine Enculé aka Le Marquis De Montpézat absolutely wanted us to go in the water the very least he could have done was to wait till hightide. The hamster cheek part is not my imagination either. Lets face it this piece of shit is not one of the more attractive specimens of his race with his potbelly, his plastered down hair and his hamsterlike face. According to an old military saw: Commander c'est prévoir! (To command is to anticipate!.)

It looks like we are going to get some of the much anticipated American gear after all, because the first few half-tracks already arrived. These are lightly armored open top personnel carriers, with wheels in front and tanklike tracks in the back.

OCTOBER/14/AIN DIAB(nr.Casa)

We started the work we were brought here for. After hanging around for 1½hr they found for us something to do. We've to open big wooden crates containing trucks, to be assembled and "made ready" for use, which meant mounting the tires, fill the batteries with water etc etc. All this we were supposed to ^{do} correctly and well of course without ever having given any kind of explanation or instruction about it. Débrouillez vous! Every work party consists of one Sgt. and ten Legionnaires. The Sgt.'s job seems to be to say :allez-y! (Lets go) Needless to say the Sgt. doesnt know more about the job then the others but the poor bastard is responsible for getting the job done righth. After the trucks were supposed to be ready it was found out that most of the work was done backassward. As long as this is found out here it is no tragedy but if they find out at the front that the gastank was filled with water and the radiator was filled with gas it could get a bit hairy to put it mildly. What I wonder about who was the poor shithead who decided to give us this kind of work for which by no stretch of the imagination are we qualified.

OCTOBER/20/AIN DIAB

Tomorrow we're returning to the FORET DE MARMORA. How long we'll stay there we dont know. Where we're going from there we know even less. The only thing what interest me is that I've only 115 more days of service left. I got a letter from Erzsi and a very nice one too. She told me that I knocked her up, which is not exactly a big

surprise, and although she would have liked a second child, preferably a girl as she already had a boy - did I say that? - she doubted that her husband would appreciate it if and when she gets home from Europe so, she got an abortion. The more important news was: "you awaked my female instincts so successfully that I had to take a new lover shortly after you left, I hope you dont mind Erwin." MIND? I was prouder of it than I ever was of my Croix de Guèrre and told her so.

OCTOBER/21/FORET DE MARMORA.

Reveille @0600hrs depart @ 0735hrs. Yesterday we loaded all the weapons on the trucks. This morning we had to unload them because Capitaine Enculé insisted to have "Present Arms"! for him. This buttfucked piece of shit and megalomaniac lunatic should be locked up in a nuthouse instead of being in charge of a companie. As I said before: Mohammed where are you now when we need you?

OCTOBER/22/ F.de M.

The whole companie is restricted to barracks because two guys are supposed to have typhus. In the afternoon we've medical inspection and it turns out that half of the unit is LOUSY in more than one way. This is not exactly a surprise taking into consideration the facilities and possibilities for personal hygiene in this sad sack unit whose commander is a pathetic desk warrior moron who was never in charge of an active companie and does not have the remotest idea of the chapter in the "Manuel des Gradés": "Hygiene en Campagne". Or much of anything else what has to do with soldiering.

Since we returned here a week ago we never had the chance to wash as much as shirt because the pump of the only well is broken and the drinking water is brougth in by trucks. And we were doing pretty dirty work for ten days at that. Now of course all the officers are mad as hell, but not ^{one} of them would have thought of it to give us the chance to wash ourselves or do our laundry after we came back filthy dirty working on the trucks.

OCTOBER/23/F.de M./

Monsieur Le Marquis Enculé found the first opportunity to screw me after my little caper regarding my leave in Agadir. He gave me

" 8 jours arrèt simple " because I left the "punis de prisons" sleep after the sieste, which was authorized for the whole unit because we came back late from manoeuvre and told him so. "Are you again arguing with me Fuchs ?!" No Mon Capitaine. "Je sais que vous s'en foutter parce que vous etès libérable mais mois je vous fais casser avant que vous soyez libérable!" (I know you dont give a fuck because you're leaving but I'll bust you down before you are leaving"! Oui Mon Capitaine, and ^{as} we say so delicately in Hungarian, three horses cocks braided together UP YOUR ASS! - There are two possibilities: either this sad sack, buttfucked swine of a Vichy bastard does not know that NO Captain can bust down anybody in the Legion, and probably in the French Army either, or he thinks that I dont know this and for that - fat chance. As I explained before the maximum punishment a Companie Commander can do is give eighth days in prison. For anything more he has to send it up to higher authorities. And this cretin tells me HE will bust me down! Pathetic is the word.

