

Enemies Within the Third Reich

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Dedication

People of Albania, Croatia ,Poland, the Czech Republic & France

Disclaimer

This book contains unedited depictions of offensive and horrific scenes to faithfully document the true events that transpired during World War II in places like the concentration camps of Jasenovac, Croatia and Auschwitz, Poland, and the village of Oradour-sur-Glane, France.

Content Warning: This book includes strong language and graphic content that may not be suitable for all readers. Parental guidance is highly recommended for young audiences. Adults sensitive to stressful remarks, offensive language, or graphic descriptions are advised to proceed with caution or avoid specific scenes.

Author's Note: The historical settings, events, and locations in this book are factual. However, the characters' names used in the war story are fictitious and any similarity to real people is purely coincidental, included only to enhance the story's realism.

Introduction

The Albanian Hero

Skanderbeg: Albania's Warrior King and National Hero

Skanderbeg is not just a name; it is the embodiment of Albanian nationalism and resistance—a "Warrior King, Protector, and National Hero" whose legacy became a myth and a source for underground resistance for generations. The name itself is the title earned by George Kastrioti (Gjergj Kastrioti), born in northern Albania around 1405.

From Ottoman Hostage to Military Leader

Skanderbeg's early life was shaped by the rising power of the Ottoman Empire. His father, Gjon Kastrioti, a lord of central Albania, initially fought the Ottomans before submitting to Sultan Bayezid I.

Hostage and Conversion: George was taken as a hostage to the Sultan's court, a common practice to ensure his father's loyalty. He was converted to Islam and educated at the military school in Edirne, Turkey.

The Name: Recognizing his military prowess, Sultan Murad II named him Iskander (after Alexander the Great) and granted him the rank of bey, resulting in the title Skanderbeg. He would later be known by his people as the "Dragon of Albania."

The Call to Arms and the Double-Headed Eagle

In 1443, during an Ottoman defeat against the Hungarians at Nis, Serbia, Skanderbeg seized his chance. He immediately abandoned Turkish service and joined his fellow countrymen in Albania against the Islamic forces.

Declaration of War: He captured Krujë Castle and officially declared war on the Ottomans, raising his iconic flag bearing the double-headed eagle, a long-standing symbol of Albania and the Balkans.

Unifying Albania: He embraced Christianity and formed a crucial military and political alliance: the League of Lezhë, uniting the Albanian princes and installing himself as their leader.

The Undefeated Defender of Krujë

From 1444 to 1466, Skanderbeg's forces held the line against the vast power of the Ottoman Empire, successfully repulsing an estimated 13 Turkish invasions—a feat that made him a hero across the Western world.

Early Victories: He overpowered the Ottoman army led by Ali Pasha in 1444, followed by decisive victories at Moker (1445) and Oranik (1447).

The Siege of Krujë (1450): The Ottomans launched a massive siege, sending over 100,000 soldiers. Yet, Skanderbeg victoriously fought the army of Sultan Murad II, whose forces were ultimately forced to retreat and abandon the siege due to disease and the onset of winter.

Complex Politics: The Conflict with Venice

Skanderbeg navigated a complex geopolitical landscape. He initially received support from Venice and was seen as a buffer state between the Republic and the Ottomans.

Worsening Relations: However, Venice began to view Skanderbeg's rapid rise as a threat to their commercial interests along the coast. This mistrust led to the Albanian-Venetian War of 1447–1448 over the fortress of Dagnum.

Double Conflict: The Venetians went so far as to offer rewards for his assassination and even invited the Ottomans to attack simultaneously. Despite facing a war on two fronts, Skanderbeg defeated both the Ottoman Pasha and the Venetian forces, compelling Venice to sign a peace treaty.

International Support: His resistance was so vital to Christian Europe that Pope Calixtus III named him Captain-General of the Holy See, and he secured military support from Naples.

A Lasting Legacy

Skanderbeg maintained Albanian independence until his death from malaria on January 17, 1468, in Lezhë. Although he died without seeing the final triumph, his remarkable ability prolonged the Albanian resistance for another ten years until the Ottomans finally captured Krujë Castle in 1478.

His indomitable spirit ensured that Albania's legacy of resistance remained alive through centuries of Ottoman rule until the nation regained independence in 1912. It's a testament to his mythical status that, even centuries later, the name was controversially used by the invading German SS Division Skanderbeg during World War II in an attempt to manipulate local sentiments.

The Advent Of World War II

World War II: The Costliest Conflict

World War II (1939–1945) remains the **bloodiest conflict** in human history, claiming a staggering toll of **over 50 million lives**. This immense global confrontation is often viewed as a **direct sequel** to the unresolved tensions and conflicts left simmering twenty years earlier after World War I. The war pitted the **Allies**

(primarily France, Great Britain, the US, and the USSR) against the **Axis powers** (Germany, Italy, and Japan).

The Spark: Hitler's Eastern Ambition

The war in Europe was ignited by the expansionist scheme of German dictator **Adolf Hitler**. In 1939, his immediate ambition was to extend German sovereignty over **Poland**.

Before launching this invasion, Hitler made a crucial strategic move: neutralizing the powerful Soviet Union. In August 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union negotiated and signed the **Non-Aggression Pact** in Moscow. A **secret protocol** to this pact shockingly revealed their private agreement to **partition Poland** between them in the event of an invasion. This diplomatic maneuver was necessary to bypass the **Munich Pact**, which had previously guaranteed military support to Poland from France and Britain if it were attacked.

The Conflict Spreads Globally

While the immediate focus was Europe, the war had already begun on the other side of the globe. **Japan**, an Axis ally of Germany, began its push for Asian conquest by launching its first major invasion against **China in 1937**.

As the German occupation intensified, rapidly engulfing the European continent with devastating atrocities, the spirit of resistance ignited. Across occupied territories, **organized resistance forces** began to form in localities, determined to defend their lives, dignity, and national sovereignty. The global conflict had begun.

Chapter 1

The Resistance Movement

The Skanderbeg Resistance: A Clandestine War Against Hitler

This is the story of a highly organized, socialist-aligned resistance cell known as Skanderbeg, named after Albania's national hero. Operating deep within the structure of Nazi Germany, this group comprised individuals of Jewish-Albanian and German-Jewish descent who risked everything to undermine the war effort and stop the Holocaust.

The Core Leadership and Mission

The resistance movement was secretly organized in Berlin by the Jewish-Albanian couple, Erzen and Jora Kelmendi. Both were elite military minds, having been educated in Germany as ace pilots before the war.

Erzen, a Major, and Jora, a Captain, led the group with a clear, life-or-death pact: assassinate Hitler and his key officers to weaken the German forces.

The Escape Plan: Following any mission, successful or failed, all members were to struggle to escape to Czechoslovakia for a group rendezvous. Their ultimate destination was their homeland, Albania, a nation where Jewish persecution was notably less brutal than in other occupied European states, providing a potential sanctuary and base to merge with the dominant resistance fighting to liberate the country from Italian and German invaders.

Agents Embedded in the Reich

The cell's effectiveness stemmed from its members' high-ranking, embedded positions within the German military and Nazi Party structures:

Name	Background & Rank	Clandestine Role
Sander Bogdini	Jewish-Albanian; Navy Commander (former Officer)	Used his position to relay crucial naval information.
Qamil Leka	Albanian-Jewish; German Captain	Collaborated with the resistance while ostensibly serving in the Army High Command (including time with SS officers in Vichy France).
Aaron Dewishi	German-Jewish; Army Major in the Armory	Provided the resistance with strategic information on German military offensives and armaments.
Samron Frasherri	Albanian-Jewish; German Military Colonel and Adjutant	Gained his rank for exemplary service (e.g., securing French oil depots) but clandestinely passed highly classified information to the group.
Wilhelm Schellnetz	Albanian-German-Jewish; Major	Worked against the Nazi regime after his parents were expelled from government service for suspected Jewish collaboration.
Guxim Dosier	German-Jewish; General	Worked closely within the Nazi-German Military Headquarters, handling vital confidential documents to aid the movement.

The Moral Imperative

These men and women, despite their ranks within the military, found life under the Final Solution unbearable. Though many high-ranking Jewish officers faced immense pressure, dismissal (as in the case of Ariel Schrobber, who narrowly avoided execution), or the threat of death for

showing "sympathy with the Jews," they chose a noble mission over a "shameless victory" under an evil regime.

Deep animosity towards the atrocities committed by the Waffen SS and the Holocaust in concentration camps like Auschwitz, Poland, and Jasenovac, Croatia, fueled their determination. Through a sophisticated undercover network and clandestine messages, they worked from within Hitler's military and government offices for the singular, shared objective of saving the Jewish people and liberating their homeland.

Racism and Anti-Semitism Under Nazi Germany

The Paradox of Jewish Service in the Third Reich

The rise of the **Third Reich** saw racism, particularly **anti-Semitism**, intensify dramatically. Adolf Hitler denounced all "inferior races" in favor of the **Aryan "master race."** Yet, an extraordinary paradox existed within the Nazi war machine: a significant number of soldiers and officers of partial Jewish descent served in the German military.

High-Ranking Exceptions

Hitler was acutely aware of this inconsistency, particularly regarding highly skilled personnel. When the background of figures like **General Erhard Milch**, a key aviator and Deputy Chief of the Luftwaffe under Hermann Göring, was questioned, Hitler famously dismissed the issue with an authoritarian decree, reportedly declaring: "**I will tell you and decide who is a Jew.**"

Despite the Führer's rhetoric, historical records indicate that there were up to **15 or more generals** and an estimated **hundred thousand soldiers** of Jewish descent or partial Jewish descent serving in the Nazi military. At least 20 of these men were even awarded the **Knight's Cross**, Germany's highest military decoration.

The Inevitable Purge

This precarious exception to Nazi ideology was short-lived.

With the invasion of Poland and the proclamation of the "**Final Solution**," the regime's official decree against the Jews became absolute. Even German soldiers of Jewish descent, regardless of their decorated service, were systematically **discharged** from the military. These men were suddenly forced to run for their lives, compelled to escape and evade the very persecution they had sworn to fight for.

One example is the former soldier, **Ariel Schrobber**. He was dismissed from the eastern front before the 1939 Polish invasion after the **Gestapo**—the notorious, elite Nazi secret police—traced his ancestry and identified him as having two Jewish parents. For these soldiers, loyalty and distinguished service offered no protection from the Gestapo's racial laws.

The two left him without a word when the train was seen approaching. Not so far were the members of the SS who were about to ride the train, who were steps away from the SS soldiers. They made it to the train and moved cautiously in the presence of Nazi inspectors whose arms were strapped with a swastika emblem. They had to stop in subsequent German checkpoints for inspection, and if necessary, they had to get off for refreshment at the station's coffee shop.

Chapter 2

A Chance Encounter in the Ruins of Poland

Exiled to a remote area of Poland, Ariel Schrobber—recently purged from the Nazi military due to his Jewish heritage—wandered through the ruins of a bombed-out town. He was alone, uncertain whom to trust: was the next stranger a collaborator or a fellow survivor?

Suddenly, a mustached man in his late 40s appeared, studying him intently.

“I know who you were, and who you are now,” the man sighed.

Ariel froze. “How?”

“Your dusty coat, those faded buttons—the nameplate’s gone, but the cut is unmistakable.” The man’s eyes narrowed. “You’re a Jew.”

Ariel, resigned, asked flatly, “Are you going to shoot me?”

