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During the Paris fighting I saw only RICHARD again, who told me that the Germans, LIP T and ALBERT had left Paris and that he had no news of them.

The Marshal was taken to Germany, and the "Amis du Maelochal" could not continue to exist under such conditions. I waited for the arrival of the Division Leclerc, which I joined. I was assigned to the 1st Co. of the 1st Regiment de Marche du Tchad, and took part in all the fighting from Paris as far as Frisenheim in Alsace, with the rank of Sergeant.

Military address: E.P.M. 6 - Si - 84143

Civilian address: 4 rue du Saule Fleuri, Ile St. Denis (Seine).

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Station: SCI FRANCE, Paris Base

Report No.

S-288

FPX/1630

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Reference:

Report Date:

21 Dec. 1944

Source: Rene PONCIN

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Date Info. Received:

19 Dec. 1944

Evaluation: B-2

SUBJECT: Statement of Rene PONCIN, member of SD-Controlled "JEANNE"
Organization

Born 14 March 1908 at St. Denis (Seine), son of Auguste PONCIN and of Elizabeth de TOLLENAERE.

My father and mother had a laundry business, first at 123 rue de Paris in St. Denis, then at 17 rue Couste, Cachan (Seine). Around 1922 my parents moved to 36 rue du Saule Fleuri on the Ile St. Denis, and I became an apprentice with the firm of A. Combe et fils, tanners, whose factory is at St. Denis in the rue des Poissoniers, and their main office at Paris, rue du Faubourg St. Denis. Prior to that time I had worked in my parents' laundry, and had only graduated from primary school.

My application to my work at the Combe concern was noticed by M. RENAUD and M. RIBES, who recommended that I learn English, and in 1926 they sent me to their London branch with the idea of eventually making me one of their representatives.

My stay in England taught me a lot. I worked in London during the day; the director was Mr. Nash, and the representatives were Messrs. Brown and Dangerfield. At night I went out to Bexley Heath, Kent, where I lived at the home of a Mrs. Bunce, 2 Etronvi (?) Rd. I quickly made excellent contacts which not only helped me to study English but also to develop.

First I met a Mr. Richard Jesse Divey and his family, then Mrs. Olivier, then Miss Isabel Roxburgh and her family. I owe Miss Roxburgh most; she was most helpful in her guidance during the eleven months I was there, and we have corresponded ever since.

When I returned to France I went back to work at the tannery in St. Denis, meaning to wait until I had completed my military service and was old enough to take a representative's job. In order to hurry things along I decided to enlist for two years, and I selected the 21st Infantry Regiment, then in garrison at Mayence, Germany.

Until that time I didn't know what politics was. I knew my father was republican and a Freemason, and I had attended several election meetings with him, but it made no impression on me.

In 1928 I was a garrison soldier at Mayence, in the French army of

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occupation, as I had wished, and I forced myself to learn German. But from the start I noticed the ill will that the German civilians bore the French. Once I saw German children who spat at us as we marched to the range one day; once when I tried to use the few words in my German vocabulary to talk to a German, he walked away from me. Eventually soldiers were attacked, and to our astonishment, the authorities (at least as far as we knew) did nothing about this. It was the beginning of German reassertion.

About that time something happened which was to influence my whole life. I found a paper called "L'Action Francaise". I read it, and one article made a profound impression on me. The author talked of the weakness of the French government before German activity; with tremendous foresight he said that they were things were going, the French would soon have to evacuate the Rhineland, and that the Germans could then rearm themselves at their leisure; and all this in front of a France which was giving itself up to comfort and to Communist propaganda.

Months passed, and I didn't think about this paper again; and then we had to evacuate the Rhineland, which was hard on me, but since my political formation was incomplete, that did not leave many traces. I finished my military service at Chaumont and then went back home.

I soon met an Englishwoman, a Mme. Terrasse, 2 rue du Saule Fleuri, in St. Denis. I enjoyed talking to her in English, and I got to know her husband, M. Gilbert Terrasse, chief engineer for the Chatiers de la Loire at St. Denis, and their two daughters, Catherine and Claire.