This morning he made the following speach concerning the sad news from the medical visit that half of ^{his} Honour Garde Cie. is lousy:"Hière on a passé la visite de pistage. Je dis pas que tout le monde avait des poux mais ce qui n'avait pas des poux ils avait des morpions et ce qui n'avait pas des morpions ils avait la chaude piss. Si vous voulez pas vous laver vous même on va vous laver par force! Pour le momment tout le monde passera au coiffeur et fera couper les cheveux à ras! Et après midi on vas vous amener au douche!" (yesterday we passed the visit. I dont say that everybody had lice but those who did not have lice had crablice. And those who did not have crablice had the clap. If you dont want to wash yourself we will wash you by force) For the moment everybody will have his hair cut bald. And in the afternoon you'll be taken for a shower." - As they say in French : il vas pas/crever en étouffant! (There is no exact equivalent for this in English but it means "he has enourmous gall!") As for cutting the hair of Sgt. Fuchs bald, this will be done under ONE condition only: under the order of the Medical Services! And in THAT case, EVERYBODY's hair will be cut, officers included, because lice are very democratic critters, they dont respect officers anymore then the "other ranks". -

We had a very amusing and charming incident yesterday. We've a "Camp Instruction" here for the American gear which was inspected by two high ranking American Officers. One Cie. sent an antitank gun escorted by a Sgt. One of the American officers started to quiz the Sgt. about the gun who had to admit that he knows nothing about it as he came only as escort. Said the Officer: Are you saying that you're in the same Regiment and you need to send an escort?! If you cant trust each other how do you expect US to trust you? The French Colonel who was standing close by, didnt know on which foot to stand poor guy. Another American Colonel came to inspect one of our halftracks to find out what are we doing about their maintainance? Our poor morons thought that if our rifles has to SHINE for inspection the halftruck has to shine too of course! So they rubbed down the poor halftrack with engine oil till it SHONE! The American Colonel gave it one look and mumbled something like: OH ME GAWD! He proceeded to flip up the hood of the halftruck, took off his jacket, rolled up his shirtsleeve, took off the top of the oil filter and plunged in his hand pulling it out with the palm of his hand full of black sludge and all kinds of crap. looking more bewildered than angry he says: are you people using the oil filters as shithouse ? Deafening silence, while the American is shaking his head in disbelief and walks away disgusted. -

NOVEMBER/9/F.deM.

It was read in today's Standing Orders: As the new American uniforms are lacking the buttons of the Foreign Legion it is forbidden to wear them. However, shirts being too cold in the evening it is allowed when going out to town to carry the wool pullover in the musette and wear it underneath the shirt." The trouble is that the musette(side bag) had to be handed in weeks ago. The American weapons and other gear are acceptable, but the uniform without the buttons of the Legion are NOT worthy to be worn by a Foreign Legionnaire! You can say what you want, but whatever this outfit is lacking Esprit de Corps is NOT it!

NOVEMBER/12/ F.de M.

We had a big Défilé (Military Parade) to commemorate the 11th November(Translator's Note: No idea WHY the 11th is holy ?) There is strict order to wear our tin helmets(WWI vintage of course) whenever we ride in a motor vehicle. Nevertheless for the Defile, only the sacred KEPI BLANC would do. So we get into our new American halftracks with our Képi Blanc and horrors of horror!When we sit down the KEPI is not visible because the side armor of the hafrack was designed for fighting not for Defiles and so of course they are high enough to protect the heads of the people riding inside.

But HOW can we participate in a Defile without showing our Képi Blanc? Panickville! Both the day and the HONOUR of the Legion was saved by one quick thinking débrouillard who suggested to fold our blankets four times and SIT on it! Voilà! La Légion se débrouille!

While the Americans are painting their White Star on ONE side of their vehicles we are painting a square of 50cm on FOUR sides with the motto FRANCE d'ABORD and the Grenade of the Legion, after having changed their idea THREE times about the exact spots. -

NEVEMBER/17/F.de M.

This is my 28th birthday! And the last one in this Travelling Circus. I've 87 more days to serve. It doesnt look like anything important or interesting could happen meanwhile.

NOVEMBER/19/F.de M.