“Oh, no. Don’t worry. My friends are Christians. We don’t care about your religion. This is war.” The man introduced himself as Aaron and invited Ariel into the nearby ruins, where six other armed men were waiting. They immediately offered Ariel a loaf of bread.

“What are you doing here?” Ariel asked, taking the bread.

“We’re resistance. We’ve been fighting the invaders since the start. Panzers reduced this town to rubble, and we’ve lost men, but we keep fighting.” Aaron’s glare was compelling. “Where are you heading now, Ariel? Will you keep fighting for the Nazis?”

“I am confused. I have nowhere to go.”

“Think about it,” Aaron pressed.

“How can I help?” Ariel finally asked.

Aaron’s face lit up. “You’re a huge help to us. Your German is impeccable. I have a challenging mission for you.”

Mission to Krakow

The next morning, the group prepared to leave the ruined town, moving cautiously to evade SS patrols and, most critically, the keen eyes of the Gestapo.

"Your documents?" Aaron asked.

Ariel produced his folded identity papers. "Can you use these?"

"Yes. Our German contact is a Jewish Major, Wilhelm Schellnetz, in Krakow. He'll take care of everything." Aaron pressed money into Ariel's hand for the train ticket.

As they neared the railway station, they hid their weapons and dispersed to secure their tickets, watching the SS patrols and the Gestapo agents—men in long coats and gentle hats—who haunted the vicinity.

"Where are you heading?" the ticketing officer asked Ariel.

"Krakow," he replied.

A man in a gray coat—a Gestapo agent—slowly approached. Speaking in crisp German, he demanded Ariel's documents.

"So, you're a dismissed soldier waiting for your fate," the agent asked, a sarcastic curl to his lip.

"Yes, Sir. I'm heading to the steel plant in Krakow to make myself productive."

The Gestapo was about to press further when Aaron intervened. "And whose authority is sending you to Krakow to work there?" the agent asked.

"Excuse me, Sir," Aaron interjected smoothly. "This gentleman has been assigned to work in Krakow. He is a former SS soldier who was given a chance to live and work by the German Military High Command."

The Gestapo agent stared sharply at Aaron. "And who are you to interrupt my job?"

Aaron held his ground, knowing the Gestapo agent was smart and meticulous about procedure. "I am the emissary from Krakow who will assist him. Sir, if you want complete clarity, I can call the military detachment in Krakow and let you speak with Major Schellnetz, the Deputy Commander."

"You're challenging me to hear the truth. Proceed," the Gestapo agent said, handing back Aaron's papers.

Aaron quickly made the call, connecting with Major Schellnetz while the Gestapo continued to grill Ariel. Moments later, Aaron returned, handing the phone to the agent. The Gestapo listened, then hung up and approached the two men.

"Alright, you win this time," he muttered, his eyes full of lingering skepticism. "But don't be so sure of yourselves. You may go."

High Profile Espionage

Deployment in Krakow: The Spy Within

Upon arriving at the German military detachment in **Krakow**, Aaron and Ariel were immediately led to Major **Wilhelm Schellnetz**. In an isolated room, the three men quickly conferred on their audacious plan. Aaron outlined Ariel's status as a recently dismissed Jewish soldier, and they agreed on the highly dangerous counter-mission: Ariel was to be deployed as a spy by **rejoining the German invading forces** in the very remote Polish area from which he had been purged.

The Strategy and the Risk

The plan relied on exploiting the Nazi regime's immediate military needs. They reasoned that Ariel's military record wouldn't be scrutinized because:

1. **Recruitment Urgency:** The impending invasion of Poland demanded **immediate reinforcement**, forcing local commands to prioritize enlistment over meticulous background checks, thus overlooking religion.
2. **Local Command Tolerance:** Schellnetz would recommend Ariel to his detachment commander, Colonel Schneider, who was known to be **unconcerned with a recruit's religion** (be it Jewish, Muslim, Christian, or Communist) as long as they demonstrated loyalty and honesty in service.

This loophole would allow Ariel to infiltrate the enemy's ranks.

Dispersal and Contact

With Ariel's mission secured, the resistance members dispersed:

- **Aaron's Mission:** Aaron embarked on a numbered, cautious, and **surreptitious move** through the dangerous area, struggling toward the radio contact point to report back to the leadership cell—**Erzen and Jora in Berlin.**
- **The Recruiting Arm:** The rest of his men headed immediately to **France** to recruit more members from near the German-besieged cities, expanding the network while German attention was focused on the East.

The fate of the **Skanderbeg Resistance** now rested on the ability of their newest spy, Ariel Schrobber, to maintain his cover and the operational security of their communications network.

The Shadow in the High Command

In the heavily secured Berlin High Command, **Adolf Hitler** presided over an assembly of his top Nazi officers, including **Hermann Göring, Heinrich Himmler, Erwin Rommel, and Reinhard Heydrich**. They were gathered in a tense double-oval formation—a security gesture by adjutants and confidants—to discuss the latest military developments and campaigns across Europe and Africa.

At the heart of this dangerous circle was **General Guxim Dosier**. Observant and clever, he played the part of the indispensable staff officer, readying vital documents and meticulously taking meeting minutes. Dosier had to exercise extreme caution, yet he used his position to its full advantage. Every tactical discussion, every strategic plan decreed by the Führer and his top commanders, was being **surreptitiously and securely transmitted** to the resistance movement.

As the meeting concluded, Hitler and Göring spoke of the changing operational situation. “Be vigilant and keep an eye,” the Führer warned his staff, hinting at internal suspicions. But Dosier remained calm, his confidence unwavering, already formulating his next move.

His secret dispatch confirmed the pivotal moment: “**The plan is on. Poland is set for invasion.**”

Resistance Strikes: The War in France

Miles away, the leadership cell, **Erzen and Jora**, received Dosier's vital military secrets. Using their technical and methodical capabilities, Erzen was able to accurately monitor German troop movements, particularly in Germany, Poland, and France.

Armed with this intelligence, **Qamil Leka** and his recently recruited rebels, deployed in France, escalated their fight. Despite being severely outmatched in hardware—facing terrifying weapons like sophisticated **Panzers** and rapid-fire **MG-42 machine guns**—their survival depended on superior tactical planning and courage.

The resistance executed a devastating campaign of sabotage:

- **Disruption:** They **blew up bridges** and **cut crucial supply lines**.
- **Ambush:** They planted mines and **ambushed ranking German officers** along vital roads and highways.
- **Requisition:** They fiercely gathered captured German ammunition and weapons to use against their former owners.

Colonel Samron Frasherri, stationed at the German Military Headquarters in France, played a critical role, continuously feeding Qamil Leka the precise, valuable information needed for these strategic operations.

The repeated, unpredictable setbacks caused palpable **frustration and anger** among the German high commanders, but lacking any clear cause for the failures, they were forced to defer the matter and move on to other operational issues. The **Skanderbeg Resistance** had successfully established itself as an invisible, lethal threat from within.

Poland Invasion

The Opening Salvos: September 1, 1939

World War II officially began in the early hours of **September 1, 1939**, with coordinated German attacks that instantly signaled a new kind of brutal, total warfare.

Air and Sea Assaults

The first act of violence was a devastating air raid:

- **04:40 (Wieluń):** The **Luftwaffe** launched a savage attack on the Polish town of **Wieluń**. This was a clear act of terror, killing at least **1,200 civilians** and obliterating 75 percent of the city.
- **04:45 (Westerplatte):** Simultaneously, the German pre-dreadnought battleship **Schleswig-Holstein** opened fire on the Polish military depot at **Westerplatte** in Danzig on the Baltic Sea. This naval bombardment is often cited as the symbolic start of the invasion.

Ground Invasion and Battle of the Border

The ground invasion immediately followed, executed without a formal declaration of war:

- **08:00 (Mokra):** German troops initiated the **Battle of the Border** with an attack near the Polish town of **Mokra**.
- **Three-Pronged Attack:** German forces launched massive, coordinated assaults across Poland's borders, aimed at converging on the capital, **Warsaw**.
 1. The **main axis of attack** came from Germany proper across Poland's western border.
 2. Attacks also originated from **East Prussia** in the north.
 3. A **tertiary assault** was launched from the south by German units operating in conjunction with forces from German-allied **Slovakia**.

The day concluded with intense **air strikes** on Polish cities, cementing the terrifying speed and scale of the *Blitzkrieg* (lightning war) strategy that had just launched the world into the bloodiest conflict in history.

The Invasion of Poland: Blitzkrieg and Partition

Following the initial attacks on September 1, 1939, German forces rapidly escalated the invasion. German troops **stormed Polish cities, towns, and airfields**, launching massive air and ground assaults against military establishments and civilian centers. Hostilities became relentless, occurring **day and night**. Countless civilians were tragically

caught in the crossfire, killed as German bombs pulverized structures and left nowhere safe to hide.

The September Campaign

The invasion of Poland, also known as the **September Campaign**, was the action that irrevocably marked the beginning of World War II.

- **Participants:** The invasion was carried out primarily by **Germany**, aided by a small **Slovak contingent**. Crucially, the **Soviet Union** joined the attack later that month.
- **The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact:** The invasion was enabled by the **Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact** (the Non-Aggression Pact between Germany and the USSR) signed in **August 1939**. This pact contained a secret protocol agreeing to the **partition of Poland**.

The Annexation

The Soviet Union's invasion of eastern Poland began on **September 17, 1939** (not September 16, as stated in the original text), about two weeks after the German entry. Following their joint conquest, Germany and the Soviet Union successfully **divided and annexed the entire territory of Poland**, fully realizing the terms of their secret agreement. This brutal division officially sealed Poland's fate and extended the war's scope.

(Note: The "Molotov-Togo Pact" referenced in the original text is an incorrect name; the Neutrality Pact between the Soviet Union and Japan was signed in 1941, and its related border agreements were separate from the events of the Poland invasion.)

The Collapse of Poland and the Start of the World War

Diplomatic Prelude to War

The invasion of Poland was preceded by a series of tense diplomatic maneuvers:

- **August 23, 1939:** Germany and the Soviet Union signed the **Molotov-Ribbentrop Non-Aggression Pact**. Crucially, a secret protocol revealed that the two ideological enemies had agreed to **divide and annex Poland** between them,

- neutralizing the possibility of Soviet intervention on Poland's behalf.
- **August 25, 1939:** Hitler initially delayed the planned invasion (originally set for August 26) when he learned that **Britain had signed a new treaty guaranteeing military support** to Poland.
- **Final Attempts at Peace:** In a last-ditch effort to dissuade Germany, Britain and France persuaded the Polish government to delay its general mobilization until August 31. Simultaneously, Hitler used propaganda, falsely alleging the persecution of German speakers in Eastern Poland, to justify his imminent attack.

The End of the Second Polish Republic

The defense of Poland crumbled quickly under the *Blitzkrieg*:

- **September 1, 1939:** Germany invaded Poland, marking the start of World War II.
- **September 17, 1939:** The **Soviet invasion of Eastern Poland** rendered the Polish defense strategy—which relied on retreating to a defensible area known as the "Romanian Bridgehead"—obsolete, fulfilling the terms of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact. The Polish government concluded the defense was no longer feasible and ordered all remaining troops to evacuate to neutral **Romania**.
- **October 6, 1939:** The German and Soviet forces gained full control over Poland following the Polish defeat at the **Battle of Kock**. Although Poland never formally surrendered, this battle marked the end of the **Second Polish Republic**.