The evenings when I was at the Terrasse home I frequently saw lying on the table a copy of "L'Action Francaise" and remembering the predictions which I had read at Mayence, I began to read it regularly; then, drawn by the serious tone of the articles, I tried to find out more about it. I read the work of Bainville, then of Maurras and others, and finally I went to one of their meetings in St. Denis.

I studied the politics of this group for a year, at a time when it was already beginning to combat the Communists of St. Denis, whose chief, a man named Geraud, at one time tried to win me to his side by having me read several of Karl Marx's works, and those of Engels and others.

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I studied the two doctrines impartially, chose Action Francaise, and joined the group in 1930-31.

On 6 October 1941 I married Miss Catherine Terrasse.

I quickly became an active member of the St. Denis section, a difficult spot, because Doriot was at that time heading the Communists at St. Denis. The time came when the work of the section fell largely to M. Baudry and myself, and I visited the headquarters in the rue Boccador frequently. There I saw regularly Raymond Richard, who was then secretary of the Ligue d'Action Francaise for the Paris region. Richard assigned various jobs to me, such as surveillance of suspected members, attendance as often as possible at Communist meetings; he asked for a report after each of these meetings.

I pass over the conflict which led to the dissolution of the Action Francaise, to report what I did from that time until September 1939.

The firm of A. Combe et fils was drifting toward bankruptcy because of poor management. The principal shareholder, an American named Blumenthal, withdrew and with him went the best technicians, including M. Ribes, whose protege I was. The Banque de Paris, et de Pays-Bas took over the business in 1933, and a general-director was named; this was a professor Jeze, lawyer for the Negus (Haile Selassie) at the time of the Ethiopian affair, whom the newspaper l'Action Francaise had violently shaken off. I am inclined to believe that it was political revenge which caused my discharge two months after M. Jeze arrived. One of the assistant directors, M. Fregeoliers, also a member of Action Francaise, was also discharged. I then went to work for the Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits.

At the beginning of 1936 Richard introduced me to M. Maurice Puje, one of the directors of Action Francaise, and it was agreed that I should have the job of following Doriot's movement as closely as possible, and to make regular reports to Richard, who would transmit them to his chiefs.

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Doriot founded the PPF in June 1936; I joined, and was received as a sort of prize by Doriot, because I was well known among royalists in St. Denis. I was a delegate at all the congresses, and thus was in an excellent position to follow the development of the party, of its chief, and its principal members, and Richard got the reports agreed on.

On 3 September 1939 I joined CM 52 near Bourges, and was attacked, with my rank of sergeant, to the 25th B.L.L.A., called the "Joyeux". It was an accident that I was destined to fight the war with a battalion whose members were half of them Communists.

Early in September we were north of Bitche in front of the Maginot Line for a short time; the bad behavior of the "Joyeux" made it impossible to keep them at the front. They were withdrawn to a camp at Hailly, disarmed, sorted and the worst ones sent to Africa. I was selected for the cadre in Africa, first at Colomb-Béchar in southern Algeria, then at Bou-Denib in southern Morocco.

In March 1940 a company was formed and sent to Medenine, southern Tunisia. I was again selected for the cadre. In June Italy declared war and the fighting on the Tripoli front was reduced to a minimum. The armistice arrived, and the "Joyeux" sent to the phosphate mines near Gafsa, and we were not to see France before October.

Since 1931 I had been aware that Germany was getting stronger every day, both in military and diplomatic directions, and that France was getting weaker in matters military and diplomatic, as well as morally, thanks to the germ of Communism which was undermining her resistance. I had left for the army in 1939 believing that we could beat Germany once more, which was also the opinion of Richard, whom I saw a few days before I left for the front. Richard had told me that he was working for the 2^{eme} Bureau, and I remember having written him from Africa, at a time when I was doing the work of a prison guard rather than that of a soldier, to ask him to get me into the same service. His answer had been: "Wait a while, I'm looking after you."

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In November 1940 I returned to Paris and went to the Wagons-Lits to take up my work with them, but the situation was such that they could not take me back.