The American gear is arriving drip by drip. We know from the grape-wine and from seeing one, that the complete kit for soldiers include everything but everything a soldier might need or want from underwear and uniform to fountain pen and wristwatch. "Money is no object!"

DECEMBER/23/Nr.PORT AU POULE.

We're here since ten days for exercise with live ammo. Apart from that, it is constantly raining and we're constantly starving. My mortar team is also supposed to take part in live ammo firing. Tibor got himself transferred to the machine gun platoon as soon as the American .30 Brownings arrived, so he is in his element again and can hardly wait to let lose a few belts full during the street fighting exercise, he is supposed to provide covering fire, for a rifle platoon "impersonating" house to house search. - I had a very unpleasant

confrontation with Capitaine Enculé' when it was my turn to fire my mortar. (Translator's Note: I think I'll have to digress a bit to give a short explanation for the un-initiated what is a mortar all about otherwise the following story wont make much sense. I've no powerful hankerin' after all these fifty some years to get back into the subject ^{of} gunnery and ballistic and I promise I'll make it as short - and as clear - as I can.

So listen up children: A mortar is called in the trade a "low velocity/high trajectory weapon", used for targets one cannot see from the firing position because they are hidden behind hills, woods, buildings etc or they might be sitting in a "hole" big or small. The technic of HOW to sight in on these "invisible" targets we will mercifully skip because it is irrelevant to my story which follows. What is relevant, is the sad fact that a mortar shell fired from the tube of the mortar is a very unreliable piece of merchandise, exactly because it is a LOW velocity/HIGH trajectory weapon, unlike the stuff fired from HIGH velocity/LOW trajectory weapons like rifles, pistols, antitank guns, and all the artillery shells of any calibers. And the LOWER the velocity of the mortar shell is, the more unreliable it gets. Let me explain why. A mortar shell is not "driven", propelled, like any other round or shell whose empty cartridge stays in the "breach" of the weapon from which it was fired. The explosive charge which drives the mortar OUT of the tube is upsticked the mortar shell's ass. Literally. It looks like a cartridge used for hunting rifles and if that alone is not strong enough to propel the mortar to it's objective - or more exactly to the apogee of it's trajectory - there are additional charges sticked between the fins of the mortar. - This is important to remember because as I said the closer the target the less explosive you stick up the mortar's ass and the SLOWER the mortar will climb up on it's trajectory. Now: the second element what can influence the up-climbing of the mortar on it's HIGH trajectory is WIND. While the influence of WIND is negligible for LOW trajectory HIGH velocity shells, for the HIGH trajectory/LOW velocity shells like mortars, WIND is a real BITCH, specially as it is impossible to anticipate it and therefore counter it's effect, except to assume the

always the "worst case scenario". Now lets see what happens if and when the mortar shell gets caught in a HEADWIND on it's climb to it's apogee of the HIGH trajectory. AS I said the higher it climbs the slower it climbs and the slower it climbs the BIGGER the influence of the HEADWIND is going to be of course. When the mortar reaches the apogee of it's trajectory, theoretically for a split second it's velocity becomes ZERO, before it keels over, being designed topheavy, and FREEFALLS to it's target using just gravity for this final phase of it's existence. The maximum range of a 60mm mortar is 1000 meter achieved by elevating the tube to 45° and upsticking the maximum charge it's ass. The minimum ALLOWABLE range is 300 meters achieved by elevating the tube to 75° (if memory serves and NO I'm NOT going to dig out my notes, thank you.) and upsticking the basic cartridge ONLY it's ass. The 300m minimum range was chosen because although a 60mm mortar is small it's a vicious bastard "generating" hundreds of little razorsharp splinters, all of wich are very unhealthy and unfriendly up to 150 meters (if I remember correctly.) To make a long story shorter nobody but a board certified moron or lunatic would want to call down mortar fire -of ANY calibre - at a target 150 meters away only.