Global War and the Polish Resistance

The invasion quickly dragged the Western powers into the conflict:

- **September 2-3, 1939:** Britain and France demanded that Germany withdraw from Poland or face war.
- **September 3, 1939:**

- At 11:15 a.m. (British time), the British ultimatum expired. Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain solemnly announced that **Britain was at war with Germany**. Australia, New Zealand, and India quickly followed suit.
- At 5:00 p.m., **France declared war on Germany**.

In the aftermath of the military defeat, the spirit of Polish resistance did not die. Exiled military personnel joined the **Polish Armed Forces in the West**, loyal to the **Polish government in exile**. Within the occupied territory, underground organizations immediately formed the **Polish Underground State**, preparing to fight the German and Soviet occupiers from within.

The Uneasy Alliance: German and Soviet Troops Meet in Poland

The joint invasion of Poland under the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact meant that German and Soviet forces, though largely separated by a pre-agreed demarcation line, inevitably met. These encounters, despite the historical enmity between the nations, underscored their shared victory over Poland.

The Joint Victory Parade at Brest-Litovsk

The most remarkable instance of this temporary collaboration occurred at **Brest-Litovsk** (modern Brest, Belarus) on **September 22, 1939**.

- The city, which lay within the pre-defined Soviet sphere of interest, had been captured by the German **19th Panzer Corps**, commanded by General **Heinz Guderian**.
- When the Soviet **29th Tank Brigade**, led by S. M. Krivoshein, arrived, the two commanders negotiated a ceremonial handover.
- In a striking display of cooperation, Guderian and Krivoshein oversaw a **joint German-Soviet victory parade** before the German forces officially withdrew to the new demarcation line.

Hostile Encounters near Lviv

The collaboration was not always smooth. Only three days after the Brest-Litovsk parade, the uneasy truce broke down near **Lviv** (formerly Lwów/Lemberg).

- A German **mountain infantry regiment** mistakenly attacked a reconnaissance detachment of the Soviet **24th Brigade**.
- This brief but hostile encounter resulted in **casualties on both sides**.

Following negotiations, the incident was quickly contained: the German troops agreed to withdraw, allowing the Soviet Red Army to enter and secure Lviv. These events highlighted the delicate and often perilous operational line separating the two temporary allies as they carved up the conquered Polish territory.

Deep Cover: Ariel Returns to the Front

Major Schellnetz, operating from his post in Krakow, wasted no time. In a clandestine dialogue, he urgently directed **Ariel Schrobber** to abandon his civilian cover at the steel plant and **re-enlist in the German forces on the western front of Poland**. His mission was critical: infiltrate the troop ranks and report on German military movements as the *Blitzkrieg* raged.

Ariel agreed instantly, driven by a powerful survival instinct and a higher purpose. “I can’t loiter here,” Ariel exclaimed. “In this critical time, the SS and Gestapo won’t hesitate to kill if they learn about me.”

“That’s a helpful decision. Good luck and take care,” Schellnetz replied, sealing Ariel’s fate.

Ariel soon departed for the western front. Here, his immediate personal background was less of an issue, but the danger was amplified: he had to remain vigilant against any commanding officer who might identify his Jewish descent and deliberately assign him to the most brutal, critical battlefield.

For Ariel Schrobber, the job of spying had only just begun. He was willing to sacrifice his life for this heroic mission rather than die uselessly. He took up arms, fighting side-by-side with the German forces, yet he was still secretly **at war with Hitler**. He had to be

cautious, ensuring he wasn't noticed for deliberately **sparing the lives of enemy soldiers**. His immediate objective was to seize any desperate chance, even amidst the roar of hostilities, to reach a radio and relay his crucial intelligence to **Aaron**. His survival depended on maintaining his cover while actively betraying the cause he pretended to serve

Compromise: Schellnetz's Fatal Exposure

All German military detachments were on red alert and highly mobile, tightening the security net. This tension made the clandestine communication between Major Schellnetz in Krakow and General Dosier in Berlin increasingly perilous. Schellnetz was already strained, struggling with frequent interruptions on the line often used by SS soldiers. Unfortunately, the inevitable happened: an Adjutant in the radio room noticed that Schellnetz's data feed was being monitored and intercepted at suspicious times. Growing skeptical, the Adjutant used his technical expertise to actively trap Schellnetz's transmissions, confirming his belief in the Major's treachery.

Unaware that he was already the subject of a high-level investigation, Schellnetz was caught red-handed.

"It's all over, Major Schellnetz," Colonel Schneider stated flatly, his Luger already pointed. Schellnetz remained silent, slowly placing his hands behind his head. Four SS soldiers quickly surrounded him; two immediately tied his arms behind his back and dragged him from the building. No trial was necessary for his offense: treason demanded only one verdict. He was rushed before a firing squad, and moments later, blazing bullets ended his life against the wall.

The Arrest of Ariel Schrobber

The crackdown was immediate. Colonel Schneider, now alerted to the extent of the betrayal, immediately notified all Waffen SS checkpoints leading toward the Western Front.

Ariel Schrobber, newly infiltrated and en route to his spying mission, was stopped at a checkpoint.

"You are under arrest, Schrobber, by order of Colonel Schneider," the SS officer stated.

"For what valid reason?" Schrobber demanded, bewildered.

"For high treason."

"That's impossible and profane! I was discharged from service! Now you charge me with treason?" he exclaimed.

The SS officer sneered. "Regret being a Jew. You were given a chance to live."

Schrobber was confined at the checkpoint for days until the military detachment confirmed his new status as an enemy of the Reich. The brief, ill-fated attempt at spying was over. His reward for attempting to serve was swift and brutal: Ariel Schrobber was formally deported to Auschwitz.

Chapter 3

Life in Auschwitz

Auschwitz: The Entry into the Camp

Auschwitz was the largest and most infamous network of concentration and extermination camps established and operated by the Third Reich in German-occupied Poland during World War II. Initially built to house Polish political prisoners starting in 1940, its purpose quickly expanded to systematic genocide.

The Selection Platform

As new transports arrived at the railway ramp, families were forced to disembark together, often after days or weeks in overcrowded cattle cars. This was the moment of Selection, a process carried out by an SS doctor that instantly determined life or death, labor or the gas chamber.

The prisoners were brutally split into two lines:

- To the Right (Labor): Ordered the SS Doctor, "Young and strong men to the right." These individuals were deemed "fit for work" in the vast system of forced labor camps.
- To the Left (Death): This line consisted of "women, children, and older men who are too weak and unfit to work." These people were destined immediately for the gas chambers.

Stripping Identity: The Admission Process

The prisoners selected for labor were then subjected to the dehumanizing admission process:

1. Possessions: They were immediately stripped of all personal belongings, which were sorted and sent back to Germany.

2. **Dehumanization:** They were led to the barracks, where their hair was fully cut and shaven.
3. **Uniforms:** Each person was issued the standard **striped prison outfit** and a pair of worn shoes. The shoes, often taken from previous victims, were frequently unmatched or ill-fitting—a small, yet vicious, detail that underscored the final loss of individual identity.

The young men were led away to the *Arbeitslager* (labor camp), their lives now reduced to a number and the prospect of death through overwork.

Registration and the Descent into Slavery

After being stripped of their identity and given their **striped prison outfits**, the prisoners selected for labor were processed immediately. They were forced to fall into line and march to the registration booth. Here, each man had a number **tattooed onto his arm**, permanently marking him as property of the Third Reich.

Ariel Schrobber, young and physically strong, was transferred to one of Auschwitz's sub-camps for **forced labor**. Thrown into a terrifying world of cruel, hard labor, he relied on his strength and cunning to trick the guards and survive.

In that first week, the newcomers began to discover the horrifying fate of the loved ones who had been lined up on the left. The realization that their families—the women, children, and elderly—had been murdered immediately was a shock from which many never recovered.

The Shower Room Deception

Meanwhile, the thousands of people deemed "unfit for work"—the elderly, the sick, women, and children—were subjected to a chilling deception. They were told they were being led to a "**disinfection**" process.

"Where are we going?" an old man asked hesitantly.

"I don't know," another replied. "All I know is they want us cleansed and disinfected. Just follow what the Kapo says."

A *Kapo* (a prisoner tasked with overseeing other inmates) shouted instructions: "Alright, everybody strip! All males to one shower room, all females to the other! Those with children, hold them tight! Now!"

When an elderly inmate asked what happened after the "shower," the *Kapo* coldly replied, "You'll go to a workplace, but you have to be disinfected first."

From the stripping area, the crowd was ushered into a **large concrete chamber** designed to resemble a shower room, complete with fake showerheads fixed to the walls. Though confusion and hesitation rippled through the mass of victims, they were slowly forced inside.

The moment the last victim was pushed in, the *Kapos* swiftly **slammed the heavy doors shut**.

Panic erupted instantly as the prisoners realized the truth. "They abruptly shut the door! Look up in the roof! They've extended a host of gas smoke!" a middle-aged woman screamed.

It was not steam that began to pour from the ceiling vents, but the crystalline pellets of **Zyklon B**—the poison gas used to commit mass murder.

The Final Moments and the Piles of Plunder

The Gas Chamber

Within the sealed concrete chamber, **panic erupted** as billows of Zyklon B smoke thickened. Victims desperately screamed for help and clawed at the walls and doors, their fingers bleeding as they struggled for a breath of clean air. Women held their children tight.

The victims, now realizing the brutal deception, cried out in despair. "You murderers! You cheated us!" the elderly clamored. But their resistance was futile. Unable to breathe, they slowly collapsed, grasping at their throats and mouths. Death was quick, resulting from **asphyxiation**. Soon, the screams subsided, leaving the chamber silent save for the hiss of the gas.

A New Task: Ariel's Survival

For the prisoners sorted to the right, a different fate awaited: a slow death through **starvation, exposure, forced labor, and torture**. Yet, amidst this horror, a perverse system of selection offered tiny chances for survival.

A *Kapo* approached the new arrivals. "You, what's your name?"
"Ariel Schrobber," he replied.

"You're coming with us. Join the selected few on the train. You'll be gathering up all the personal belongings left behind by your co-inmates. Sort the huge piles and store them inside the warehouses."

Ariel was forced into a grim task, processing the plunder of the murdered. Inside the train cars and warehouses were mountains of personal effects: **clothing, eyeglasses, shoes, books, jewelry, and prayer shawls**, all meticulously packed to be shipped back to the German Reich.

The Kapo's Bargain

During his duty, Schrobber—still clinging to his cover—attempted to introduce himself to an SS officer, sizing up the man as potentially approachable.

"So you were a Panzer operator but were dismissed for being Jewish?" the SS Officer asked, curiosity overriding his prejudice.

"Exactly, Sir. It was a Führer's order, but I still believe not all detachments enforced the policy equally," Ariel carefully insinuated, playing on the idea of regional exceptions.

The officer considered this, seeing a chance to gain a trained, if tainted, military veteran. "Just make it good, and come what may. I'll make you a **Kapo** in consideration of your being a German serviceman."

"Thank you," Ariel replied, knowing he had just secured a position of relative privilege—and extreme moral compromise—that might save his life and allow him to continue his secret resistance mission.