In the meantime I had seen Richard. We had discussed the situation at length, the alliance of the Russians and the Germans, and Richard brought me up to date on the events that had taken place since June 1940, events of which I was ignorant because I had not been in France. He pointed out to me how the Communists were allied with the Germans and were already taking advantage of this to create ill feeling among the nationals. On the other hand, he explained to me that the Marshal had asked for the armistice to save our colonies and to preserve a government for France, which would always be preferable to a Gauleiter.

Being out of work, I saw Richard again, at which time he suggested to me that I work for the Equipe, and he introduced me to M. Pelletier. Pelletier and Richard gave me literature concerning the Equipe to read; the gist of them was the recruiting of a select group of Frenchmen from all classes in order to provide the Marshal with the cadres which he would need. I won't go any further into these pamphlets put out by the Equipe - they speak for themselves.

M. Pelletier got me my first job, which was to work for the "Cables de Lyon" at Bezons (Seine). While working there as storekeeper, I was to study the personnel and the cadre, and to report on the professional aptitude of each as well as any Communist activity. I trusted M. Pelletier, for one reason because he had been introduced to me by Richard, and also because he was police commissioner at Versailles; moreover he had certain letters from Dr. Menetrel accrediting him to the Occupied Zone.

When Pelletier came back from Vichy he would discuss his conversations there with Richard; several times I was present when he spoke of the extremely friendly relations between the Marshal and Admiral Leahy.

Little by little the Equipe recruited Laval's cast-offs for the Marshal Petain and elements of Action Francaise of Vichy (Dr. Martin, for example) they were gladly received by the Equipe. When Pucheu became Minister of the Interior the Equipe chiefs decided to place properly qualified men wherever possible, in order that the Marshal might know things through these sources which he would never learn through ministerial channels. Every man was told that his first job was to get information of all sorts, at every level, as unbiased as possible, in order that the Marshal might have information other than that brought him by ministers who were too often deceiving him ("desfaillants").

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M. Pucheu created the S.P.A.C. (Service de Police Anti-Communiste) and M. Pelletier joined it as a Commissaire, hiring various members of the Equipe as inspectors.

I neglected to say earlier that as the Equipe took shape, and M. Pelletier was unable to travel, he took me from the "Cable de Lyon" and enrolled as an inspector with the Police de l'Etat at Versailles. This served me as cover for my trips. I was paid by the Police de l'etat and began travelling all over France to recruit men.

One of my missions, for example, was to see M. Durand at Mantes for M. Dubois in Paris; I told him what the Equipe had in mind, and upon my return made a report on his reaction. In this way I built up a file where both collaborators and Resistance members could be found, as well as all variations between the two extremes.

List of Communist suspects were furnished to the S.P.A.C. by different organizations. Our job was to make inquiries, verifications of domicile, morality, inquiries at factories, to know if the person in question still engaged in illegal activity. But M. Pelletier arranged it so that I went to the provinces as often as possible to continue my recruiting.

The directors of the S.P.A.C. soon found what M. Pelletier was doing. They had their men too and they decided not to leave places for us. Pelletier had to quit, and I had to resign, because the chief, M. Detmar, could not permit me to travel. I think that Richard and the other inspectors stayed three or four months after my departure.

My work went on - travel, conversations, reports on the worth of the men I saw; the reports which I wrote in pen or pencil were typed by Richard's secretaries, who was then at 35 rue Godot de Mauroy. The typed reports were either sent directly to M. Pelletier or carried to 8 Blvd des Invalides, where they went out in the diplomatic pouch.

Months passed. The Equipe had a directing committee, but I remained the "traveler". Occasionally Menetrel came to Paris. Sometimes he saw only M. Pelletier, at other times he saw Pelletier and Richard; very occasionally he called from 10 to 15 members of the Equipe to 8 Blvd des Invalides.

I remember very clearly that the Resistance members always outnumbered

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the collaborators at these meetings. Another thing which interested me was the way M. Pelletier always knew how to come to the aid of M. Menestrel whenever he was too closely pinned down by questions from collaborators.