To understand the part of the story AFTER I was ordered to fire my mortar at 150 meters I have to explain something else about my way to become a mortar man. After Bibi seduced me to join his mortar team I was sent to a course to another outfit. Bibi told me not to worry he knows the Captain in charge and he is a "gelungene Kerl" (a funny guy) and I'll have no problems. So I was sent to see him after I arrived and he said that he saw my papers and it seems that I was a reserve officer in the Hungarian army, hein ? Oui Mon Capitaine. And you learned about mortars, hein? Oui Mon Capitaine. What kind ? 81mm Stokes-Brandt Mon Capitaine. Oh, that big monster? Oui Mon Capitaine. So, it doesnt look like I've to teach you a whole lot Sgt. Fuchs do I (grins)? Probabaly not Mon Capitaine. Bon, alors fout l'camp. (good, so fuck off.) I knew righth away Bibi was righth, this guy is not going to be a problem. One afternoon I hang around in the court and he comes by, riding his horse carrying a long pole with a bayonet tied to it's end. Quo vadis Mon Capitaine? Laughs, today I'm

going to be a Bengal Lancer! I heard there are some wild boars around here and I want to try to stick one so we have something fit to eat. Bonne chance Mon Capitaine! Needless to say I passed the course with "effortless ease".

Meanwhile back at the range: Capitaine Enculé walks up to me and pointing his aristocratic fingers at a target marked 150 meters tells me to fire my mortar at it! I try to explain to this cretin that according to the Regs I'm not allowed to fire at anything closer than 300m because if the mortar gets into a headwind it can fall back on us. TA GUEULE! I give you order to FIRE! (SHUT UP!) AS I said before when it is a case of three GOLD BARS against one GOLD STRIPE, it is no contest! So I fire - and hold my breath! I didn't have to hold it long either! Mortars when they freefall doesn't whistle like artillery shells but sound something like FLUFLUFLU the air passing thru the fins. So I hit the deck and everybody does too and a sharp CRACK, the shell hitting a rock not far behind me but thank gawd does not explode! the Bengal Lancer, who is not far from me with his heavy weapon platoon comes running and hollering, Fuchs what did you DO? Not only that you almost killed ME which is bad enough but you almost killed you frangin (bro) too. Que ce que tu a FOUTU ? (What the FUCK DID you DO?) I point out the target 150 meters away and tell him that Capitaine De Montpézat gave me ORDER to fire on it even after I tried to explain that I'm not supposed to. WHERE is he? He rushes over to him, grabs him by his arm pulling him out of earshot and starts reading the moron the riot act and Capitaine Enculé gets a VERY red face and ears to match, by the time the Bengal Lancer just leaves him standing there - no salute, nothing. - Tibor arrives of course running too and wants to know what the fuck I think I was doing etc? We agree on a few choice Hungarian expressions what would describe more or less adequately Capitaine Enculé's mental stability and his genealogy. He tells me that in the afternoon it is his show!

So I watch Bro ripping thru a bunch of paper targets shredding them to bits. He comes back swaggering with the Browning on his shoulders and cartridge belts crisscrossing his chest à la Pancho Villa, grinning like a loony. Adjudant Chef Liebschitz came to tell me, Your Bro sure gave them a helluva show. You can see he did not learn

his métier HERE!(job) - I ask him later how the Browning is shaping up against the Schwarzlose and he says it is not a bad gun but he does not like the pistolgrip on it as it is hard enough to control a machinegun at full auto even with two grip much less with a pistol grip. I'm inclined to agree with this and it seems that most of gun designers agree too as almost all the machine guns have twogrips.

This filthy piece of Vichy shit and goldplated bastard, Capitaine Enculé transferred me from the mortar team after he almost got me killed a bunch of people thru his own dumb order. I always knew he is a filthy Nazi bastard but now he proved what I also suspected since a longtime which is that he is a complete military IGNORAMUS and MORON! Nobody who knows the most basic thing about mortars and gunnery would even dream of calling down mortar fire at 150 meters! I wonder what kind of strings his fucked up aristocratic family must have pulled to get this cretin graduated from St. Cyr? A few days after this caper the clerck from his office who is my big buddy since I came back from Agadir, slipped me a piece of paper in my hand saying that it was written by the Bengal Lancer into my Cahier de Chanson after I finished his course. Here it is: "Doit faire un excellent chef de pièce, connait parfaitement son métier." (should make an excellent mortar team chief, knows his job perfectly.) So it looks I'll survive the remaining 53 days without any problems Capitaine Enculé's opinion not withstanding! -

JANUARY/1/1944/PORT AU POUL(Maneuvre)

Happy New Year to me! Truth to be told, and I'm 'tolding', I'd little illusions to celebrate the New Year of 1944 and I came pretty close at Depienne not to. That I'm up to here with the "Legendary" Foreign Legion hardly needs repeating in the New Year. It is conceivable that our new Colonel Lambert might improve things somewhat after Colonel Viar, as according to the old Russian saw the fish always starts rotting at the head, but then again it is probably a situation of "there is no way to go but up" as the old song said. I've another 43 days and then comes The Chapeau de Paille as we say here. (straw hat) The 5th Demi-Brigade is making big preparations for it's depart for France! Bonne chance les gars!(good luck boys!)

