“Mein lieber Degrelle,”... It was Heinrich Himmler addressing me. We were dug into the mud of a shadowy camp in the middle of the night, May 2, 1945. Five hundred yards in front of us, a thousand Allied bombers were succeeding in their annihilation of Kiel. The scene jumped out at us in bursts of light, like molten metal, making the night in which we were huddled together even blacker.

“Mein lieber Degrelle [My dear Degrelle], you must survive. Everything will change quickly. You must survive for six months—six months.”

He fixed me with his small searching eyes behind his round spectacles; they lit up at each round of explosions. His face, normally of a lunar paleness, had become livid in these hours of the end of the world.

A few hours earlier, toward the end of the afternoon, we had lost Lübeck. Pursued by English tanks and machine-gunned by fighter planes, we were pulling back along the main road toward Denmark. Then I saw Himmler charging down a country lane in a big black car. Already, a little earlier, I had come nose-to-nose with Albert Speer, ex-minister of armaments, an extraordinary architect and the nicest fellow in the world. In this flood of fire he remained, as always, his natural cheerful self.

We joked together for a moment. Then Himmler turned up. He did not joke often, or at any rate, when he did it was always with a purpose. In this twilight, May 2, 1945, Hitler had been dead for 50 hours and had left Himmler completely out of the line of succession.
Himmler’s head appeared more ascetic than ever, lank and shining under its four thin hairs. He tried to smile at me between his teeth, his small rodent-like teeth underneath which he had already concealed the small cyanide capsule that he would crush a few days later.

I climbed into the car next to him. We stopped in a farmyard. He announced that I had been made a general some days before.

“General” . . . “corporal”—it hardly mattered any more! The world was crashing on our backs. Soon we would all be without uniforms and without epaulets. Even dead, most of us.

Since nightfall we had taken the road toward Kiel harbor. As we were about to enter it, Allied aviation offered us the last fireworks of the last extinction. All Kiel jumped and grilled. On our road, the bombs fell like walnuts and exploded or ricocheted. We had only enough time to jump into a marshy field.

One of Himmler’s two secretaries, a tall, graceless girl, had immediately lost both her high-heeled shoes in the gluey mud. Crouched on her bony calves, she rummaged in the black silt, trying in vain to retrieve her shoes and moaning. Everyone has their worries.

Himmler continued with his: “Mein lieber Degrelle, six months, six months.”

Now, as often in the past, he ran into my intransigence about his predictions and views. An intellectually mediocre man, he would have made a diligent high-school teacher in normal times. The European world view evaded him in any case. But he was used to my points of view and to my manners, and there was no point in argument. At this moment when our universe was collapsing, it was important to him for the postwar world that I survive.

Already on April 21, 1945, after the battle on the Oder River, he had asked me to be the government’s foreign minister in the cabinet that would succeed Hitler’s. Himmler then sent Waffen-SS General Felix Steiner to obtain my consent.

I thought at first it was a joke. I was the last person who could parley as foreign minister of the Reich with the Allies, who were searching for me in the hopes of hanging me as soon as it was possible.

Mired in the mud, Himmler repeated tenaciously: “Everything will have changed in six months!” Finally I answered him, looking intently into his small tired eyes, under the lightning of the explosions: “Not in six months, Reichsführer, in six years!” I should have said: “in 60 years!” And, now I even believe that in 60 years the odds for me of any political resurrection will be even less! The only resurrection that awaits me will be at the Last Judgment to the tune of the trumpets of the apocalypse!

The exile has a natural tendency to believe his luck is
going to turn. He watches the horizon. The least sign of change in his lost country assumes in his eyes a crucial importance. An election—or even a trivial scandal in the press—causes him to seethe. Everything is going to change! Nothing changes. The months pass; the years pass.

In the beginning, the prominent exile was recognized. He was looked at wherever he went. A hundred people today elbow past him, indifferent: the nice fat woman who bumps against him is thinking about the leeks she’s going to buy; the man in front of him, going too slowly, is merely watching the passers-by; the kid who runs past, knocking against his tibia, does not have the least idea who he is or who he was. He is no longer anything more than anonymity in the heap. Life has passed and washed out everything; the life of the outcast has become colorless, like that of all the rest.