When the Americans landed in Africa in November 1943 there was a split in the Equipe. The Resistance members were happy, the collaborators were not. The latter didn't believe the landings could have been made without some complicity between the Marshal and Admiral Darlan, and from that date they began to distrust the Equipe. The Resistance members, on the other hand, worked harder than ever at recruiting.

According to Pelletier and Richard the Equipe became very suspect in the eyes of the Germans, and it was decided to make an urgent request of the Marshal that he authorize the creation of an other group, to be called the "Amis du Marechal." Several people in the provinces had already organized groups with this name, at Tours, Lille, Bordeaux, Boulogne, etc., but the Germans forbade several groups, just as they forbade the existence of the Comite de Propagande Social du Marechal, whose headquarters was in Paris, and whose chiefs were M. Marion, Touze, Draghi, Garanton, etc. This last group had been formed without the Marshal's consent.

After many letters and requests from the Equipe, supported by Menestrel, an interview took place in March 1943 at Vichy with Marshal Petain, Dr. Menestrel, and M. Jardel on one hand, and about 15 members of the Equipe on the other. I was there.

It was difficult to create a "Centre d'Etudes Politiques", with headquarters at 6 rue Anatole de la Forge, and a M. Chezepretre as director, together with a M. Lagrand. The establishment of the "Amis du Marechal" followed several months later, with the same headquarters and, as directors, M. Rene Dommenge, Paris deputy, and M. Pelorson, former secretary at the General Secretariat a la Jeunesse.

The fact that we were officially recognized by the Marshal took away from the Germans many means of repression.

I think that this incident happened about that time; while I was at Nantes a member of the Equipe, a M. Fournier, asked me pointblank "Is it true that Richard works for the German?" Faced with my ignorance, he said: "I have confidence in you; a friend of mine in Paris told me that. Find out, will you, and let me know."

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When I got back to Paris I asked Richard that question, and he replied: "Yes, it's true" and he explained how he had happened to enter into relations with the Germans.

More and more the Germans came to suspect that M. Menetrel and Pelletier were playing a double game, and Menetrel decided that in the future Richard should carry out the contact with them. I knew that Menetrel and Pelletier had worked to save Resistance members imprisoned by the Germans, and I know Richard did the same thing. I know some of the men saved by the Equipe were men like Cdt. Bretteville, d'Yvetot, the industrial Russeau from Sedan, etc.

My job with the "Amis du Marechal" remained the same; recruiting and reports on persons visited, classification of these people as Resistance members or collaborators. M. PELORSON transmitted my reports to M. PELLETIER in Paris, and to M. MENETREL when he was at Vichy. Nothing changed for me.

I saw RICHARD occasionally at home, rue Godot de Mauroy, and we talked about the situation. He complained a lot about the lack of seriousness on the part of the Resistants in their recruiting. He told me that the Communists were gaining ground everywhere, that they were more serious and knew how to take possession of parachuted arms, while the Resistance army had lots of good will, but no weapons. He cited examples of national Resistants, who understood the Communist danger, and who were still denounced to the Germans as Communists. Such was the case of a man named ROCHE, from Lannion in Brittany, whom I knew and whom it was very hard to get released.

Up until a date which I no longer recall, I had to travel at my own risk, since I had no papers of any sort, always in danger of arrest. In addition, I earned very little. So I asked Dr. MENETREL for an increase in salary and for some way of traveling in safety. PELLETIER and RICHARD had previously told me that it was easier for a secret agent to work if he was unknown, and that I was smart enough to get out of difficult situations. Nevertheless my request to Dr. MENETREL had some results, and my salary was increased to 4000 francs a month, and RICHARD gave me a German ausweis.

In my work in the provinces I was frequently in touch with Resistance groups encouraged by MENETREL, PELLETIER, and RICHARD, to whom I carried messages and about whom I reported to Vichy. In this way I knew the groups at Laon,

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led by MM. FANCROT and HOUDRY; the Hirson group, led by MM. CLEMENT and CAILLE; the Sedan Group, led by M. ROUSSEAU; the Versailles group, led by M. BLANCHARD; the Bourges group, led by M. VAUQUELIN and COSTES, etc., all anti-German, Resistants, but also anti-Communist.