JANUARY/17/1944/SIDJbel-ABBES/CP2

This is the "Beginning of the end" and the closing of the full circle folks! We left the Regiment de Marche Légion Etrangère (RMLE) on the 16th. Up to this morning we were at the CPI (Companie de Passage 1) (compagnie of transit 1) and came over here to CP2 today. The most awkward episode of our separation from the RMLE was our visit to the office of Commandant Daigny. He called us and made a half hearted attempt to persuade us to re-enlist. He knew of course only too well that we had enough of the Legion but he had to go thru the formalities. We thanked him for all his kindness toward us since the days we enlisted in Marseilles, for our nomination to Sergeant and I specially thanked him of course for extending my leave in Agadir and looking me up during my convalescence. Then we shook hands, saluted and that was it.

We were officially informed by The Management that we'll be sent to an international camp in the Sahara because having been of Hungarian nationality before we enlisted we'll be considered the same, once we became civilians again, our five years in the Legion and Honorable discharge notwithstanding. Theoretically they might have a point but they knew it and we know it that it was a filthy trick to pull on us and on a lot of others in the same boots. Later we heard that the real reason was that the Legion was desperate for people for the NOUVELLE ARMEE of Europe and for NCO's with good records the more so, and they figured, wrongly, that if they put us in an international camp we'll enlist. Fat chance! It made us only even more disgusted. Hardly anybody re-enlisted.

We're probably going to stay here at the CP2 till our five years are over then we go to the international camp in Colomb-Béchar. I assume we'll spend these three weeks here uneventfully enough with a lot of our old buddies we knew and met before in various places and times during the five years who are now in the same brodequin (boots) we're.

The most important thing to do now is to acquire a "Certificat de Travail" (work permit) proving that we'll have work waiting for us after our liberation. Coca is here too from our hometown,

planning to open a jewelry store here in Sidi-bel-Abbès. Having spent most of his five years in the Regimental Music here in bel-Abbès he had more than enough chance to make contacts with civilians and as for talent he always had wonderful hands.

We have a saying in the Legion for those who spent most of their service in the offices of the administrations or other places in Sidi-bel Abbès, he is entitled to the Médaille Place Carnot, Place Carnot being the center of bel-Abbès.-

We met a French (Corsican) Adjutant who is serving with the British Commandos. Tibor didn't waste any time to interview him about the possibility of getting us in there. He promised he'll enquire but so far we didn't hear anything. We're not sure what we could or should do apart from getting out of this outfit.

JANUARY/24/1944/S.b.A./CP2

We're here since eighth days. All we do is wait. We got a phone call from Diamant Laci advising us that if we could get to Algiers a Certificat de Travail would be no problem. I saw an ad in an Oran paper looking for draftsmen. Ziegler Guszti is also in Oran perhaps he could also help.

FEBRUAR/1/1944/S.b.A./CP2

We were in Oran for two days to try to get a Certificat de Travail and we were lucky to meet a Hungarian architect (Pinter Pál) who was kind to give us one although it was more pro forma than a firm promise for work, but it does what it is supposed to do: proves we have work waiting for us. Ziegler Guszti is working in his old métier as bank teller at the Banque National. A few days ago we were called to the BSLE (the Intelligence Branch of the Legion) trying to persuade^{us} again to re-enlist. Fat chance. It is obvious that they are very hard up for people because almost nobody is signing on. In a couple of months^a all the Spanish political refugees are "libérable" and it is safe bet that not one is going to re-enlist. What makes them even more precious is that the largest number of them are drivers and the only kind of drivers the Legion has plenty of, are mule drivers. Needless to emphasize that the reluctance of all these people to re-enlist is a case of the proverbial "chicken coming home to roost" and with a vengeance too. When the Spanish