In May, 1945, when I found myself on a small iron bed in the hospital of Saint-Sebastian, in a plaster cast from the neck to the left foot, I was still a star. The fat military governor was brought in, covered with big medals; overflowing with flamboyant embraces. He had not yet fully realized that I had ended up on the wrong side and was no longer someone he ought to cultivate. He would soon understand! Everyone would soon understand!

At the end of 15 months, when my bones had healed, I found myself quite far from there one night, moving down a black street, being guided toward a secret lodging. The only solution for me, my only survival at that time when everywhere my extradition was being demanded—so I could die in front of a firing squad—was to disappear down the memory hole. I would spend two years in my first memory hole. I would come to know many more. I had been installed in a small dark bedroom, next to a service elevator. The shutters remained closed at all times.

The old couple that sheltered me constituted my only universe.

The señora weighed about 300 pounds. The first thing I saw in the morning was, in the passageway, his bucket of urine. He produced four liters of it a night. Hard work! His only work. Before lunch, he would get back in his pajamas, gigantic pajamas, opened, gaping, over a big triangle of pale flesh.

She moved briskly under a bundle of thin, unkempt yellow hair, navigating through the blackness of the house—after all, lights cost money—on two old rags—after all, shoes wear out!

In the evening, they both listened to a play on the radio, installed in wicker armchairs. After five minutes they would fall asleep: he, expectorating deep grumblings to the fore—she, emitting strident hisses, head thrown back. At one o’clock in the morning, the silence of the broadcast ending woke them up. She then picked up the bird cage. He grabbed the large statue of Saint Joseph— luridly-painted and waving a green palm.

They made their way with small steps toward their bedroom. The snores began again. In the morning, I would find again before the door four liters of urine.

Such would be my life for two years—the solitude, the silence, the shadow, two old people who carried around Saint Joseph and two parakeets. I would not see a smile even once. Nor two graceful feminine legs on a sidewalk. Nor a tree releasing yellow leaves into the sky.

Afterwards I had to leave. The wartime injury to my stomach, a gift from the Caucasus, burst from one end to the other. In six months I lost 60 pounds. In a discreet clinic, my stomach was opened just about from the esophagus to the navel—over eight inches.

I was recognized at the end of three days by a male nurse. It was necessary to carry me away in the middle of the night on a stretcher. They hoisted me up a narrow staircase to the fourth floor. I was streaming with sweat and blood, because, under the contortions of the stretcher, all the stitches had popped. What a life! Not to show yourself—not to be recognized—does not help. They recognize you all the same, they see you all the same—even though you are 5,000 miles away.

I am in possession of a really comical file of articles on my amazing stays in 20 different countries. The day a journalist discovered me in Lima, Peru. Another day, in Panama City. Or in the Argentinean pampas! Or in a villa close to the Nile, as a guest of Colonel Nasser. Every time, the details were so precise that I ended up asking myself if I was not mistaken—perhaps I was there after all? . . .

A big French newspaper described, under an enormous front-page headline, absolutely every detail of my life in Brazil—my way of dressing, eating and speaking. With the mindset of a true Parisian reporter the author expanded at length, of course, on my love life! Yes, I loved! I loved a négresse. And I even had a beautiful little black boy from the fictitious affair.

Does the reader, in spite of everything, doubt? Why doubt? There was the photo! My son’s photo, the little black kid, a three- or four-year-old tot, a little round ball with locks of frizzy hair growing on his cranium like a carpet of moss.

My mother-in-law, a saintly lady of Périgord, of course jumped, startled, upon reading these unexpected revelations in her usual daily paper at breakfast! This grandson from the wrong side of the blanket didn’t please her at all. I would
have the task of convincing her that I had never in my life set foot in Brazil, and that there was no little black bundle of joy in the family.

It did not matter what Degrelle thought. At least 30 times—maybe 50 times—I had to find out that I was in Caracas, in Valparaiso, in Cuba—where a poor devil was put in the clink in my place—and even in the baggage compartment of the ship Monte Ayala.

It was inspected on the high seas by the Americans at the end of August 1946—15 months after the end of the war—and brought back to the port of Lisbon, where it was searched thoroughly for several days: an American policeman even climbed up inside the chimney from bottom to top to see if I were not clinging to the soot!

A secret service report described me entering a forest with a Portuguese colonel. The intelligence services traced me to Gibraltar. My life was truly breathtaking!

