



## **The resistance Museum - General Budet**

Voiceover by Lorna Farrington

- Jon            How much of a deterrent to the actions of the maquis was the knowledge that the Nazis would be very likely to vent their wrath?
- General B    There were two sorts of *maquis*, two sorts of action. There was the first, earlier, obedient to the Communists, it was the FTP. For them it was immediate action, killing a lone German etc., even if there was a risk of hostage taking. On the other hand, the other type, the Secret Army, part of this local *maquis*, which preferred to wait, to prepare in order to take on the Germans face-to-face. That's what took place here. Two different tendencies, the latter to avoid the risk of reprisals, the other for immediate and direct action. There were advantages for both; I certainly don't want to condemn either. There were just two different ways.
- Jon            What kind of experience do you hope visitors have and what memories would you like to think they take with them?
- General B    Jean Robert wanted a museum. First of all, he made sure there were written texts, so I wrote a book. Then he wanted there to be a film, so a film was made, and then the idea of a museum came up. So as there would be a museum, he made a bequest. We inherited an *association* of former resistance fighters when Jean Robert died. With his bequest, we were able to buy the property here. We gave the property to the local commune, which then was transferred to CCKB (Comité de Communes de Kreiz Breizh), and from that point onwards, the public authorities and local politicians took up the project. My role, as with others, Pierre Ziegler for example, former resistance fighter and now president of the *association*, was to help the local authorities to bring about this museum.
- Jon            You live, I understand, in the immediate vicinity of the museum. Do you have a special affinity with this area?
- General B    Yes, I live near the museum, 2kms away, because it was my family's residence. My career has sent me, during several years, to travel the world, and when I left active service, I chose to live at La Baule. But I had the habit of coming here, because part of the family property came into my possession quite quickly, and I moved here. Then, when my mother died (she lived here still), I lived here for most of the time, because it was where I

grew up, spent my childhood. It's a tranquil place, helpful for reflection, and writing, as I began to write. Of course, I'm often away, but naturally I return here. Moreover, when the museum was being set up, I was often sought out, so it was just as well that I was around. Now that I'm here, I'm staying!

Jon This museum is situated in a magnificent spot bordering the lake here. It's a very beautiful and peaceful place. Was this tranquillity deliberately chosen to point out the contrast with the horrors of war/

General B This was the centre of the battle by the maquis de Plésidy, of Coat Mallouen. In the wood opposite, the soldiers were there. They arrived there, alongside the lake, coming in well-trained groups, from Guingamp. In fact it was the fighters from Guingamp, the young men from Guingamp, who came to fight, right there. At the start, they were 200-strong. They set themselves up in the woods opposite. Everything to do with supplies, information, everything went through this spot. Because here, there was a telephone. The landlord of the inn at the time was an agent for the maquis. So sometimes orders came through on the telephone here. At the time of the battle itself, it'd true that the first action took place there, where there is now the monument to the Fallen, but there was a second phase to the battle which took place right here. It was in order to prevent the Germans from encircling the *maquis*. There were two sections there, on the other side of the road, who stopped the Germans advancing.

Jon What, to your mind was the single most heroic or inspirational story to emerge from the local resistance movement?

General B It was an exceptional battle. On a local scale, I can attest that there was a lot of action, from a little group. There was an important battle at Duault, in the forest, but it was due to the presence of parachutists; it wasn't really local resistance. It was the Free French who had been parachuted in, helped by a small group, the maquis Kito. Here, the *maquis* consisted a two companies, organised on military lines, who resisted a German attack for nearly two hours. That hadn't happened anywhere else in the Côtes du Nord of the time. When the Germans attacked, they retreated; they didn't directly take on forces that were better armed than them. They fell back, shooting as they went. This was a surprise for the Germans: there was resistance. There were deaths in their ranks. There were minefields, there were explosions everywhere. And it was only after two hours of fighting, when the German reinforcements arrived, that the *maquis* retreated, and it was only so that they could renew their assault later. It was pretty exceptional.

Jon You witnessed local battles as a small child nearly 70 years ago now. During the intervening period, have your views changed in any way about those who were not resistance fighters? German people, perhaps, or locals who did not join, did not help the maquis?

General B I wasn't a witness to the battle at Duault. I had never even heard talk of it

when I was a child. On the other hand, I was a witness to the battle here, first of all because I went as a child with my parents into the woods. Every Sunday, Mass was celebrated in the woods, the chaplain read the service, and I went with my grandmother to Mass. All the locals had a part to play in the life of the maquis; my mother, along with other women in the village of Etang Neuf looked after the fighters' washing, for example, washed their shirts etc. Every morning, my father, who was a countryman, and who had cows, took them milk, for breakfast. Every one of us in the village helped out, to make the life of the maquis as easy as possible. Of course, their main role was in providing supplies, food etc., or sometimes to help them get about. It happened that one day the chief of the maquis, Jean Robert, had to get to a meeting in Corlay. A woman from the village here who took him to Corlay on her horse and cart. That's an example of the communal life in the village during the maquis' existence there. Total participation.

I'm pretty tolerant of those who didn't commit themselves. It was not easy. French government was led by Petain, the law was French law, that's to say Vichy law, Petain's law, that was applied. The French administration was kept in place. It was very intelligent of the Germans. When they invaded France, they kept the French administration. The resistance had a lot of difficulty in gaining a foothold. It came little by little, at first in small networks that sent information back to London. Then the groups came together, and it's true that, 70 years later, one can ask oneself the question: "What would I have done?" I reply frankly "I don't know!" One has to put oneself in their shoes. It's true that, towards the end, in July 1944, when the beach landings in Normandy had already taken place, it more difficult to understand those French who continued to fight on the German side, people who were in fact Nazis. Those people, a minority, I reject totally.

As for those who hesitated, those who waited, those who didn't know what to do, I can understand them. It's not the easiest thing to commit yourself, to risk your life, to fight; it's not at all easy. That's perhaps why there were so few, it's so much more extraordinary that the resistance even existed. And we can see however that, once the situation improved for the resistance, there were many who came at that time to join the movement. There were people who had been questioning themselves, but who finally said: "I must go".

