

CEFE

The CEFE is for me a dream that came true. For us, the Belgian cadets, it is a huge opportunity to have been able to participate in this course, before that we could only admire the different reports on the mythical training camp of the foreign legion. This course is, by far, the best military experience I have had so far.

I won't reveal all the juicy details in this text so as not to spoil the surprise for the next participants, but what I can already say is that you have to expect to face your limits. The objective of the course is «aguerrissement», which means that throughout the course the instructors did not hesitate to give us a hard time. We may have felt fed up at several moments, but in the end after all these hours of suffering, we feel that we deserve to receive the famous brevet decorated with his Jaguar head. The Foreign Legion is a world apart and a mythical army; it was an honour to be able to be trained by these legionnaires who all have a very different and special experience. All the replicas, like the famous "Kurwa" still resonate in my head as a good memory...



In addition to the hardening, we also learned a lot, the Selva is a very hostile environment and you have to learn to master it to be able to live there. We quickly realize that we are no longer in our clement parts of Europe, from the very first hours, the climate makes us sweat for the slightest effort, load the bags in the van at the airport and we go out as if we had taken a shower... Everything I learned there will remain countless techniques that I will keep in my toolbox for my function later on. As a para-commando candidate, the experience gained there is a gold mine that I look forward to using and sharing with my future section.

Living for 2 full weeks in the jungle is a school of life that does not hesitate to remind us that the Selva does not belong to us, it is she who dictates the rules. As a reminder, I have been in contact several times with death or certain danger. One morning, fortunately, I had the good reflex to check if something was hidden in my combat vest, because a deadly scorpion (as they say small pincers, big stinger) was waiting for me there in the warmth. Another time, it was a very dangerous viper that crossed my path a few centimetres; the instructors pointed it out to me: "The Gods of the Selva have been with me". We also quickly learn to know the tarantulas that come to seek refuge under our tarpaulins, be careful to check if they were not hiding in our shoes in the morning...

The program was very busy, waking up at 4am every morning, dismantling the bivouac, shaving, body maintenance, etc.. Every morning, we were given a little "legionnaire-style" wake-up, without ever forgetting the famous "par agua"! "to refresh ourselves and start the day well. Afterwards, we did not see the hours ran because



there was so much to do. Numerous tracks to execute like the famous Pécari track or the mythical Jaguar track in group, different courses to follow, different topographies in the jungle where the progression is very difficult, crossings, stretchers where we learn to like the mud care for the skin...

Then, the 3 days survival was also a memorable experience, being in complete autonomy is a rewarding experience, nevertheless it was not easy, because we had a lot of tasks to do before the control of the instructors. We weren't in survival mode to sleep and eat, we had to work hard and when you have nothing in your stomach, and the slightest effort is an ordeal. Fortunately, the Selva was clement and offered us a lot of fruits like Guyanese chestnuts or moucou-moucou fruits. All this work to finish in beauty with an evacuation in a raft. After the survival no time to rest and/or to eat well, we continue in the wake with the 2



days of intense examination. When you have to follow the liana and pecari trails without anything in your stomach or sleep, that's when you think you've reached your limits, but you realize the strength of the human body and you continue the effort.

The course remains above all a group work; it is only with a strong and welded section that we reach the end. As we have been told "alone we go fast, together we go far". I was lucky to

fall with my 2 Lithuanian friends in a strong section with a good fighter spirit until the end. The results prove it, 26 patented out of 30, that's a huge proportion. It was necessary to work as a team, at first for all the group events like the jaguar track or the stretchers, but also for the everyday life of the section. We had to transport the collective material, do guard tours, take care of the water supply by carrying jerry cans with us at all times, etc.

I will end by thanking France and all the people who worked to allow my comrade and me to live this adventure. I hope that the exchanges between France and Belgium will continue so that our successors can enjoy it as much as we did. Who knows, maybe we will meet our French comrades again one day in operation...

SELVA!

Cadet Delacollette