Other journalists had followed me to the Vatican. Others, to a port on the Atlantic, where I was buying some cannon. One even saw me in Antwerp, where, it seems, I had gone just to breathe some Belgian air.

From time to time, it is true, I was really and truly discovered by an astounded acquaintance or by a supporter who fell in my arms, crying. I would then have to detach myself, go pack up my few possessions, and move elsewhere.

I sometimes met enemies also. It was always fun. They had clamored loudly for my head, and suddenly there they were—in front of me. First, stupefaction. Then curiosity won out. With a few humorous words, the air was cleared.

Seated in a small working-class restaurant, I even had the surprise one day of finding myself near one of the more prominent leaders of the Belgian Socialist Party, a man from Liège. I had not noticed at first; nor had he.

He was at a table with a blond bombshell, built like an American Mercury of the 1950s. I was reading my newspaper. I lifted my head, and our eyes met. For a second he was stunned. Then . . . he smiled and winked at me. He too was not about to lead me to the gallows.

The only ones who tracked me everywhere, with truly diabolical hate, were the Jews. The Belgian government pursued me rancorously for a long time. They asked 20 times for my extradition.

“...The only ones who tracked me everywhere, with truly diabolical hate, were the Jews. The Belgian government pursued me rancorously for a long time. They asked 20 times for my extradition.”
and electricity on my hill had been cut and the neighbors’ dogs had been poisoned so they would not bark.

I escaped by the skin of my teeth one suffocatingly hot, sunny July day. The Israeli aggressors, chauffeured by the journalist Zwi Aldouby, a well-known Jew, were arrested, armed to the teeth, just when they were on the point of succeeding.

They were sentenced to eight, 10 and 12 years of prison. Another operation was mounted nearly simultaneously, by means of a helicopter departing from a Moroccan port. Some years later, a new kidnap-murder was attempted. This time, the Jewish aggressors had arrived by sea, coming from Antwerp. It was actually a Jewess who informed one of my sisters of the plot, wanting to thank me, she said, for having saved her life during the war. At that time, I tried, as everyone did, to save all people I knew to be in danger. But I didn’t draw up any lists of “people who owed me” for after the war. So I don’t even remember this Jewess whom I saved then and who saved me later on.

Her warning came just in time, and the three “shipping clerks” were locked up as soon as they disembarked. But it was exasperating. Each time I had to move, to hide out at the country estates of old friends, even in a restaurant or, for long months, in a monk’s cell—it was not funny, believe me—of a Benedictine cloister. I will never forget the Benedicamus Domino [“let us praise the Lord”] bellowed at 5 a.m. by the wake-up monk.

But to have to pull up stakes all the time means also that it becomes impossible to earn one’s living, to have a regular occupation anywhere, or even to have a roof over one’s head. It cannot be done if one is always threatened and on the move. [All throughout the late 1940s and the 1950s, Degrelle had to be very low-profile. It helped when in 1953 President Eisenhower visited Spain, needing Spanish air bases and navy ports for NATO ships. From that point on, Franco could feel more secure and less “under the gun” himself. Leon Degrelle did not really come out of hiding until 1960, when, for his daughter’s wedding in white, he appeared, resplendent, in his own white uniform—of a general of the Waffen-SS. After this, Degrelle began to write and publish again.—Ed.]

There was no lack of “interviews” by journalists, either, to complicate my outlaw’s life—frequently and inopportune refocusing attention on my name. Dozens of these fake interviews were also published—just as fictional as a detective novel.

Twice, a long time ago, I received in secret places of refuge “special journalists”—who afterwards published statements from me that were entirely wrong even though they had promised, of course, to send the texts to me before publication for my approval. Since then, I have fled journalists like the plague.

They are always re-creating you, because their objective is different from finding the truth: they’re looking for something new and sensational to publish quickly. But the truth does not present itself in headlines the size of your hand or in a flash.

Only once did a magazine publish a real interview with me. Now they wanted an interview. I, for my part, wanted the world to believe that I was in Argentina, in Buenos Aires, in a clinic. The text of the “interview”—my words at least—appeared in its entirety.

The magazine’s publisher knew perfectly well that no reporter from their magazine had ever seen me, and that in no way was I in Buenos Aires. What did it matter to them? The main goal was the scoop and for the public to go “Ooh!” and “Ah!” while they read it.

