

Operation Green

If ever a salad was designed to impress, this was the occasion. After all, the German Führer was a strict vegetarian.

British scientists had developed a liquid poison that would cause drowsiness a couple of hours after ingesting. The chemical would then start acting as a powerful sleeping draught before destroying the nervous system's neuro transmitters, resulting in a painless and quiet death. In addition, it was neither detectable by taste nor smell.

Shortly after a few trials the code breakers at Bletchley Park had learned of an opportunity that, if handled correctly, could have far reaching repercussions.

Up to then the nerve poison had only been tested on a few single subjects. This situation could prove to be the ideal opportunity to see if the poison could be used successfully on a larger scale.

Hastily a plan was hatched.

The code breakers had determined that shortly the Führer and a group of his top officers would overnight at Les Noires Mottes.

The next morning they were to witness first-hand the initial launching of the Germans' new *Vergeltungswaffen*, or retaliatory weapon, against England.

In keeping with the jollity of the occasion a celebratory dinner had been planned for the night before the launch.

The Germans had decided to commandeer the Chateau de Blanc for their stay and for a dinner. Gaston Irissou was the chateau's head chef and the Führer had learned of Gaston's widely acclaimed skill with his famous salads.

There was precious little time to organise and give effect to the nascent plan before agent Olive was radioed and tasked with contacting Irissou who, unbeknown to her, was the leader of another resistance cell.

Irissou had been apprised of what was planned to take place. However, Irissou's handler at the Special Operations Executive was anxious not to lose him and only agreed on condition that a contingency plan was put in place to recover Irissou.

The night before the arrival of the German contingent a Lysander aircraft snuck low across the channel. The pilot and observer were guided by a brilliant moon. It's amazing how sometimes, just sometimes; nature is on your side in a war.

There was no possibility of making more than one pass as that would place suspicion on a particular area. The pilot therefore had to fly over the target on his first pass and then continue for several miles inland before making a wide sweep towards Belgium and back across the channel.

Maree Le Saux – agent Olive - heard the aircraft approaching directly ahead. Somewhere behind it anti-aircraft guns were barking and vainly spewing their tracer into the night sky, shooting at a ghostly shadow that had already passed low overhead.

As she saw the aircraft passing the village's church tower she pointed her torch to where she adjudged the cockpit to be and flashed the agreed signal.

"There it is, Sir, dead ahead," snapped the observer.

The pilot flew even lower and moved slightly to his right. In the moonlight the observer could clearly see the crouching figure and tossed out the small parcel, "Parcel gone, Sir."

It landed right next to Maree.

Just before dawn she passed a small package to the butcher boy bringing the day's meat to the chateau, "Put this in Chef Gaston's hand as arranged or I'll blow your cocky little head off."

"You'll have to catch me first," he teased before she melted back into the shadows.

The Führer had decreed that the dinner would consist of a celebration of chef Gaston's finest fare. He had allowed a selection of the finest French meats on the menu for the sake of his more conventionally eating officers.

As someone outside the Führer's circle would be preparing the food, samples were set before two tasters at 19h00 hours. It was apparent from the relish with which they ate that the fare was indeed superb.

When by 21h00 they both still appeared hale and hearty they were dismissed and the Führer's dinner commenced.

Normally the tasters would enjoy a beer or two after their task was done but they both felt unusually drowsy and slunk off to their billets.

The Führer was more than pleased with his fare and roundly congratulated Gaston after the meal. Then he rose at 23h00, "Gentlemen we have a momentous day ahead, let us all retire for a good six hours rest."

The next morning the village church struck five as the Führer's batman knocked on his door.

No reply.

He knocked again, louder.

No reply.

Gingerly he turned the handle and entered.

He hesitated before placing his hand on the Führer's shoulder. Then he gently shook it, "Mein Führer it is five o'clock."

No response.

He leant over the huddled figure and watched intently. To his horror he realised that he could not detect any sign of breathing.

His throat tightened and he fled the room, heading for the Hitler's personal physician.

Panic had removed all protocol and he flung the doctor's door wide open, virtually screaming, "Herr Doctor, Herr Doctor."

But Herr Doctor did not respond.

His frantic cries had raised General Von Weldtsen who came barging in, "What the hell is going on?"

"Herr General, the Führer is dead, the doctor is dead," he babbled.

"Pull yourself together man, you're a soldier."

Von Weldtsen checked the doctor's pulse before turning on his heels and strutting over to the Führer's room.

No pulse.

He bellowed at the batman, "Are the rest of these fools deaf or dead? Rouse them at once."

Just then the guard commander came charging in, forgetting to salute Von Weldtsen, "Herr General what is wrong?"

Von Weldtsen barked, "Since when do you not salute your superiors?"

The soldier straightened and saluted.

Von Weldtsen responded before snapping, "Go and round up all the catering staff and report back to me. Move man, time is of the essence."

A lifelong carnivore, Von Weldtsen's detestation of salads had left him as the sole survivor of the command group.

Silently, carefully Gaston Irissou had earlier picked his way between the pickets and slunk down to the rocky cove.

The tide had turned by now and his abandoned dingy bobbed quietly as the sea slowly drew it back towards the shore.

Just outside the breakwater HMS Revenge surfaced and glided quietly into Plymouth harbour.

A staff car was waiting to whip Gaston off to RAF Harrowbeer from where an Auster ferried him to Bletchley Park.

There the excitement was palpable as all morning they had been decoding the pandemonium that was evident in the German's message system.

The prime minister himself greeted Irissou and listened as he described the previous evening's events as only someone with the attention to detail of a master chef can.

A knock and a discrete cough presaged the appearance of the prime minister's aide-de-camp. His features betrayed no emotion as he handed Churchill an envelope.

The prime minister read slowly, then glanced up at the assembled company.

"Gentlemen, as you have noticed I have just been handed a communique, a communique of some import. It originates from Admiral Doenitz and reads as follows, '*The Führer is dead. We wish to discuss the terms of a surrender. . .*'."

Raymond Hattingh