I was also in touch with several Resistance groups whose leading spirits did not want to join us, such as MM. PIARD at St. Pierre d'Entremont, PAILLETTE of Domfront, the Abbe (?) at Argentan, Colonel BECHET at Montmerci, an unknown at St. Malo, etc.

One day, on the recommendation of Col. BECHET, I went to see Col. MERMET at Basancon. He was a chief of the French 2^{eme} Bureau. He listened to my explanations but did nothing. I remember that when he was reading my report M. Pelletier told me I should not have gone to see such a person without first having asked permission.

I always remember that in the course of my conversations with Richard there was the question of his reports with London or with the French 2^{eme} Bureau at Algiers. He often mentioned the name of M. Fresnay. I also remember that in 1942 Richard said he had to get in touch with the Comte de Paris, then in Spain, and at the time there was some question whether I might make the trip, but he did not speak of it again.

July 1944. Richard called me to the rue Godot de Mauroy one day and told me that he wanted in the arms matter. A man named Litt, about whom he had made inquiry in 1942 (original text not clear), had come to see him. This man had been accused at one time of selling stocks of iron, steel and other high priority materials to the Germans. Litt had made this proposition; he knew some Germans who were anti-Communists, who saw that they had lost the war, and were looking for some French anti-communists who would fight against communism which would break out as soon as the Germans collapsed.

Richard saw two possibilities in this proposition: one, the anti-communist campaign itself, which the "Amis du Marechal" had always been interested in, but which because of lack of weapons, they would not carry on; and two, a chance for Resistance groups to get hold of weapons which the Germans would give to other groups like the R.N.P., P.P.F. Transictes, etc., if we did not accept their proposal.

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He gave me the job, which was, thanks to the names of collaborators in my files, to present to the Germans men whose opinions were openly known, and then to study the possibility of making three or four large depots at the homes of people we were sure of, in order to keep the arms for ourselves.

Richard left the rue Godot de Mauroy and established himself in the rue Arsene Houssaye. Soon he introduced to the Germans his "treika", composed of myself for recruiting, Dumas for information service, and Jacquot for material.

The Germans had requisitioned a private house in the Avenue MacMahon. Their names were NEBEL, HAGEDORN and VALENTIN.

I made the first automobile trip with DUMAS, NEBEL drove and a man named ALBERT who had been introduced by LITT, also went along. Before leaving, RICHARD specifically told me to see the people I was to visit alone, and not in front of NEBEL or ALBERT, whom he thought was an agent of the R.N.P. When we got back, there was a scene between ALBERT and RICHARD. ALBERT complained that I had not let him meet the people visited, and RICHARD replied that he alone was responsible for the political side of the business, and that it would continue that way.

Several days passed in a fairly tense atmosphere. Then there was a meeting in the Ave. MacMahon where NEBEL, HAGEDORN, VALENTIN, and a man named BESEKOW represented the Germans, while RICHARD, LITT, ALBERT, DUMAS and I were the French. BESEKOW was the German chief who was in charge of the whole thing. ALBERT told him his complaints. RICHARD held his ground, and it was decided that ALBERT would no longer be concerned in the distribution of arms. Actually, I made a second and last trip, and ALBERT did not go along.

However I also met people in the Resistance. I met M. BARUZY, known in the Resistance as VENITEN, this way. The first meeting took place at the home of M. CHEZLEPRETRE, in the rue Jean Goujon in Paris, then at M. BARUZY's office, rue Drouot. It was agreed that M. BARUZY's men would be armed with the weapons stocked on the Ile St. Denis, at the home of M. DENOJEAN, and it was done; one part of this stock armed BARUZY's men, and the other the Resistance group of the Ile St. Denis, led by M. GOLDEMAR.

A second depot was set up by RICHARD at Zaubonne in Kieffer's home, and it was the most important of all, according to what RICHARD said. It served to arm a group of Pompiers in Paris, completed the armament of M. BARUZY's group, and likewise, through M. CHEZLEPRETRE, armed a group at the Hotel de Ville.

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