These scribblers can describe for you what Aristotle Onassis and the ex-Mrs. Kennedy do in bed, and the state of the ovaries of Queen Fabiola (with supporting drawings), even though no one involved is a valet de chambre or resident nurse!

When a journalist goes out for a story, it is because he wants to get some air, especially at the expense of a lovely princess, and to fully enjoy his expense account. He sniffs about a bit, pays homage to beauties who cannot answer back even if he does not write nice things, and then checks over his piece at breakneck speed and submits it to his editor so he can get his “bucks.”

At left, this recruitment flyer for the Wallonian [French-speaking Belgians.—Ed.] Division of the Waffen SS reads: “Counter Bolshevism. For Europe and our Fatherland. Join the Wallonian Legion.” Fighting the spread of Communism from the Soviet Union and countering the aggressive Communist and Socialist political movements in the various European nations were priorities of the young men enlisting to fight in Hitler’s all-volunteer brigades of the Waffen SS.
But the political exile, how does he see the public? He also, with time, will begin to live in an unreal, non-existent world. He will attribute to his public a way of thinking it does not have, or no longer has. He has lost track of its evolution. Everything changes, and he does not know it has all changed.4

His world is no longer as it was, people are no longer as he knew them. Like an old factory-owner outstripped by modern life, he must readjust. He continues to believe that the old ideas are still valid and that people are still passionate about them, and especially about him.

But in whom does anyone remain interested after the years have passed? People are eclipsed by newer events that come along. Each one of us pushes a predecessor into the pit of oblivion. The exile remains convinced that he is still on stage at that very moment. But the curtain has been lowered for a long time. He waits for the applause to revive again, as if the public were still there in front of the curtain, not realizing that the years have pushed him offstage into a dark corridor. This is painful: who is going to tell a proud exile that he does not count anymore? He doesn't understand; above all, he doesn't want to. His smile is often forced; he is convincing himself that his future has not been totally blocked.

I too, for a long time, believed in my political survival. I was in my prime. At 38 years of age I was not going to disappear like this forever, no way! Oh, but one does disappear. Friends die, far away, one after the other. The past becomes fuzzy, like a shoreline that gets fainter and fainter and then disappears under the sailor's gaze. To a boy 21 years old, who was not even born when our careers foundered, who are we? He gets it all mixed up. Or he knows no more of our stories than he does of the big mustache of Vercingetorix or of the cavity-rich teeth of the Sun King, Louis XIV.5

And that is not all: the field is crowded. The exiles follow each other, pile on top of each other. . . . Already the Perons, the Trujillos, the Batistas, the Fulbert Youlous, defeated long after us, are only silhouettes in Spain, hardly discernible now. [These were leaders or dictators, respectively, of Argentina, the Dominican Republic, Cuba and the former French Congo.] The names of the Lagaillardes, of the Ortizes, and even of the Bidaults and the Soustelles, the last two political stars of the Algerian affair, don't mean anything more, five years later, to 90% of the French. [These French revolted against President Charles de Gaulle's decision to give Algeria its independence; two million French colonists lost everything when he did, while hundreds of thousands of pro-French Algerians lost their lives in horrifying massacres.—Ed.] We are in the century of speed. To disappear from the public's visual field—that too happens quickly.

Even for very well-informed people a politician who has been exiled for 25 years has become an almost unreal being. They think he has disappeared. Or they don't believe he exists anymore. One evening, I was invited to dine with a prominent doctor, universally known and very close to the head of state in the country in which I resided at that time. Some very well-known people entered the dining room. Each of these guests had been acquainted with me at various stages of my exile, and under different names. To one I had been Enrique Duran, a Pole (a funny name for a Pole), to another, Lucien Demeure, a Frenchman, to another, Juan Sanchez; for others Pepe, with no last name. I got tired of unfurling, with each handshake, this panoply of false names.

When a big banker entered whom I had never met, then which pseudonym to use? I didn't hesitate to present myself under my true name: "Leon Degrelle"!

The banker looked at me, very amused. "And I am Benito Mussolini."

It took hard work to convince him that I was really he, and that I was not joking.

Thus, with time, the exile slips into a haze, or into oblivion. He has transferred from the Mercedes of power onto the malodorous subway of exile. Even the most lucid need time to make sense of it.

