**A field and then a camp**

I am a field and I belong to Henri Rochereau.

I am near Septfonds, hidden by tall trees. My story is special because I witnessed unspeakable events.

When war broke out in the surrounding areas, I was awakened with a start by unknown noises, followed by great pain: I was being stabbed with dozens of stakes and surrounded with a double row of barbed wire! I am being transformed. Scores of long wooden huts were being erected on me, crowded next to each other.

Men were invading me. They were uniformed and armed guards that supervised the work. There were also battalions of workers and craftsmen. What a bustle! As I cover a large surface area, they were building huge towers at each corner so that I was in the centre of this macabre theatre.

What a tragic day, so much suffering, I have kept scars ever since. It was the end of my peace and quiet, I was becoming a muddy and ugly place, with all these people I didn’t know.

After the first to come, still armed, others arrived by the thousands, in ragged clothes. They never stopped trampling on me. I finally understood that I had been turned into a terrible internment camp.

There was nothing I could do.

Every day, another batch of men were marched onto my muddy surface. In less than a month, there were thousands of them. All around me, to bring them in, the landscape was excavated to build roads. All these men arrived when there were already more than enough inside. I didn't know them, they spoke a strange language. I could see that they had been affected by their past, it showed clearly on their faces.

In the evening, they slept on my ground, I could feel their pain and I absorbed their tears, I heard them talking about their families. I too missed my previous life ... I got attached to a few of them, especially those who had fallen into my arms, feverish and seriously ill. Some did not last long, they died on me so early, so young, just as the flowers were beginning to bloom. As epidemics spread rapidly, lime was poured on me, in addition to all the abundant metals I absorbed every day... How painful it was! Among these metals, there were spoons that fell and they tried to hide them as best they could under my skin. These didn’t bother me, they were soft and smooth, and I understood that they were important to those poor people.

I have always been a peaceful soul, but I felt more and more tired with the omnipresent noise.

I was constantly on the alert with this loudspeaker that talked all the time. It announced so many things that were inaudible.

Fortunately, however, I heard bursts of laughter, especially when the men played football on me. There was even a celebration every year where the flags of our country were proudly displayed.

Shortly after all these men arrived, I noticed that some went out and came back in the evening, while others went out but did not come back, it was an unceasing ballet, not to mention the daily deliveries of goods. Was it finally going to end?

Unfortunately not. Other men were coming, in addition to the Spaniards. Not all of them were in poor condition. The Poles, for example, wore beautiful uniforms the first time they arrived, some time after the camp opened, to fly those albatross-like machines!

In the summer of that same year, soldiers arrived, I heard that they had lost the war, and that they were being demobilized. After the weather deteriorated, at a time when nature had time to put on its warmly-coloured coat twice, the agitation began again with continuous coming and going of foreign workers. Some people were not allowed to go out. On a cold and special night that autumn, families, with children, were dragged onto me, Jews from what I’ve heard. I felt their sadness and fear when they suddenly abandoned me.

A special day finally arrived, since on a beautiful sunny day two years later, I was attacked. I heard that I was going to be freed! I was very much alone without my freed inhabitants, but others arrived and some guards were taken prisoner! I didn’t know what was going on. And then, this terrible episode was almost at an end, the buildings were torn down and the horrible stakes which pierced me, were removed! How happy I was to be free of them!

I was bought by the Guérin family who settled in one of the buildings, at my entrance.

Over the seasons, the grass and brambles grew until they covered me completely. Little by little, it was as if nothing had happened during those six winters that seemed like an eternity to me.

I was forgotten, as the people of the village forgot the camp, but I myself did not forget. There are still so many objects, so much that was buried in me and is still painful. I'm so ashamed and memories haunt me. Only the small Polish oratory next to me and the spoons that have remained there bring me some comfort in my solitude.

Much later, very close to me, I heard restless discussions. I understood that a farmer wanted to set up a pig farm on me and that some people did not agree. As usual no-one asked for my opinion, about being used again in a degrading way.

Then I saw a group of men placing a plaque in my memory and in memory of those dramatic events. A hut was even rebuilt so that my story would not be forgotten. Since then, people come to be silent and remember what happened. At last! What a relief to no longer have to bear the weight of my memories alone.