refugees enlisted in the first place it was because they were given the "choice" of starving to death in the international camps or join the Legion. As we all know hunger is a powerful persuader so they enlisted. When they got to Marseilles, in the same time with us, they were treated like dirt. "Bande de Bolsheviques", "Armée des Espadrilles", nobody called you to come here etc etc. True nobody CALLED them but their stomach did. Now when they are needed badly they kiss their asses, but they have long memories these hombres. Apart from putting us in international camps now they use every dirty trick in the book they can think of. If somebody lost his paper and cannot prove that he is of Allied nationality they say they don't have to believe them and they are sent to an international camp. If somebody is writing to his Consul and is not smart enough to mail it outside the letter gets "lost". If somebody handed in his papers when enlisted he is told that all the papers were lost when the Germans occupied France. A boldfaced lie as everybody knows that ALL the files of the Legion were transferred to Sidi-bel-Abès when the war broke out. They tried to pull this cute trick on us too but we politely reminded them that all our papers were HERE in 1940 when we applied for our Rectification d'état Civil. They promptly "found" our papers. Rectification d'état Civil is a procedure special to the Legion. After one year service you have the right to establish your REAL name in case you enlisted under a false one or prove that the name under which you enlisted is the REAL one, as we did. You have to get a document signed by two people who knew you before you enlisted bearing your picture and signed by the two people and notarized. - We got it done of course as soon as it was possible. (Translator's Note: If you want to read about all this dirty little sulkdaggeries in more detail consult Chapter 23 A FRAGILE UNITY in Douglas Porch's monumental definitive book about the Legion, THE FRENCH FOREIGN LEGION. (Harper/Collins)-

FEBRUARY/2/1944/S.b.A./CP2

We were called to the Company Commander of CP2 who gave us a big morality sermon why we should re-enlist! (I hope you won't hold your breath Mon Capitaine while standing on one foot!) They see big jobs ahead for the Legion! Big posters on the walls proclaim: A LEMPIRE

IL MANQUE L'INDOCHINE! And guess WHO will get it back? "LA LEGION EST APPELE PAR EXCELLENCE POUR RECONQUERIR CET PRECIEUX COLONIE POUR L'EMPIRE!"

And as they're desperately in need of people they are not exactly chosie either. the German and Italian POW's from Tunisia are welcome! Here is one charming case: One German Legionnaire with eigh^{an} years service went back to Germany where he was put in^{an} internation camp first, being an ex Legionnaire. From there he was sent to Russia first and from there to Tunisia where he fough^t against the Legion! (Legio Patria Nostra). He was taken prisoner by the Legion and then re-enlisted the second time in the Legion! (Legio Patria Nostra again ? Why not ? As the song says : Love is more wonderful the second time around!) Whew! Talking about being FLEXIBLE!

FEBRUARY/11/1944/ S.b.A./CP2

Well, folks this is a date which requires somebody who is a little better writer than I'm to put into words my emotions and how do I feel on this sacred day when I became a CIVILIAN again after five years in the "legendary" French Foreign Legion aka Légion Etrangère aka Légion Etrangère between the cognescenti. (EtranGLère is a play on Etrangère meaning STRANGLING) In the morning we were issued a set of cvilian clothes called in the Legion Clémenceau after the famous French statesman. No man ever wore an ill fitting suit with more deligth, pleasure, relief and joy.

FEBRUARY/12/1944/COLOMB-BECHAR

We left Sidi-bel-Abbès yesterday and going thru SAIDA where I "enjoyed" bootcamp five years ago, we arrived here today afternoon. Colomb-Béchar is called the gateway to the Sahara. From the town itself I havent seen anything sofar as we didnt have the chance to leave the camp. When we reported to the office of the camp the clerck asked us whether we have a Certificat de Travaille?(work permit). We handed it over and after checking it he said: Je me demande pourquoi on vous a envoyé ici a Colomb-Béchar? (I wonder why did they sent you here?) Good question! Obviously he was not into the REAL reason for it. (Translator's Note: please consult the definitive work about the Legion by Douglas Porch: THE FRENCH FOREIGN LEGION Ch.23) He said he'll make a Demande de Libération

to the relevant authorities and we'll be able to leave. How long this will take he didnt know. A Hungarian guy is introducing himself (Pokorny Ferenc) and wants to know if we know Magyar Laci and Diamant Laci ? We assure him that we know both of them a lot longer than he does.

FEBRUARY/13/1944/COLOMB-BECHAR

Although we're here only since two days it is already obvious that the same kind of whorehouse reigns here also. The food is "weak" and it is distributed by the political internees who see to it that their own buddies gets the mostest and the bestest and that we ex-Legionnaires get the leftovers. Even former Legionnaires with sixteen years of service with their French wife's are in the same camp as the political internees. "La Belle France avec gratitude à ces Légionnaires!"