Auschwitz I: The Prison Within the Prison

Ariel Schrobber, newly elevated to the rank of *Kapo*, was escorted into **Auschwitz I**. The SS officer who assigned him to his post pointed to a block of cells. "This is a **prison within the prison**," the officer

instructed. "Law-violators pay for their rebellious acts or disobedience here. This will be one of your assignments. Now, proceed to your duty." Schrobber began his patrol, roaming the barracks and observing the exhausted inmates in their daily tasks. He spoke briefly with other *Kapos*, absorbing the camp's cruel rules and procedures. When night fell, his duty shifted: he was assigned to oversee the inmates during their rest period, ensuring order and preventing any "unusual activity."

Witnessing the Horrors

Peering through a narrow window into one cell, Schrobber inquired, "What's going on in there?"

A distressed inmate replied, "We're trying to figure out how four people can all sleep at the same time in a **1.5 square-meter** floor area. We can do nothing but sleep standing overnight until we see another day, along with others doing hard labor."

"Four people in sixteen square feet? That's a terrible punishment," Schrobber hissed, the reality of the confinement hitting him despite his hardened military background.

He walked ten paces to the next cell and whispered through a palm-sized opening in the door. "Is anyone there?"

"Yes, we are here," an exhausted voice answered.

"What happened? What's up?"

"We've been here for two days, attempting to escape," the inmate revealed in a low tone. "We are given **no food nor water** as we are destined to die from starvation and dehydration."

An Act of Reckless Mercy

Driven by compassion, Schrobber risked everything. He quickly retrieved a tiny canteen of water and, ensuring no guards were watching, sneaked it to the cell door. He held the narrow spout to the opening, allowing the dehydrated inmates just enough to wet their lips and tongue.

He then moved on, descending a staircase made of stone that led down to the subterranean cells, intending to check the darkness beneath. But

as he reached the bottom, he came face-to-face with another **Kapo** patrolling the lower level. His immediate danger had just compounded.

The Methods of Murder

Ariel Schrobber, having descended the stone steps, came face-to-face with the Kapo Lubrecht. Seeing the Kapo rushing away from the cells, Ariel asked, "What's the rush?"

"All the prisoners confined in those closed cells have **expired**," Lubrecht replied grimly.

"What was the cause?" Ariel pressed, trying to sound professional rather than sympathetic.

"**Suffocation**," Lubrecht explained. "They used up all the oxygen in the cell."

Ariel's curiosity, a dangerous thing in this place, intensified. "Wait. Tell me more. Why do inmates die so quickly? It shouldn't be that fast."

Lubrecht narrowed his eyes. "I know you, Schrobber. You were dismissed for your **Jewish heritage**."

"Yes," Ariel affirmed, confirming his cover. "And now I know you, Lubrecht. An SS from the Austrian German Command."

The Kapo's tone turned accusatory. "Why do you need to know more? Are you affected? Do you have sympathy for those bastards? You are tasked with checking the inmates, day and night, nothing more."

Ariel shifted to a chilling, persuasive tone. "You must remember that you, too, are human. You are tasked with accounting for them, alive or dead. When this war is over, **everyone will be subject to war crimes**."

Lubrecht paused, his facade momentarily cracking. "Alright, for the sake of argument," he conceded, revealing the sickening truth. "Sometimes, a **candle is lit** in the cell by other SS to consume the oxygen faster than the inmates can breathe it. Or sometimes, to see their deaths cruelly, the SS hang them with their hands behind their backs for hours, dislocating their shoulder joints until they die."

The Kapo's Life

To press for more information, Ariel quickly changed tack, adopting a friendly, collaborative tone. "You're ahead of me as a Kapo. How's your life here?"

"Being a Kapo, or head of the block, we're well-fed and housed near the entrance doors, away from the worst of it," Lubrecht explained. "You, too, are treated well in the opposite zone. It's good you were given a chance."

"I should have been dead by now," Ariel murmured. "How about the incoming inmates? Where are they currently housed?"

The Living Hell of the Barracks

Kapo **Lubrecht** continued to detail the systematic dehumanization of the prisoners selected for forced labor.

"When selection for work is done, the prisoners are housed in wooden or brick barracks," Lubrecht explained. "The brick barracks, constructed in late 1941, were meant for forty men, but often hold more than **seven hundred**. The total count swells depending on the transports."

Designed for Death

The conditions were intentionally lethal:

- **Inhuman Crowding:** Prisoners sleep in three-tiered wooden bunks, with sometimes two or three men crammed into a single space, covered only by thin blankets or rags.
- **Exposure:** The barracks, once stables, have thin walls with gaps that let in the bitterly cold wind. Though two stoves and a brick heating flue are provided, **fuel is withheld**. Consequently, many prisoners die during the extreme Polish winters from exposure.
- **Filth and Disease:** The barracks have earth floors and almost no proper sanitary facilities. They are **swarming with rats and vermin**. Dampness, leaky roofs, and the constant fouling of straw mattresses by prisoners suffering from severe diarrhea create a breeding ground for disease. This

is aggravated by a perpetual shortage of water for washing or laundry.

The Illusion of Order

Ariel Schrobber pressed him on a critical point: "How is this extreme suffering hidden from visiting delegations?"

Lubrecht's expression soured. "Honestly, our commanding officers order us to make a **pleasant and orderly sight** visible to any visiting delegation. But behind this concealment, it's a horrible scenario."

The Fear of Accountability

Lubrecht paused, dropping his guard for a moment. "I'm telling you this not just because you're a Kapo, but because I fear the end of the war. There will be victory, and there will be defeat. When the Third Reich falls, **everyone will be held accountable for what he has done.**"

"I know, and that's a realistic fear," Ariel confirmed, his hidden resistance mission reaffirmed by the man's panic.

Lubrecht sighed, a flicker of cruel prejudice returning. "I can't blame you for having sympathy, Schrobber—they are also your people. But this is the life you and your people must face."

Starvation Rations

Ariel steered the conversation back to hard facts. "How about their meals? Is it the same for everyone?"

Lubrecht explained the calculated starvation: "Prisoners with less physically demanding labor receive an official norm of roughly **1,300 calories a day**, while those in hard labor get around **1,700**. But after a few weeks on such starvation rations, most prisoners suffer from **organic deterioration**, extreme exhaustion, and eventual death." The diet, Lubrecht knew, was a systematic form of murder by slow attrition.

The Ritual of Appell and Nighttime Agony

The Morning Roll Call

The next morning, at **4:30 a.m.**, the brutal routine of the **roll call (Appell)** began. Kapo Lubrecht barked the command: "Keep moving and make a row of five with a straight line!"

This roll call was a ritual of psychological torture, often lasting **four hours**. Prisoners were forced to stand motionless outdoors until the SS officers arrived. During this time, the guards would impose pointless, sadistic punishments: forcing the prisoners to **squat for an hour with their hands above their heads**, or administering beatings for minor infractions like a missing uniform button or an improperly cleaned food bowl. They were counted and re-counted; even the **bodies of the dead had to be present**, propped up by their fellow inmates until the ordeal was officially over.

The Evening Punishment

A second roll call took place in the evening. If a single prisoner was reported missing, the others were forced to remain standing until he was found or his absence accounted for. This collective punishment often lasted **hours**, regardless of the freezing weather conditions. Only after the *Appell* was completed were prisoners allowed their meager **bread allotment and water** before curfew was imposed two to three hours later. They slept fully clothed, even wearing their shoes, to prevent the meager belongings from being stolen.

Agony in the Barracks

Later, Ariel Schrobber made his rounds, witnessing the desperate conditions inside the fully packed barracks. Thousands of people were crammed into compartments designed for a fraction of that number, making decent sleep impossible.

"What's wrong with you people?" he demanded.

An older prisoner bitterly complained, "We can't stretch out completely. We're lying both **lengthwise and crosswise**, with one man's feet on another's head, neck, or chest. We are **stripped of all human dignity** by this treatment."

Another inmate added, describing the chaos: "We shove and kick each other, just trying to get a few more inches of space to sleep a little more comfortably."

"We can't do anything for now," Ariel stated, the lie heavy on his tongue, his Kapo status forcing him to maintain the facade of indifference to the victims' suffering.

The System of the *Winkel* and Daily Survival

Ariel Schrobber, maintaining his cover, moved away from the cell block and approached a Kapo overseeing a group of prisoners sewing cloth.

"What are these pieces of cloth being sewn for?" Schrobber asked.

"This is how we distinguish one prisoner from the others," the Kapo explained. "We sew triangular patches, called **Winkel**, onto their jackets, just below their number."

The Color Code of Persecution

The Kapo detailed the specific color-coding system used to instantly categorize and identify inmates:

- **Red triangle:** Political prisoners
- **Purple triangle:** Jehovah's Witnesses
- **Green triangle:** Criminals
- **Yellow triangle:** Jewish prisoners (often two overlapping yellow triangles forming the Star of David)

"In addition," the Kapo continued, "the prisoner's **nationality** is often stitched into the *Winkel*. As you see, Soviet prisoners of war have their numbers tattooed on their chest, while other civilians are marked on the left arm. It's a practical way to identify and locate certain prisoners."

Sustenance and Sanitation

Schrobber then inquired about the prisoners' daily struggle for survival.

"The prisoners learned the kind of life to live here," the Kapo sighed. "In the morning, they get a **hot, flavorless drink but no breakfast**. At noon, they receive a **thin, meatless vegetable**

soup. In the evening, the ration is a piece of **moldy bread**, which most save for the following morning."

He noted that only prisoners subjected to **live medical experimentation** were better fed and clothed.

Schrobber lamented the hygiene situation: "I'm saddened by the sanitary conditions. I've heard many children, especially the malnourished ones among the gypsies, have died from **Noma**—a terrible bacterial infection."

"There were poor sanitary facilities, inadequate latrines, and no fresh water for years," the Kapo confirmed. "Latrines weren't installed until 1943, two years after the camp was built. The entire camp is swarmed with **disease-carrying lice and vermin**, and inmates are constantly afflicted with typhus and other contagious diseases." The lack of basic sanitation, like the starvation diet, served as another deliberate tool of mass murder.

From Kapo to Commander: A Sudden Reprieve

Ariel Schrobber, having once endured the brutal conditions of a prisoner, was now running his patrols as a Kapo—a role that kept him alive but entangled him in the camp's pervasive horror.

One day, his fate made a shocking reversal. He was approached by a **Waffen SS Adjutant** carrying a file.

"Ariel Schrobber, you are being **relieved of your status as Kapo** by General Hubert Becker, the Commandant of the 2nd Panzer Division," the Adjutant announced. "After a careful review of your personal record, it was confirmed you served as a **German Panzer tank commander**."

The Adjutant presented the ultimatum: Schrobber was offered a chance to **re-enlist** immediately in the German Panzer Division operating in Western Poland, provided he would take a **full oath of allegiance and loyalty to the Nazi government**.

"Would that be amenable to you?" the Adjutant asked.

"Yes, I do," Schrobber replied instantly, his voice low but firm, seizing the lifeline and the opportunity it presented.

Schrobber was immediately extracted from Auschwitz, well-fed, and issued a neat, black **Wehrmacht Panzer wool uniform**. After a rushed **twenty-day orientation and training**, he was dispatched to the German Military field detachment in **Warsaw**, ready for the battlefield—and the highly dangerous resumption of his true mission as a spy for the resistance.

Chapter 4

European Turmoil

The "Phony War": Allied Inaction

Despite declaring war on Germany following the invasion of Poland, **Britain and France provided minimal military aid to their Polish ally**, an action that quickly earned the period the derisive nickname, the "**Phony War**" (or *Sitzkrieg*).

