

CATHERINE ROUX

"I was born in Lyon on March 2 1918, just before the war ended. I had a brother and sister considerably older than I was. My father fought in the First World War. He died in the twenties so we all ~~started~~<sup>went to</sup> work at an early age. I passed my Studies Certificate at twelve and mother found me a job in a factory. I worked in a number of places while continuing evening courses. Eventually I was qualified to leave the factories and workshops to do office work. When I was ~~about~~<sup>at</sup> fifteen I joined a factory that made gas heaters. ~~That~~<sup>It</sup> led to my joining the Resistance. From my earliest childhood ~~on~~ I read a great deal. When I had no ~~reading~~<sup>books</sup> material I checked garbage cans. That way I read the Progrès of Lyon, <sup>daily</sup> a paper I dreamed of working for some day.

"Early on I ~~was~~<sup>became</sup> interested in politics. As the years passed I sensed the ~~enormous~~ threats growing: there was Hitler; <sup>and people</sup> people talked of Mussolini in very favorable terms because he had drained the Pontine marshes. At fourteen I ~~was already~~<sup>was</sup> involved in street demonstrations. In the factory I enjoyed a privileged situation because I was the youngest; they let me take classes during work hours. <sup>which was stopped.</sup> The head boss was an older man; very, very kind and distinguished; he had been an artillery commander in the First

World War. He wrote children's tales as I did. I gave him the address of a paper which had <sup>published</sup> accepted several of my stories and they accepted some of his. This created a different sort of ~~sort~~ ~~of~~ relationship between us, besides work.

"In 1935 things were not that great. While I had a very comfortable place in the office, <sup>not</sup> without being overwhelmed with work, those who worked in the factory did so in conditions that rivaled <sup>2</sup> 1850. In winter it was like Siberia; only one brasier. Frequently I went there on errands and when I did I replaced someone for a few minutes so they could warm themselves by the brasier. The disparity between our situations disturbed me so I helped them to unionize. There <sup>4</sup> was no union in the shop. At fifteen I had a union card. Then came 1936. That was an extraordinary period. We had to learn how to negotiate with management. But finally nothing worked and the workers went on strike, and I struck with them. The Popular Front introduced major reforms; a forty hour work week (which soon became forty-two) and paid vacations. I personally knew an older worker aged seventy-four who had his first <sup>2</sup> paid vacation then!

"One day a company executive asked me if I would receive mail and then bring it to him. I was very surprised because we were not exactly friends, <sup>but</sup> he added that it was for a good cause so I accepted. What I did was wrong in those days because I didn't <sup>10</sup> mention it to my parents. My mother had remarried which made it :

difficult. My step-father was a fine man who had been wounded eight times in the First World War. He had served under Pétain and in his view, the Marshal was incapable of doing any harm to France. So I said nothing and the letters and packages started coming. I explained to my mother they were to make packages for prisoners of war, a plausible excuse. I also started / carrying messages to addresses of people I didn't know. After we returned from deportation I met finally met Anne-Marie Soucelier. We had delivered messages to each other's addresses on numerous occasions but had never met until then.

"I was asked to do more for our group<sup>Combat</sup>. For example they wanted to have meetings at my home. That posed a major problem; what about mother and my stepfather. I hit on a simple solution. I bought them tickets for the cinema across the street. They ~~used to~~ tell all their friends what a considerate daughter they had. When they left I signalled by raising and lowering the shades and everyone arrived. All the major figures in the southern zone; Jacques Soustelle, Henri Frenay, Georges Bidault came to <sup>make</sup> eight Place Ambroise Courtois in Lyon. When the movie ended the lights went out and everyone left. I opened the windows to try and get rid of all the smoke and emptied all the ashtrays. They smoked a <sup>great deal</sup> lot. Those are some of the things I don't want to forget. That was such an extraordinary period.

"At work we were now helping hide young men who were scheduled

to go to Germany to work. I was the liaison between our firm and the German work bureau on Garibaldi street. I filled out identity card and cards exempting the bearer from forced labor. I imitated the boss's signature very well. I also had access to official stamps. There are many things like that which were the basis of Resistance work which you would not normally do; they were illegal.

"In 1943 the group needed me in Paris. Would I go? I answered yes even though I had never been to Paris. But that wasn't a serious problem. I told my boss that I was going to work for a newspaper in Paris. He wished me luck, signed all the papers, and wrote the Germans recommending that they grant me the required authorization. And that is how I went to Paris for the first time.

"The train north was very slow, eleven hours to cover Lyon to Paris. At Chalon-sur Saône I had to pass the German control. I had two large suitcases; one containing extremely compromising materials. I smiled at two young German soldiers. I was a petite blond with a big scout hat. It worked. They spoke French so we talked about I know not what, perhaps Wagner. In any event my suitcases were not checked. In Paris it was very difficult to find lodging. The Germans were everywhere. I checked by bags at the Gare de Lyon and went up and down the streets. Every hotel was full. Finally I found a room in a hotel for Chinese and brought my bags. Then I attended to something that had been bothering me.