The exile prefers to hang on to his past. He had believed, at one moment of his life, in something exceptional. He suffers horribly at having passed from this exceptionalness to the ordinary, to the banal pris fixe restaurant, to the cheap laundry. The sublime dream—dismantled, disintegrated—it haunts

Above, Degrelle, in later years in Spain, reads over some papers in his office. He would occasionally don his World War II Waffen-SS uniform so that photographs could be snapped. Incidentally, special thanks must go to Mrs. Degrelle who has allowed THE BARNES REVIEW to translate and publish the works of Gen. Degrelle from the French.
him. He sometimes begins to believe again that . . . despite it all . . . one never knows—something could spring up again. Something—yes. But we—no. We are finis.

We might as well give an account in a manly fashion, at least, and draw up the balance.

The fascisms made their mark on their time, and on the future. That is what counts. So, what did they leave behind? What did they change? Once they were burning with dynamism, and now they are gone. The real question to pose is the following: Of this great adventure—or epic—of the different fascisms, once our coffins are closed, what remains now?

And what will remain through the ages?

ENDNOTES:

1 Himmler, like Hitler and Goebbels, long hoped for the American and British governments, or at least their peoples, to wake up to the Soviet menace before it was too late and see Germany finally as their ally against Stalin. Of course, in a limited sense this happened—not in six months but the next year, in 1946. It was then that U.S. Secretary of State James Byrne denounced the Morgenthau Plan, designed to keep Germany weak and poor forever. By 1948 Western Germany was being re-built—of course economically only, not psychologically. The Germany that the Zionists, Washington and London have made peace with is a mental slave of “holocaust” guilt, not the Reich, as Hitler, Himmler and Goebbels had hoped.

2 Although the right-wing Francisco Franco had won the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) and ruled with an iron fist the Spain that had granted him refuge, the guilt, not the Reich, as Hitler, Himmler and Goebbels had hoped.

3 The widow of President John Kennedy (1929-1994) took up with the homely Greek shipping billionaire Aristotle Onassis, 23 years her senior, in 1968-1969, while

In the final chapter of My Revolutionary Life, “If Hitler Had Won,” written 25 years after WWII, Degrelle reviews how the great nation-states of Europe and the U.S. were all formed—by war and conquest, just like the Reich—and how a Hitlerian Europe would have dealt with Britain, America and Japan after annihilating the USSR. He concludes his memoirs with a vision of the different white peoples, each with its own genius and drawbacks, and his conviction about the continuing power of the fascist or national socialist model to guide them all to a new greatness.

Degrelle was writing this book: Queen Fabiola of Belgium (born 1928; reigned 1960-1993) never could have children with her husband, King Baudouin. At the king’s death, his brother Albert II became the current monarch—of whom it is boasted that he has never invited any member of the “extreme right” in Parliament, such as of the largest party, the Flemish Interest, to a reception in his palace, and that he is a ferocious “antisemite.”

4 Of course, today with the Internet, an exile—such as the heroic and active Swiss Revisionist Juergen Graf, now in Moscow—can stay in the closest touch with the news, newspapers and even the people of his country; Degrelle, however, died in 1993, just as the World Wide Web was getting launched.

5 Two thousand years ago, Vercingetorix was a charismatic young Gaulish nobleman, a mere 17 or 18, who for years, with tactics, harsh discipline and the taking of hostages, raised Gallic armies and blocked the conquest of his country by Julius Caesar. He is sometimes depicted in France with a winged helmet and an enormous, droopy, Keltic warrior mustache. It may be a particularity of the French mindset to have national saviors who are extraordinarily young, full of clan and fire. Joan of Arc, who defeated the English in the Hundred Years War, after no old general or king could, was a mere 19; Napoleon became a general at 25 and dictator at 30; Degrelle, of French parentage, became the leader of Belgium’s most dynamic party at 30.

Belgian Waffen SS Gen. Leon Degrelle fought not only for his country but for the survival of Christian Europe, preventing the continent from being inundated by Stalin’s savage hordes. What Degrelle has to say, as an eyewitness to some of the key events in the history of the 20th century, is vastly important within the historical and factual context of his time and has great relevance to the continuing struggle today for the survival of civilization as we know it. Gen. Degrelle was translated by Margaret Hupfstickler, a longtime European-American rights activist and linguist, and John de Nogent, a former Marine translator, linguist and European-American rights activist.


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