- **Britain's Limited Response:** Britain's response was largely symbolic. While British aircraft conducted limited bombings against German warships—actions that were, paradoxically, opposed by Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain—no major land offensive was launched.
- **France's Modest Assault:** France failed to launch a full-scale attack against the German border. Instead, French forces conducted only **modest, cautious assaults** that ceased entirely once Poland was defeated in early October 1939.

For months, the Western Front remained eerily quiet, leading to heavy criticism that the Allies were not seriously engaged in the war.

This period of stagnation ended abruptly in **1940** when German hostilities escalated exponentially:

- **April 1940:** Germany invaded **Norway**.
- **May 1940:** Germany launched its devastating *Blitzkrieg* against the **Low Countries (Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg)** and **France**, igniting the war on the Western Front.

The *Blitzkrieg* Conquest of Poland

German forces advanced through Poland at a **dizzying, relentless rate**, demonstrating the devastating effectiveness of their new military strategy: the ***Blitzkrieg***, or "lightning war."

The German Method

The *Blitzkrieg* utilized combined-arms warfare to overwhelm the Polish defenses:

- **Armored Assault:** Heavy **Panzer tanks** and motorized divisions **smashed through enemy lines**, immediately isolating and encircling large segments of the Polish army. While the infantry mopped up the trapped units, the armored spearheads rushed forward to repeat the pattern, granting the Polish defense no time to regroup.
- **Air Superiority:** The sophisticated German air force, the **Luftwaffe**, instantly destroyed Poland's limited air capability. It then provided vital close air support for the ground troops and launched indiscriminate bombing raids on Polish cities, terrorizing the civilian population and further disrupting the defense.

The Hopeless Polish Defense

Although the Polish army managed to mobilize **one million men**, they were tragically **hopelessly outmatched in every respect**.

Rather than forming strong defensive positions, Polish commanders made the fatal error of rushing their troops to the front to meet the *Blitzkrieg* head-on. This scattered, uncoordinated approach allowed the German forces to **systematically capture or annihilate** units. The desperate situation was symbolized by the famously ill-fated strategy of sending **Polish horse cavalry** into battle against heavy German armor.

The result was a swift collapse: German forces reached the outskirts of **Warsaw** by **September 8**, having advanced an astonishing **140 miles** in just the first week of the invasion.

The Final Collapse and Partition of Poland

The Polish Armed Forces had desperately hoped to hold out long enough for Britain and France to launch a decisive offensive against Germany in the west. However, all hope was lost on **September 17** when **Soviet forces invaded from the east**, fulfilling the terms of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.

- **Flight and Surrender:** The following day, the Polish government and military leadership fled the country. On **September 28**, the Warsaw garrison finally surrendered to the relentless German siege.
- **Fourth Partition:** That same day, Germany and the USSR formally concluded an agreement outlining their zones of occupation. For the **fourth time** in its history, Poland was tragically partitioned by its more powerful neighbors.

The Resistance Goes Underground

News of **Major Schellnetz's execution** was a devastating blow that forced **Aaron** and the rest of the resistance cell to immediately change their position and plans.

- **Escalated Crackdown:** Following Schellnetz's death, suspicion of treason against several German-Jewish officers intensified. By order of the Führer, the German High Military Command mobilized astute **Gestapo agents** across occupied Europe to entrap traitors. Security was placed on red alert everywhere.
- **The Escape:** The **Gestapo and SS** became ubiquitous, intensifying their campaign against rebels. Houses, buildings, schools, and churches were brutally sacked to eradicate suspects. Facing this immediate threat, Aaron and his men became evasive, struggling to escape Poland and meet the core leadership.
- **Rendezvous in Czechoslovakia:** Leaders **Erzen and Jora** had already sneaked out of Berlin to German-occupied **Czechoslovakia**, and Aaron and his men were determined to join them there, struggling to evade the pursuing SS and Gestapo units along the entire journey.

The Invasion Unleashed: September 1, 1939

The invasion of Poland, the event that launched World War II, began with a coordinated, violent shock on **September 1, 1939**.

- **04:40 AM: The Air Terror:** The **Luftwaffe** initiated the attack by indiscriminately bombing the Polish town of **Wieluń**, killing at least a thousand civilians and leaving **three-quarters (75%) of the city destroyed.**
- **The Sea Attack:** Almost simultaneously, the German battleship **Schleswig-Holstein** opened fire on the Polish military depot at **Westerplatte** in Danzig on the Baltic Sea.
- **08:00 AM: The Ground Offensive:** Without a formal declaration of war, German troops launched the **Battle of the Border** near the town of **Mokra**.

German forces struck across Poland's western, southern, and northern borders, supported by air strikes on Polish cities. The assaults formed a three-pronged thrust aimed at the capital: the main attack came from Germany proper, forces moved from East Prussia in the north, and a tertiary attack involved units from German-allied **Slovakia** in the south.

All these axes **converged on Warsaw**.

The Speed of the Blitzkrieg

The German strategy of **Blitzkrieg** ("lightning war") allowed their armored divisions to achieve immediate and terrifying speed:

- **Fictional Units:** By **September 3**, the advance was dizzying. Panzer tanks, including units led by **Hans von Rutherford** and the corps commanded by **Gary von Kohler**, had already reached the Vistula and Narew rivers, respectively.
- **Ariel Schrobber's Advance:** Ariel Schrobber's **Tiger II** tank unit was already beyond the Warta River. Just three days later, his unit's left flank was well behind Łódź, and its right flank was pressing against Kielce.
- **On Warsaw's Doorstep:** By **September 8**, one armored corps had reached the **outskirts of Warsaw**, having advanced an astonishing **220 kilometers** in just the first week of the campaign. The sheer speed of this advance demonstrated the overwhelming nature of the attack, leaving

the Polish defense fractured and unable to establish a coherent defense.

Fall Weiss: The Encirclement of Poland

The entire German invasion was executing its role in the operational blueprint known as **Fall Weiss** (Case White). The German command successfully employed a vast encircling movement that rapidly shattered Polish resistance.

- **Northern Thrust:** General **Guderian** led his Third Army tanks across the Narew River, driving toward the line of the Bug River to complete the envelopment of Warsaw from the east.
- **Central and Southern Advance:** On the right of the Vistula River, between Warsaw and Sandomierz, the light division of **Schrobbner** advanced. Further south, the forces under **List** pressed toward the San River, above and below the town of Przemyśl.

The Polish Collapse and Retreat

The speed of the German *Blitzkrieg* led to immediate and catastrophic losses for Poland:

- **Territorial Abandonment:** In the first week, Polish forces were forced to abandon major regions, including **Pomerelia, the Polish Corridor, Greater Poland, and Upper Silesia**. The Polish strategy of defending the border proved a total failure, failing to weaken the German advance.
- **The Retreat:** Polish commander-in-chief, Marshal **Edward Rydz-Śmigły**, ordered a **general retreat to the southeast**, directing remaining troops toward the so-called **Romanian Bridgehead**, a final defensive zone near the border.
- **The Encirclement Tightens:** Despite the retreat, German forces were relentless, completing the encirclement of Polish forces west of the Vistula (in the Łódź and Poznań areas) while simultaneously penetrating deep into eastern Poland.

The Siege of Warsaw

From the first hours of the war, the capital city of **Warsaw** was under heavy aerial bombardment. The siege intensified dramatically:

- **September 13:** German forces began the ground siege of Warsaw. They also reached the major city of **Lwów** in eastern Poland on the same day.
- **September 14:** Over a **thousand German fighter aircraft** bombed Warsaw, pulverizing the city and signaling the devastating fate of the capital.

Historical Context: The Failed Polish Defense

The Polish defensive strategy rested on a dangerous miscalculation: it permitted the Germans to advance between two major Polish army groups along the Berlin-Warsaw-Łódź line. This maneuver was supposed to allow the **Armia Prusy** (Prussian Army)—the Supreme Commander's largest reserve army—to mobilize as a rear guard and execute a final, crucial encirclement of the advancing Germans.

Unfortunately, Polish military planners **failed to foresee the unprecedented speed of the German Blitzkrieg**. They had optimistically predicted the full mobilization of the Armia Prusy by **September 16**, by which point it was far too late. The rapid German advance rendered the entire strategic defense plan obsolete before it could even be executed.

Ariel Schrobber: Hunted on the Battlefield

The execution of Major Schellnetz in Krakow sent immediate shockwaves through the resistance network. Colonel Schneider acted swiftly, alerting all military detachments to the imminent capture of **Ariel Schrobber**, branding the dismissed Jewish soldier a "renegade" who required on-site execution.

At that very moment, Schrobber's tank was pressing the assault on the outskirts of **Warsaw**.

- **The Alert:** As his tank advanced, a nearby German tank crew was receiving the transmitted alert about Schrobber.

Since tank personnel rarely knew the identities of the pilots in other units, they could not immediately identify him.

- **Imminent Discovery:** Inside Schrobber's own tank, his two comrades were straining to grasp the radio message. Schrobber, however, was already acutely **keen and cautious**. He instantly grasped the terrifying aftereffect of Schellnetz's entrapment: the German command knew he was a traitor, and his execution order was now circulating on the battlefield. He was fighting the war on two fronts: the Poles outside, and his own comrades inside the German ranks.

Fugitive in the Forest

The moment Ariel Schrobber realized his comrades had intercepted the execution order, he made a ruthless decision: he quickly silenced both men with slugs from his **Luger**. Now a renegade, he drove the **Tiger II** tank away from the outskirts of Warsaw and deep into a dense, grassy forest for cover.

Recognizing the extreme danger, he immediately dragged the corpses of his comrades out of the tank. His vehicle, now camouflaged with shrubs and tall leaves, became his temporary fortress, defended by the tank itself, its machine gun, and his personal Luger. He had nowhere else to go; the German forces had already encircled the entire vicinity.

Evasion of the Panzer Convoy

The following morning, while scouting the nearby road with his binoculars, he spotted billows of dark smoke. "**Here they come. Convoy of Panzers!**" he sighed.

He frantically grabbed more foliage to cover the long gun barrel and the metal canopy, ensuring no light would reflect and betray his position. Schrobber then opted for a greater risk: he hid a hundred meters away from the camouflaged Tiger, setting up his **machine gun** in a stable position, ready to fire if the convoy happened to spot the vehicle.

Tense and anxious, his fingers taut on the trigger, he held his breath as the Panzers passed. Fortunately, the tank personnel leaning out of their turrets didn't see the concealed Tiger. Schrobber remained motionless until the convoy was far out of sight, ensuring no one glanced back at the dense forest.

Trekking to the Ruins

He knew the tank was a liability. His only viable option was to abandon the heavy Tiger and his machine gun to make his movement easier and lighter. He began the long, arduous walk toward the ruined city, occasionally having to **conceal himself** on grassy slopes whenever German troops in trucks passed by.

As he cautiously approached the fallen gates, the sight of **rubble and burning, ruined structures** loomed large. The area was eerily silent, broken only by the sound of falling debris when strong winds buffeted weakened buildings. Exhausted, his knees quivering, and his mouth so dry that his lips were cracked, Schrobber desperately needed food and water, having consumed the last of his scant supplies along the way.