Each time he was wounded my stepfather had been treated in the American Hospital in Neuilly. He told me how difficult it was to travel by subway. 'The gates close before you have time to get on and so forth.' So, although it was fairly late in the evening I took the subway to Vincennes, the end of the line, then back to Neuilly, at the other end of the line and returned to the Gare de Lyon stop. After that I was no longer afraid of the Métro. It was extraordinary to find myself suddenly alone in Paris.

"Then I made contact with my comrades Enghien and Peck and we started worked on the big project we had discussed extensively while still in Lyon. The Resistance movements were very disparate. Combat, our group, helped set up the MUR (Mouvements Unis de Résistance); the grouping of all the movements. We focused on the NAP plan (Noyautage des Administrations Publiques, working within the public administrations); the brainchild of Claude Bourdet. One of our first tasks was to contact people and see if they were favorable or not to working with us. One had to be extremely careful because there had been many problems, many agents captured. Sheep in our fold turned out to be wolves. Another comrade from Lyon got me a job with La France Socialiste; the collaborationist paper of Marcel Déat. There was a electrical outage the evening I went for my interview and Déat barely glanced at my articles under ~~the~~ my flashlight. He asked me if I had a subject in mind to write about. Although I hadn't thought about it, I came up with the idea of doing a sociological inquiry about the Métro; the personnel, the

training of new employees and so on. This was a subject that interested me greatly. Déat accepted and so I got a journalist card with La France Socialist. This was invaluable. At the same time I enrolled as a student at the Ecole du Louvre which gave me double security. I won't tell you I had an address for I changed addresses weekly. Agents were continually on the run; continually moving. I think I stayed in all the <sup>rooms</sup> attic rooms in central Paris, except for the sections forbidden to us: the Latin Quarter; around the Palais Royal; from the Tuileries to Concorde. Montmartre was off limits also.

"That didn't hinder my research on the Métro because I never had a moment's time for the project. A lovely Alsatian family, the <sup>t</sup>Harmanns, gave us a room in their apartment where we kept all our group's equipment; radio, mimeograph, typewriter. I was assigned <sup>t</sup>coding and decoding. Evenings I continued work in my room. At that time I was staying in a hotel with a very shady reputation, <sup>t</sup>but (you took what you could get) The room was ugly but I had a washbasin and electricity, which was something. By chance Jean, an agent from another movement (and scout from Lyon, like me) was staying <sup>the same hotel</sup> there. This was <sup>strictly</sup> completely forbidden by security regulations. The proprietor was old, widowed and lonely. Perhaps she wasn't fully aware of the sort of hotel she was running. Each week one of us took her out for the evening. The other one took over the hotel desk. We had to deal with very new experiences, and some very unusual individuals, to say the least. To thank us, Mme

Boyoux let me have a second lamp which really helped ~~for~~<sup>with</sup> my night code work. When I wasn't there Jean ~~came~~<sup>was by some</sup> to make identity cards for his group, Ceux de la Résistance.

"December 23, 1944 my chief Marcel Peck did not show up for our meeting on the Boulevard Raspail. Young, dynamic, enterprising, he was always punctual or sent a message. I waited a half an hour, which was very imprudent. Peck had been arrested (and died after torture). Alfred Smoular, a journalist with the Havas agency, replaced him and we finished our project. We set up the future government of France. All the commissioners were named. They had been contacted and accepted, all in total secrecy, of course. I typed up the plans for the Paris uprising, when the Allies came, a document seventeen pages long, and coded it.

"On February 21, 1945, I met Sévère, one of our agents. He gave me a message to be decoded that very night. We met in the gardens of Saint-Julien-le Pauvre. 'Catherine, I think I am being followed' he said. I told him he probably should not have come, ~~but~~ <sup>he</sup> insisted he had been very careful and was certain no one had followed him there. The next day we had an appointment at the Hartmanns' apartment near the Parc Monceau to drop off some papers and meet our head, Count Bernard de Chalvron. I was a little early, which my boss hated. You were not to be early or late. So I went into the church of St. Roche. To my astonishment a wedding was taken place. My life had changed so completely I had forgotten

that for most of the French population, daily life continued more or less as before, while those of us in the Resistance were truly living on the edge. My reverie soon ended. When I got to the Hartmann's apartment the Germans arrested me.

"They asked me who I was, and I told them I was the governess there to take the six-year old for her daily walk. I took out a veil I always carried with me. Nevertheless they insisted on seeing the contents of my purse. They took out everything and there was the envelope with the plans for the uprising. In addition I had other documents because there had been so many arrests recently I visited a dozen or more drop-off points a day, on top of my regular jobs. Sévère and I were taken to Gestapo headquarters in a Mercedes. Somehow I had managed to conceal my wallet in my armpit. Place de l'Etoile the car was stopped by a policeman; it was going the wrong way or something like that. While the driver was flashing his identity card another policeman opened the door on my side so I leaned out and my wallet dropped. We arrived at rue des Saussaies <sup>(Gustave Levallois)</sup> and I was the first to be questioned. A German named Franz, along with Roger and Geneviève Kalame (a Jewish collaborationist couple shot after the war) worked on me. The tactic is to get as much information as possible right away so they were very brutal, very violent. They thought I was Jewish, the sister of Jean-Guy Bernard (Yvette Farnoux's husband). Now I had met Jacqueline Bernard who was short and dark, with dark eyes while Jean-Guy had reddish-blond hair, blue eyes and a light complexion.