FEBRUARY/15/1944/BIDON II

Bidon means can, water bottle, and this used to be in the old times a watering station in the Sahara. It is used now by the Charbonnage which is a coal mine. What kind of work we'll have to do we dont know yet. We were hired as technical draftsman with a starting salary of Fr.90/day. From this they are deducting Fr.57 for food and lodging in a dormitory and Fr.8 for "clothing allowance." This leaves us with the munificent sum of Fr25 for "wine and women"! Obviously they are careful not to spoil us after the Legion. All this would be OK if we are not going to stay here long for which we are little inclined after five years in the Legion.

FEBRUARY/16/1944/BECHAR-DJEDID/BIDON II

We started our work as "technical draftsman". Needless to say we have no intention to acquire hernia. Fortunately the food is here OK both in quality and quantity as we eat in the same canteen as the regular staff of the Charbonnage. The other political internees are as international as the Legion was. There is an Austrian artist painter, an Italian mechanical engineer etc etc and all these are working for peanuts of course. Needless to say The Management is pulling the same tricks as The Management of the Legion did: whenever some dignitaries came to visit we ate like kings. Previously we had a Commitee visiting from the British Royal Engineering Corp

looking for volunteers and took some of the best guys. After that they promised us the sky to stay here. Later they found an easier and better way: they fixed it up with the French authorities so that nobody was allowed to volunteer and leave anymore of the political internees. (For all these shenanigans consult the above mentioned book of Douglas Porch)

Needless to say that we fervently hope that our Document of Demande de Libération will arrive soon and that we dont get stuck in this dump as the above mentioned others. With all these skilled people working for peanuts they fixed up this Charbonnage pretty well. They have their own bakery, their own electrical plant, swimming pool, showers, canteen etc. What is lacking is any kind of entertainment. They dont even have a library. The only "entertainment" available is the same as in the Legion: playing cards and getting drunk. We were told today by the Boss that we'll get some other kind of work to do because they need skilled draftsman not beginners like us. This is not all bad news as the more useful you are the more difficult it is to get out of here. They are no slouches to find excuses for NOT letting you to leave.

MARCH/4/BECHAR-DJEDID/BIDON II

We were visited yesterday by a Capitaine of the BSLE (the Intelligence Branch of the Legion) who tried AGAIN to persuade us to re-enlist! He promised us the proverbial sky and a few stars. For a start we would be immediately promoted to Sergeant Chef and when we mentioned our problems with Capitaine De Montpézat he promised that we can pick any unit we want. When we said: "thanx but no thanx" he realized that he is wasting his time and left. We heard that he didnt have more success with the other ex-Legionnaires either.

MARCH/8/1944/B.D.-B.II

Today we were advised by a wellmeaning employee to ask somebody in Algiers to be allowed to go on leave. We sent a telegram to Laci immediately of course. Meanwhile Tibor picked up some lice and out of loyalty I picked up some crablice, both varieties originating probably from the bedding.

MARCH/14/1944/B.D.-B.II

This is another important date with unforeseeable consequences. We enlisted in the British Alien Pioneer Corp. This is, folks, our THIRD army no less! And we "volunteered" for all three! This might say something about the much talked about and written about "free will"! For the Hungarian Army we volunteered to enlist before our turn came - in Hungary draft is a tradition - to be able to study in Checkoslovakia textile design, for which we needed a passport, which nobody could get unless served in the army first. For the Legion we "volunteered" to get away from Hitler's concentration camps. And now for the British Army we "volunteered" to get out of THIS internation camp. What the consequences of this enlistment in this third army will be, as we used to say it in the Legion: QUI VIVRA-VERRA! (those who will live-will see!) We enlisted "Pour la durée des évènements"- Conditions: Sans conditions." Our reason for enlisting was basically twofold 1)nobody could fore-see howlong we'll have to sit in this dump. 2.) As the war was still on we felt that as Jews we had to do our part in defeating the filthy Nazis.

MARCH/15/1944/B.D.-B.II

We got a telegram from Laci this morning advising us that he was unable to get us a leave. Somuch the better as this would have made things only more complicated under the circumstances. The exact time of our leaving this dump is not known yet. We were told it will take about three weeks to fix all the "formalities." We heard some rumours that the British Eighth Army has a Jewish Legion. If it's possible we'll try to get in there.