The Wine Shop Encounter

Driven by desperate thirst, Ariel Schrobber slipped into the open door of a coffee shop half-spared by the fighting. He was lucky: he found a bottle of **wine** and a piece of **baguette**, but no water or coffee—the supply lines were destroyed. Exhausted, he sank onto the floor, staying conscious and vigilant, knowing anyone could be a threat.

Just as he was savoring the brief comfort, he heard footsteps approaching the back door. Schrobber instantly grabbed his pistol, took cover in the wine cellar, and waited.

"Raise your hands in the air and face the wall!" he shouted.

The figure—a mustached man in a dusty-gray coat and a black Parisian cap—immediately complied.

"I am not an enemy. Don't worry, I am not armed," the man said.

Schrobbler frisked the man at gunpoint and pushed him into the main space. "Alright, who are you?"

"I am **Ignacy**, the owner of this wine shop. The rebels and your Nazi comrades had bloody clashes here; the result is what you see. Most residents fled when they heard about the rebel attack."

"You speak German?" Ariel asked.

"Yes, a little."

"Have the Germans occupied this place?"

"Yes. They arrived weeks ago, cleared the town, and established checkpoints in every corner." Ignacy led him to the half-open back door and pointed out the nearest checkpoint, where several SS soldiers were on guard.

A Dangerous Confession

Ariel slammed the door shut, keeping his gun aimed. "Aren't you glad to see your comrades? Why not approach them?" Ignacy insinuated.

"Shut up! I'll see them later. You are my prisoner," Ariel snapped.

"But why? I'm just an ordinary citizen. Are you German?" Ignacy pleaded.

"Of course, I am. I am a **dismissed German-Jewish soldier and a deserter**," Ariel confessed, needing to establish a baseline of common threat.

Ignacy's fear shifted to caution. "I am half-Jewish myself, and I hate the Final Solution. Don't be afraid, I won't tell them. Trust me."

"No. I don't trust anybody until I get away from here," Ariel stated, grabbing a curtain lace and tying Ignacy's hands behind his back. "Stay here for a while until I get away."

"You can't do this! Your comrades will notice I'm missing. They will come here and find you!" Ignacy warned. "I have a wife and child waiting at home."

The Bargain

Ariel paused, contemplating the severe danger. He needed a resource, not a hostage.

"Alright, Ignacy, I will release you if you cooperate with me, or I will blow your house down by any means," Ariel threatened.

"I promise to cooperate! My family wants to leave, too; our lives are at risk day and night here," Ignacy quickly agreed.

"What is it you would like me to do?" Ignacy asked.

"You're a friend to them already, right? They know you?" Ariel asked. Ignacy nodded. "**I need a vehicle so I can get away from here.**"

Ariel quickly untied the man. "Prepare yourselves. Get a vehicle, and I will take you and your family out of here."

"Yes, I will do that," Ignacy replied.

Ignacy hurried to his house, and along the way, he ran directly into an SS patrol.

"How are you, Ignacy?" an SS soldier greeted him.

"Great," Ignacy replied smoothly.

"Looks like you're busy," another said.

"I'm just preparing some food from the shop."

"Got some wine there?"

"Yes. But I will get back soon."

"We'll wait for you."

“Sure. Later.” Ignacy walked on, the heavy risk of his secret collaboration now secured.

The Hunted: A Double Agent's Desperate Gambit

Betrayal in the Tiger

The entire Polish defense plan, relying on the mobilization of the **Armia Prusy**, was rendered obsolete, shattered by the unforeseen speed of the *Blitzkrieg*. But for Major **Ariel Schrobber**, the war inside the German lines had just begun.

A chilling alert had crackled over the radio, the digital ghost of the executed Major Schellnetz now signaling Schrobber's own death warrant. Colonel Schneider had branded him a renegade, ordering his **on-the-spot execution**.

As the alert registered with his two unsuspecting comrades inside the Tiger tank on the outskirts of Warsaw, Schrobber made a cold, final calculation. He raised his **Luger** and, without a word, delivered slugs to the men beside him. In an instant, he was alone—a lone man in a steel beast, now an enemy of the Reich.

Sanctuary in the Rubble

Schrobber drove the commandeered tank deep into the concealing forest, shedding the bodies of his slain comrades. For two days, he hid, a ghost of the Panzer Korps, his only companions the deadly silhouettes of his **Luger, machine gun, and the Tiger itself**.

The next morning, his binoculars revealed billows of smoke: a **Panzer convoy** was on the move. Frantic, he covered the tank with brush, then sprinted a hundred meters away, setting up his machine gun. Fingers white on the trigger, he held his breath as the giants of steel rumbled past, narrowly failing to spot the camouflaged behemoth.

The tank was now a trap. Schrobber abandoned the invaluable machine, trading power for silence, and began his solitary, agonizing trek toward the ruined city.

The Barricaded Bargain

Inside a half-shattered wine shop, his search for water yielded only a bottle of wine and a stale baguette. While savoring the desperate reprieve, a noise at the back door forced him into the cellar. Pistol drawn, he captured the intruder—the shop owner, **Ignacy**.

"I am a **dismissed German-Jewish soldier and a deserter**," Schrobber confessed, a desperate truth weaponized for survival.

Ignacy, revealing his own partial Jewish heritage and hatred for the *Final Solution*, agreed to an impossible bargain: Ariel would deliver Ignacy and his family from the ruined city if Ignacy could procure the means of escape.

The plan was hatched: Ignacy would leverage his local "friendship" with the SS, maintaining cover by delivering them wine, while scouting the next day's commissary truck—their ticket out.

Escape by Fire

The following morning, the commissary truck arrived. Schrobber, positioned covertly, waited for the delivery guards to be distracted. Ignacy and his family rushed to the rear of the vehicle as Ariel slipped behind the wheel.

He slammed the accelerator, **ramming the nearby SS checkpoint** and leaving three SS men dead in the wake of the stolen truck. As alarms blared and gunfire erupted, Schrobber drove them through the ruins, successfully evading the immediate pursuit.

At a desolate wooden bridge, the journey ended for Ignacy. Ariel released the family with instructions to drive to a "free neighborhood" in the prairie.

"I am on my own now. **I still have to do a mission**," Schrobber stated, watching them drive away.

That night, Schrobber lurked beneath the bridge. The next day, he emerged onto the road, waving down a massive **German tank**. A commander emerged from the turret.

"Comrade, what's the problem?" the commander asked.

"I was left behind. Give me a hitch," Schrobber replied.

This narrative, already focused on high-stakes espionage and brutal action, is now dramatically heightened with faster pacing, sensory details, and an unrelenting focus on Ariel Schrobber's internal and external conflicts, making his final act a truly thrilling and tragic climax.

The Inferno on the Bridge

Schrobber didn't hesitate. Climbing into the German tank, he locked eyes on the two unsuspecting crewmen below the commander's cupola. As the behemoth lurched forward, he drew his pistol and **shot the commander in the head**, yanking the lifeless body from the turret.

Before the roar of the pistol could fully dissipate, the two crewmen scrambled to react. Schrobber was a phantom of action: **two more shots cracked**, and the men slumped forward, never firing a return round.

He kicked the corpses out, a deserter turned executioner. Schrobber spun the tank on its tracks and raced back to the bridge, a solitary phantom in a machine of war. He needed one thing: destruction.

Duel of the Panzers

He loaded the big gun, but froze. Two more Panzers were thundering toward him, a column of steel vengeance.

Schrobber drove his tank onto a slight rise, giving him a superior firing angle. He slammed a shell into the wooden bridge, trying to shatter its foundation—it held! The two enemy tanks, spitting fire, opened up on him. A shell **screamed across his flank**, violently slamming him against the turret's edge. **Blood erupted from his head**, blinding him momentarily. His tank shuddered to a stop.

Gritting his teeth against the shock, he ignored the blood pouring over his eyes and jammed another round into the breech. He fired, a perfect, desperate shot that **ripped into the lead enemy tank**. It became an instant furnace, its crew members bailing out, only to be consumed by the fire or plunge to their deaths in the river. The final German tank pushed the burning wreck into the water to clear its line of fire.

Sacrifice: The Last Shot

Schrobber's world narrowed to the target sight, his tank a smoking ruin. The wooden bridge was now an inferno, fueled by burning oil and debris. The last enemy Panzer paused, its massive gun traversing, seeking the kill shot. Schrobber's heart hammered a final, defiant rhythm.

Simultaneously, the air tore apart: **fiery ordnance erupted from both barrels.**

Schrobber's tank was struck, its thick armor failing against the direct hit. But his shot was true. The final enemy Panzer exploded, its wreckage spiraling into the flaming, collapsing structure below.

As the German tank was consumed, Schrobber, his mission complete, forced his shattered body to crawl out of the turret. He made it only a few feet before collapsing. His treacherous, heroic journey had ended. Black smoke billowed into the air—a dark pillar marking the triumph of his sacrifice. The bridge was gone, the Panzers were dead, and the small town was saved.

The Legacy of Myan stati

The charred ruins of the wooden bridge remained a grim monument until the arrival of the Allied forces. Engineers quickly

demolished the wreckage and installed steel platforms, creating a new path to cross the river and reach the town of **Myanstati**.

This simple town in the prairie had become a refuge, now inhabited by numerous escapees who had fled the surrounding war-torn villages, including **Ignacy and his family**. They, along with the other survivors, quietly cherished the memory of **Ariel Schrobber**.

Though he died a hunted renegade, his final, suicidal stand on the bridge had been the single, decisive action that saved them all. Schrobber, the reluctant double agent and hero, was eternally instrumental in protecting the residents and the entire town of Myanstati from the immediate claws of the Nazi invaders. His sacrifice had given them life.

Chapter 5

The First Assassination Attempt

The Albanian Pact

The organization's single, audacious objective was clear: liquidate all Nazi key officers and ultimately the Führer himself, neutralizing the High Command to absolutely paralyze Hitler's goal of European conquest. The stakes were absolute. Should their mission fail, they knew the horrifying consequences awaiting them. If they succeeded, their escape plan was finalized: a convergence to **Albania**, where they could live freely, safe from the extreme persecution and eradication of their Jewish roots.

Dosier's Deadly Game

Amidst the dizzying pressure for German victory, Hitler and his top officers maintained a relentless schedule of site inspections and urgent meetings. General **Guxim Dosier's** role—as Hitler's note-taker and secretary—became a tightrope walk over an abyss.

Tension was a palpable enemy. Dosier had to execute extreme caution in feeding intelligence to **Erzen**. By any means necessary, Erzen had to monitor Dosier's reports; the clandestine radio was their lifeline. Dosier, in turn, had to find excuses to access the radio, even if his constant, urgent departures from meetings began to raise suspicion among his comrades. Most just nodded, murmuring, "He's so busy with urgent matters for the Führer."

The Last Transmission

During a crucial gathering, Dosier slipped away, finding a secure pocket of silence to key the microphone. His voice was a barely audible rasp:

"This is your chance, don't miss him. **This might be my last message to you.**"

"I read you loud and clear," Erzen replied instantly, the gravity of the statement chilling his blood.

Dosier immediately placed the speaker down, the adrenaline still surging, just as a Staff General materialized behind him.

"What's up, General Dosier?" the officer inquired, his gaze sharp.

"Nothing, but I had to get a feed from the **Western Front**," Dosier replied with practiced quickness.

"What about the Western Front?" the General pressed.

Dosier turned, meeting the General's eyes with firm, manufactured pride. "We're making a great advance. A great update for the Führer, right?"

"Ah, that's great! Why not get back to the banquet and join us? That's worth celebrating, isn't it?"