He really could have been my brother. They brought him from Fresnes prison. I had my period at this time and the one humanitarian gesture of Geneviève Calame was to let me keep my chemise on (we wore chemises then). They threw Jean-Guy into my arms and told me to kiss my brother. Jean-Guy said he didn't know the young girl and I told them I didn't know him--although I did. He looked so different. His eyes had dark circles and his beard was like the one Christ is portrayed with; curly and red. He had handcuffs on and all his fingers were bandaged. *It was my first job  
see his photo.*

"They continued to question me, over and over again: 'Who was I going to meet?'; 'Whom did I meet?'; 'Where did the papers I had come from?'; 'Who were the people I knew?' Finally I collapsed and told them to leave me alone. They would not get anything out of me before three in the afternoon when I had an appointment with my head. 'Where?' Twenty-seven Place Vendôme I replied although I didn't know Paris all that well yet. They brought me some cloths to clean myself up. My mouth was full of paper which proved providential although I hadn't thought of it. The paper protected my teeth when I was struck. In the bathroom I spat out what I hadn't been able to swallow. I put my clothes back on and they fixed me up. The Calame woman, Geneviève, took the silk scarf I had (you could get nice ones inexpensively in Lyon, where they were made) and wrapped it around my disheveled hair. And so we took off for the Vendôme meeting with my hands handcuffed behind my back. Time passed and of course no one came. The Gestapo already had my

chief. They said: 'That's it. We are returning and you will really get it.' 'Oh please,' I said, 'let's take another turn by Castiglione street.' I played my role well. Once more we went around the Place.

~~"Once again we were~~ <sup>13</sup> ~~back~~ at Gestapo headquarters ~~where~~ <sup>the</sup> questions and beatings resumed. Blows rained down; they used a lash on my back. Fritz went next door where the Hartmann family and the others had been held since that morning. Then Alfred Smoular spoke up and identified himself as my head. This he did thinking he would save <sup>me</sup> but in reality it almost cost me my life. Fritz returned to question me and then told me my chief was next door. At this point the elderly bailiff shoved his watch in Fritz's face. It was after midnight; the time for those who were still among the living to be returned to Fresnes prison. We put our coats on and were taken away. In the <sup>fully</sup> wagon I was able to talk with Mme Hartmann but once ~~at the~~ prison we were separated. I was thrown into a dark basement cell. Feeling about I found a board with straw on it and stretched out. Things looked very bleak. Frantz had said he was looking forward to seeing me again. I ~~didn't~~ think I could face another day like that. I decided I had to do something quickly. Another day I would settle that with my confessor. I had a lovely blue coat with an officer's collar with a simple silver pin to close it. I tried to open my veins with the <sup>pin</sup> but couldn't. ~~The pin was~~ <sup>it</sup> just too thin, ~~it~~ bent too easily. My mother always said I was clumsy. She was right. I couldn't even

kill myself. So I gave up but decided to keep the pin anyhow, as a sort of protection, hidden in my coat hem. Knowing it was there was very reassuring--until it was discovered during a search.

"Next morning they came for me. They took me to the fourth floor and threw me in a cell with four others. I couldn't see ~~having~~ <sup>after</sup> been in the dark for so long and I was traumatized. I clung to the door. 'Come little one, come,' a voice said. I was pulled away from the door by a ~~woman~~ <sup>my friend</sup> who had the only bed because she ~~was~~ <sup>of the age</sup> ~~the oldest~~. I cried out because I couldn't lie on my back. She took off my things, and took a chemise from clothes her family had sent her, and ripped it into strips. She bathed and bandaged me; neck, back, and wrists. That was exceptional, <sup>unusual?</sup> water in a French prison. It revived me. I trusted this ~~gray-haired~~ <sup>old</sup> woman although I said nothing ~~the whole~~ <sup>that</sup> day. She told me she was emprisoned during the First World War because she was caught carrying messages through the German lines in the north of France, where she lived. This time she had been arrested because she was taking care of Johnny, a British aviator en route to Spain via a network escape route. When the Germans burst into her place she was treating his injured leg. It was the most obvious flagrant délit. When they were taken off Johnny wept saying, 'I, I go to a prisoner of war camp but you, where?' She was sixty-eight and very courageous. That night they came and knocked on our door. It is always terrifying when they come during the night. 'Madame Roux, trial,' they announced. I had to go to the Commander's office. I couldn't

put on my dress so Madame Odile put a plaid blanket her daughter had sent about my shoulders. 'Is she coming back?' she asked the interpreter, 'because I gave her my blanket.' 'Yes, she's coming back. It's just the initial trial.' So I went down to the Commandant's office, a splendid room. By now they had had ample time to examine the contents of my purse thoroughly. They wanted me to describe Enghien, who was like a brother to me. I could not, so they beat me and I fainted. Naturally Mme Odile's blanket opened up and revealed I wasn't dressed.