AMRCH/23/1944/B.D.-B.II

We were supposed to leave tomorrow but it was postponed till next monday. We're very anxious to say the least to get out of this goddamn dump and write an end to this in-between period.

MARCH/26/1944/B.D.-B.II

I've read it in the papers that Hungary declared war on Germany and was occupied by the Germans but Kállay was leading a resistance. It would be fun to go back to Hungary with the Brits to fighth the fucken Nazis!

MARCH/28/1944/BECHAR DJEDID/BIDON II

Tomorrow morning we're leaving this fucken dump for COLOMB-BECHAR.
When are we leaving from there we dont know yet.

APRIL/5/1944/ALGIERS.

We're in the garrison of the British Alien Pioneer Corp in Algiers.

EPILOGUE.

Perhaps it is fitting to sum up the pluses and minuses of this whole HEGIRA. (Hegira="A journey undertaken to escape from a dangerous situation" (Websters)

There can be little doubt that joining the Foreign Legion when it was still possible to get out of Hungary, most probably saved our lives when the majority of our friends perished either in the Russian labour companies or in the concentration camps of the Nazis. Another positive aspect of these five years were the first hand experience which proved what I used to say: A man could get used even to hanging, if he could hang long enough! Another positive aspect was seeing a bit of the world and meeting all kinds of people and by this I dont mean only different nationalities and "races" but people of different backgrounds, education and "classes".

I dont think I ever was anything like a "racist" - nobody in my family was - but if I would have been, these five years would have certainly cured me of it. There are "nice" people and rotten ones everywhere and no nation, "race" or religion have monopoly on either category. The Nazis and the Germans killed some six million jews, including all my own family, but ironically enough if you remember what I've written, you must have noticed that almost every time somebody has shown special kindness to my brother and myself in the Legion it was a German and usually a former German Officer at that. I've little doubt if Sergeant Chef Schatz would not have taken on himself to get my brother to the hospital in Sénégal he would have died of peritonitis and almost did even so.

I also found out that being "lowborn" or "highborn" does not determine the parameters of a human being's inherent decency or villainy. My Number One guy of the mortar team was Eugene Dondeynaz who certainly came from modest backgrounds but he risked his life, and probably saved mine, when he ran for a stretcher bearer and although all hell broke loose by the time they arrived

this did not kept him from running thru a curtain of steel with my stretcher to the First Aid Station.

Sergeant Palotay was a Hungarian aristocrat, as the letter "Y" at the end of his name indicated, and he was "An Officer and a Gentleman" of the first order. On the other end of the scale was Capitaine Le Marquis De Montpezat who might have been highborn but he was nevertheless a lowlife and not only an antisemitic Vichy swine, which would not have necessarily disqualified him from being a competent officer, he was surely not the only one of the breed in the Legion, but he was also a villain, a scoundrel and blackguard who was completely devoid of the smallest modicum of human decency, utterly lacking in shame who thought nothing of coming back to the camp in the middle of the night with ^a common whore in tow and insisting that the Garde Commander wakes up the guard to Present Arms for him and his whore. I had the dubious pleasure and honour of serving in three armies and ^{never} did I have an officer worth a skunk's fart who did not have at least a modicum of respect, and probably affection too, for his men.

What are the minuses of these five years? It can be perhaps best summed up by quoting the author of the before mentioned book THE FRENCH FOREIGN LEGION p490, Douglas Porch : "It could escape the attention of no one that the Legion had been left to molder on the sidelines of the greatest conflict in world history." Out of the five years with the Legion my own unit, the 4ème Demi-Brigade spent all of FIVE WEEKS on the front. And by the time the others got to Europe the show was pretty well over there too. -

What I could never understand, nor forgive, to The Management is how did they ever decide to misuse, squander and fritter away all the available potential fighting force of all the Jewish and Spanish political refugees, seething with hatred and looking for a chance for revenge by fighting the Nazis. And if it is admitted that few of the jews had army background literally ALL the Spanish guys were battle hardened veterans who would have been ready willing and able to join the fray at short notice. Whether this was the result of sheer ineptness and stupidity, which was never in short supply as we saw, or a conscious decision trickling down from The High Command, I cannot know, nor do I care, because the result was the same. We all "moldered" on the sideline.