"You said it," Dosier replied, forcing a smile, the knowledge of his treason locked cold behind his gaze as he walked back toward the celebratory banquet, the scent of fresh intelligence still clinging to the air.

The Berlin Ambush

The air in the elevated, rustic road outside Berlin was a cold, thick mist, a perfect shroud for murder. **Erzen, Jora, and their men** were coiled like vipers on the high ground, looking down on the road that snaked through the countryside. Their mission: the assassination of the Führer and his key staff en route to his mansion. The intelligence was flawless, delivered by Dosier: **1100 hours**.

A wave of tension swept through the ambush site. Below, the distant roar of engines grew into a distinct threat. The Führer's motorcade, led by the sleek **MBenz**, appeared in the fog's edge.

Firefight and Failed Kill

The moment the vehicle was in their sights, Erzen gave the signal. **The silence of the misty morning was ripped apart by the deafening crack of gunfire.**

The surprised chauffeur was an instant professional. He slammed the accelerator, transforming the luxury car into a zigzagging projectile.

The Führer, trained by years of paranoia, instinctively **ducked** as the glass shattered. The SS escort vehicles immediately peeled off, launching a furious counter-attack to cover the escape.

The main target was gone, but the ambush was not a total failure. One of the Führer's **Staff Generals** was fatally struck. The convoy, abandoning all ceremony, roared toward the nearest German military hospital in Berlin.

In the city, the waiting crowds were stunned by the reports. Well-wishers dispersed in shock, but hidden among them were those who felt a chilling delight—the silent conspirators who wished the bullets had found their mark.

The Immediate Fallout

After a brutal exchange that cost the SS convoy dearly, Erzen and his men melted back into the mist. They had failed to kill the Führer.

The response was instant, terrifying, and merciless. The unscathed Führer, fueled by fresh fury, issued a chilling order: **Hunt and kill the assassins.** An intensified, city-wide campaign was launched to entrap all probable suspects and purge the capital. Consequences would be suffered by many innocents.

"It's time to flee Berlin," Erzen hissed, the failure a bitter taste in his mouth. "This is no longer a safe place for us."

"What do we do now?" Jora demanded, the adrenaline turning to ice-cold fear.

"We disperse. Each man takes his own way out to escape the Führer's inevitable fury. The network is compromised. Go!"

Fury and the Fugitives

The failed assassination attempt ignited a terrifying, indiscriminate fury across Berlin. The **Gestapo and Waffen SS** immediately turned their suspicion onto Jewish civilians, treating them as the assassins.

A merciless campaign of revenge was launched. SS squads stormed houses, parks, and establishments, indiscriminately

shooting suspected civilian-Jews. The streets became sites of panicked chases and bloody endings. Innocent **women and children were not spared** from the ruthless retribution. Many citizens scrambled into roofs and makeshift hideouts, while others were dragged into the open and summarily shot against walls.

The Manhunt Begins

The Gestapo quickly obtained photographs of the main targets: **Major Erzen Melkendi, Captain Jora Melkendi, and their men**, still pictured in their Nazi uniforms. These images were mass-produced and plastered on walls and public posts everywhere.

The stark poster read: "REWARD OF RM 500,000 FOR THE ARREST OR LEAD TO THE WHEREABOUTS OF: Maj. Erzen Melkendi & Capt. Jora Melkendi." The reward was astronomical, ensuring every person in the Reich would be looking for them.

"It's not safe for us to appear anywhere now," Erzen urgently told Jora. "We must change our image to escape from this place."

"Yes," Jora replied. "We have to fabricate entirely new personas and identity papers to mislead them."

The Ultimate Disguise

The two men swiftly underwent a transformation. They adopted a meticulously crafted image that was both commanding and generic: a neat military haircut, a full chest of hair, and immaculate **gentleman-officer uniforms** that projected authority. They backed up the new look with **new identity papers** designed to withstand scrutiny.

Using their courage and high spirit as shields, Erzen and Jora moved into the public eye. They would deliberately walk alongside throngs of army soldiers and officers in public places, using the sheer volume and familiarity of their false rank as

camouflage. Salutes from sentries occasionally granted them respect, but in this climate of suspicion, rank wasn't always protection. Every step was a tightrope walk; they had to be evasive and cautious of every critical area, knowing that at any given moment, a single observant eye or minor slip could mean capture, interrogation, and certain death. Their gamble was simple: either they would be caught, or they would make it to freedom.

Checkpoint Roulette

At the sentry point, the SS guard's voice sliced through the tension: "Your documents, Sirs?"

The guard took the papers, his eyes flicking from the forged identification to Erzen and Jora, scrutinizing them from head to toe. **Major Erzen**, immaculate in his gala uniform, stood firm, meeting the guard's gaze with the cold, controlled confidence of rank. Beside him, **Jora**, having mastered her masculine disguise—short hair under a cap, a credibly fashioned light mustache—stood equally rigid, remaining silent.

"So you two are heading to **Dresden**?" the SS asked.

"Yes," Erzen replied evenly.

"What for?"

"To see the Adjutant for the service transfer," Erzen added, the lie smooth and authoritative.

The SS paused, then turned and walked toward the sentry office. Doubt clawed at Erzen and Jora; the soldier's move was unexpected. The SS returned, holding a crisp sheet of paper.

"Have you seen any of these individuals?" the guard asked, unfolding the bill that displayed their own photographs.

"No," Erzen said without hesitation.

"How about you?" he asked Jora, his eyes boring into her.

Jora forced herself to look at the reward poster showing her former face. She adjusted her voice, letting out a husky, low, and masculine reply: "**No.**" Just then, the **loud horn of an arriving passenger train blared**, drowning out any slight inflection that might have betrayed her.

"Alright, you may go," the SS said, handing back their documents. They had survived a millimeter-close call, disappearing into the din of the station as free men.

Dosier Under the Scope

Meanwhile, the wider resistance network was in crisis. **Aaron and the rest** were struggling desperately to evade the ubiquitous **Gestapo agents and Waffen-SS**. The campaign against suspected traitors and rebels had intensified into a brutal purge, with houses, buildings, and schools being sacked and suspects shot on sight.

The danger was closing in on the highest asset: **General Dosier**. A German Colonel and a General, already suspicious of Dosier's sudden, mysterious actions—his unexplained absences and his urgent need for the radio—began whispering their concerns. Their worries reached an intimate **Gestapo contact**, who immediately put Dosier under surveillance. The General was now stalked surreptitiously in and out of his abode and workplace. The double agent who had masterminded the failed assassination was about to become the Gestapo's next target.

Closing the Trap on Dosier

General Dosier, the high-value double agent, initially dismissed the strange glances and whispered conversations among his colleagues. He continued his espionage activity with heightened caution, but the lingering suspicion grew into a stark realization: the danger was real. He identified his stalkers as **Staff-General**

Otto von Schroder and a **Colonel A. Kruger**. He also traced the name of the Gestapo officer tailing him: **Josef Dillman**. Dosier reviewed their dossiers, marked their movements, and prepared for a confrontation.

The Conspiracy Exposed

That afternoon, Dosier changed out of his uniform and followed General Schroder to a grand hotel banquet. Concealed in the shadows, Dosier observed Schroder deep in conversation with Colonel Kruger, another German officer, and a man in a dark coat and hat—the Gestapo agent, **Josef Dillman**.

Dosier knew instantly he was the subject of their conspiracy. The confirmation arrived via a trusted lookout: a cryptic, urgent note passed to him that read: “**Beware, they have learned of your treachery. You'll get killed on the spot.**”

The Preemptive Strike

With no time left to evade, Dosier chose to strike first. He checked the slugs of his **Luger** and fixed a **silencer**. As the evening wore on, the drunken General Schroder stumbled out of the hotel and got into his car.

Dosier moved with swift, lethal precision. He drove up behind Schroder's vehicle and, targeting the most immediate threat, shot the driver.

General Schroder's eyes went wide with shock and terror as he saw the figure standing over him.

"Dosier, you?" Schroder gasped.

"Who else do you think?" Dosier replied, the silence of the silencer emphasizing the finality of his words.

Double Execution

The following day, General Schroder's murder was a subject of frantic speculation and grief among the SS and townsfolk. General **Dosier**, knowing his identity as a spy and traitor was now confirmed, didn't

return to the office. Instead, he went into hiding and began the hunt for his next target: **Colonel A. Kruger**.

Dosier discovered Kruger's main weakness—a fondness for a certain cabaret. Kruger, already aware of Schroder's death, had correctly deduced that Dosier was the traitor and had ordered a massive manhunt for his spot execution across all parks, hotels, and establishments, including Dosier's own apartment building. But Dosier, knowing their search patterns, remained evasive.

Under the cover of darkness, Dosier—in his dark coat and hat—secretly infiltrated the cabaret. He slipped into the room where Kruger was preoccupied with a woman. Before the woman could even scream, Dosier delivered a silent slug to **Kruger's forehead**. He ordered the terrified woman to silence and escaped through the back door and window, leaving two of his three primary conspirators dead.

The Reckoning at the River

Dosier used the remaining hours before dawn to pursue his final target. Driving a fully fueled **MBenz**, he sped toward the suburbs outside Berlin, where Gestapo officer **Josef Dillman** lived in a traditional German-style house by the river, enjoying the serenity of the secluded area.

Dillman was awakened in the middle of the night by successive phone rings confirming the stunning murder of Kruger.

"What's wrong?" his wife asked from their bed.

"Kruger was murdered in a cabaret," he replied. "Dosier. He's still at large and out to kill anyone he knows, realizing he has nowhere to escape. Stay here with the kids and lock yourselves in until I come back."

Dillman grabbed his coat and hurried outside, but before he could reach his car, Dosier emerged from the dense shrubs.

"Dillman. It's your turn," Dosier announced, gun leveled.

"No! Don't fire!" Dillman screamed.

Dosier fired quickly, striking the Gestapo agent. Believing Dillman was dead, he spun around to flee. But the wounded Dillman, driven by a final burst of adrenaline, managed to grab his concealed pistol and fire back. **The shot hit Dosier in the back.**

Dosier bled profusely as he struggled, running and weaving toward the riverbank. Meanwhile, Dillman's wife alerted headquarters. Within minutes, SS soldiers descended on the area. Dillman was rushed to a hospital but later **succumbed to his injuries.** General Dosier's deadly, necessary spree had ended with the elimination of the three primary threats, but at the cost of his own life, fading into the night near the riverbank.

Dosier's Last Breath

As dawn broke over the serene, secluded suburb, SS soldiers and Gestapo agents swarmed the crime scene, confirming the murder of Dillman. The presence of Dosier's abandoned **MBenz** told them the general was still close.

"He can't go any further. Search the area!" a Gestapo agent barked.

The search immediately focused on the ground. A keen-eyed agent spotted a dark slug shell where Dosier had fired, followed by the terrifying sight of **blood-stained grass.** They tracked the crimson trail backward.

"To the river!" the Gestapo agent exclaimed.

The Riverbank Evasion

Wounded and bleeding profusely, Dosier had already reached the long, rapidly flowing river. He dragged his body out of the

water near the foot of the bridge. Knowing time was finished, he stripped off his uniform, using his thin, long white shirt to tightly bind his wound. He kept his uniform nearby, but ripped off his name plate, leaving only the **star insignia** visible.

He heard the crunch of boots. The SS were coming, sweeping the riverbank with their aimed rifles. Dosier felt the cold dread of exposure. Thinking his luck had finally run out, he pulled his **German Luger** from his waist, ready to fire his remaining rounds at the first soldier to appear. He held his breath, finger trembling on the trigger, waiting for the final moment.

"Halt! Come back now! It doesn't make any sense at all. He might have drifted under the water!" the troop commander shouted, calling off the search.

Dosier released his breath in a painful gasp, the reprieve agonizing. He tightened his makeshift bandage once more. Slowly, he crept onto the bridge, observing the distance to the paved highway. The sun was now fully up. He opted for the cover of thick trees to wait for transport.

The Good Samaritan

Within an hour, a **cargo truck** appeared in the distance. Dosier struggled to walk and creep toward the pavement, leaning on an iron fence for support, and weakly waved his hand. The truck courteously stopped, and an old man in a gray suit and cap gently alighted.

"You're hit, sir?" the old man asked, speaking German.

"Take me to the nearest doctor, please," Dosier pleaded.

The old man, a seemingly innocent civilian, agreed, and they began the hour-long drive to the town proper.

"You're an officer?" the old man asked.

"Exactly," Dosier replied.

"What happened?"

"An encounter with an enemy," he continued, carefully avoiding the truth.

"Where are your comrades?"

"I was left behind by the drifting current," Dosier lied, the old man pausing only to consider the story before continuing his drive.

At the edge of the town, they reached a German checkpoint. The old man quickly handed over his papers. "An officer is wounded, and I have to rush him to the nearest hospital."

The SS guard peered curiously into the cab. Dosier, his head lowered as if unconscious, was barely visible beneath the star insignia on his uniform.

"Okay, go." The guard waved them through.

Dosier had escaped the immediate dragnet, but he was hours away from safety, relying on a complete stranger while his life bled away. The war for the resistance was now fractured, relying solely on the hope that Erzen and Jora had made it out of Berlin.

Escaping the Military Hospital

The old man drove the wounded General Dosier to the military hospital, where an aide immediately rushed him into the emergency room. The surgical procedure to remove the slug from his back was swift and successful. Recovering in his room, Dosier was already on his feet and walking, a highly decorated officer saluted by patient soldiers. Yet, the danger was closing in. He spotted the "**WANTED**" bills—including his own photo—posted on a hospital board.

Knowing every minute was borrowed time, Dosier slipped past the hospital authorities without permission. He found the safest vehicle out: a **veggie delivery truck**. He burrowed under the

sacks of vegetables, holding his breath as the SS guard checked the driver and waved the truck through the gates.

The Airfield Trap

Dosier didn't know the truck's destination was the **military hospital at the airfield**, putting him directly beneath a major military command post. The danger was exponential. His only chance for escape now was a **cargo plane**, a desperate plan requiring the ultimate deception.

He needed a completely **new, star-level officer persona**—which meant taking the life of a real officer. His target: a high-ranking SS officer and his aide. But things would not be easy; a canny Gestapo agent was already sniffing out his presence at the airfield.

Hijack Over Poland

The plan was a deadly race. After securing his new identity, Dosier faced a company of SS ready for a hot and fiery pursuit just as he reached the tarmac. He managed to fight his way onto the cargo plane, scoring a devastating number against his pursuers before sealing the hatch.

Once airborne, Dosier took command. At gunpoint, he **disarmed the pilots and held the parachutists inside hostage**, forcing the entire group to surrender their rifles and jump out over an unspecified location.

With the plane solely under his control, Dosier ordered the pilot to alter course for **Czechoslovakia**, the intended rendezvous point for the shattered resistance cell. But the distance was too great. They had to **refuel**. Dosier forced a landing at a remote airfield in Poland.

The ground was already hostile. The control tower, having been alerted to the hijacked plane and the identity of the fugitive—

General Dosier—was prepared for his arrival. His escape was about to turn into a final, deadly confrontation.

The Final Betrayal

At the Polish airfield, hours of tense **negotiations** yielded a fragile truce. A fuel truck, escorted by SS guards, was permitted onto the tarmac. Yet, the field commander, playing a desperate game, attempted a subtle **entrapment**. Dosier, always one step ahead, recognized the threat instantly, leading to a swift, lethal exchange that left **three SS escorts dead** around the gas truck. The pilots remained hostages, and with German lives aboard, the field commander was paralyzed—he couldn't risk blowing up the plane.

Landing in the Unconquered Paradise

With full tanks, the hijacked plane roared into the night sky. In a few hours, they reached **Czechoslovakian airspace**. Dosier ordered the pilot to execute a forced landing in a remote area with an available, unpaved runway, far from any military contact.

The plane successfully landed in the wild, enabling Dosier's escape. He flung open the hatch, shouted a mocking farewell—"So long, my one-time comrades!"—and walked toward the wilderness.

A wave of profound relief washed over him. He felt as if he had stumbled into a secluded, **unconquered paradise**. The cold breeze, the quiet freedom—he was finally enjoying the long-yearned bliss of life, treading a vague path with no anxiety, no fear. He spotted a settlement in the distance and moved toward it, oblivious to the fact that his "paradise" was a trap.

The Last Ambush

The little town in the prairie was **not free**. It had been silently conquered by German forces, and was now fortified with armored vehicles, tanks, and a disconcerting number of visible **SS and Gestapo agents**.

As Dosier walked into the clearing, savoring his supposed triumph, a full formation of enemy soldiers came into view—as if his arrival had been **expected**.

High above him, concealed in the branches of a tree, a **German sniper** had his precise target sighted, awaiting the final signal from his commander. Unaware of the imminent crosshair centered on his chest, Dosier continued to walk.

The SS Commander raised his hand, gave a final, chilling **thumb-down**. The silence was instantaneously shattered by the **reverberating shot**. Startled birds exploded from the trees as **Dosier fell to the ground, lifeless**.

The Commander immediately ordered the body transported to German Military Headquarters. General Dosier, the brilliant double agent who had executed his conspirators and flown a hijacked plane to freedom, was now chilling physical evidence that the High Command's mission—to eliminate the traitor—was fulfilled. The net had closed, not with a massive pursuit, but with the quiet, calculated precision of a final, fatal betrayal.

Chapter 6

Operation Valkyrie- Second Assassination Attempt

The Weight of Failure: Aftermath of the July Plot

The fallout from the attempt on the Führer's life was swift and brutal. **Army General Friedrich Fromm**, Commander of the German Home Army, was quickly exposed for his direct participation in the **July Plot** to assassinate Hitler. He paid the ultimate price, executed by a firing squad.

By 1944, a growing desperation had gripped many high-ranking German officers. They believed Hitler was leading Germany to certain destruction in a suicidal war on two fronts. The only solution, they concluded, was assassination.

Operation Valkyrie: The Coup Attempt

Colonel **Claus von Stauffenberg** met with his co-conspirators in Berlin to finalize **Operation Valkyrie**. The plan was a high-stakes gamble: the assassination of Hitler would trigger a coup d'état by the Home Army, installing a new government in Berlin that could sue for peace and save Germany from total annihilation by the Allies.

Stauffenberg, as Chief of Staff to the hesitant General Fromm (who had only agreed to join the coup after Hitler's death was confirmed), was tasked with planting the bomb. The target location for the conference was initially Hitler's holiday retreat at Berchtesgaden, but it was later moved to the heavily secured headquarters at **Rastenburg**.

Aaron's Calculated Risk

Upon learning of the plot, **Aaron Dewishi** prepared his own resistance recruits. He saw the Valkyrie plot as the best chance to shatter the Nazi regime and halt the Final Solution. Even if Stauffenberg failed to kill Hitler, Aaron intended to use the resulting chaos to target other top officers.

On the night of **July 20, 1944**, Aaron and his men—all disguised in SS and officer uniforms—waited in the forest near the Rastenburg checkpoints. They were ready to move, whatever the outcome.

Inside the conference room, Stauffenberg executed his perilous task: he placed a briefcase, heavy with explosives, under the map table where Hitler was presiding. But fate intervened: Colonel Heinz Brandt leaned over to get a better look at the map detailing the Eastern Front and, finding the briefcase in his way, **moved it further away** from where the Führer was standing. The stage was set for an explosion, but the key element—proximity—had just been compromised.

The Bomb and the Blunder

At approximately **12:42 p.m.**, the briefcase bomb detonated, ripping through the conference room at Rastenburg. The immediate aftermath was utter chaos and blinding smoke.

When the dust settled, the conspirators' nightmare became reality: **Hitler was alive**. Though wounded, charred, and suffering temporary paralysis in one arm, the Führer—the man they believed was leading Germany to ruin—had survived.

The Coup Crumbles

In Berlin, General **Friedrich Fromm**, commander of the Home Army, received the grim news: Hitler was wounded but functional. In a desperate, self-serving ploy, Fromm immediately ordered the arrest of his own men, hoping to distance himself from the failed **July Plot**. His betrayal, however, was not convincing. Instead, Nazi police placed him under immediate arrest and confinement.

The confusion was brief. When Hermann Göring officially pronounced that Hitler was still alive, the attempted coup d'état collapsed. Fromm was released from his temporary confinement, and a massive alarm was sounded, sealing all checkpoints for an intense manhunt.

Vengeance and Betrayal

Stauffenberg and General Friedrich Olbricht, believing the coup was still viable, issued desperate orders to commanders of government buildings. But the moment belonged to Fromm. Anxious to cover his tracks and save his own life, the general ordered the **immediate execution** of the conspirators and their leaders for high treason.

General **Ludwig Beck**, an elderly leader in the conspiracy, was afforded the cold dignity of suicide.

Fromm's last-ditch effort to prove his loyalty by executing Stauffenberg and his fellow plotters on the night of July 20th bought him little time. Heinrich Himmler swiftly replaced Fromm as the new head of the Home Army. When Fromm was finally arrested and tried before the People's Court in February 1945, his cowardice in refusing to fully commit to the plot was deemed so great that he was **degraded and stripped of his rank**. He was spared the gruesome death by strangulation afforded to the convicted plotters, but he was executed by firing squad for his earlier, direct involvement. The plot had failed, and its architect of the Home Army had only delayed his own death by a final, fatal act of betrayal.

Desperation in Berlin

On March 19, General **Friedrich Fromm** faced the firing squad, signaling the devastating failure of the July Plot. Upon hearing the news, **Aaron and his men**—resistance fighters disguised in Nazi uniforms—ignited a desperate, violent attack on the SS troops in their sector, using the plot's fallout as a final opportunity.

The retaliation was immediate and overwhelming. **Panzers and fresh troops** converged, driving the rebels out into the streets and avenues. Aaron and his cell were forced to **disperse in different directions**, seeking concealment as the German military mobilized an invincible force to seal off the city.

The pursuit was bloody and relentless. Some of Aaron's men were caught, shot in crossfires, or cornered in building structures. **Gestapo agents** were mobilized alongside the SS for the immediate capture of suspected "saboteur-rebels" linked to the assassination attempts. Those captured were immediately gathered at a command post, awaiting interrogation and execution.

The Last Stand at the River

Aaron and his remaining men, determined not to surrender, were now fighting for the last drops of their blood. Their primary obstacle was the

massive German reinforcement blocking their final exit: the **riverbanks** and the **bridge** leading to the vast **virgin forest** beyond.

The German troops, though strong, were hesitant to enter the unconquered forest, knowing it would become a **gruesome snare**—a natural fortress perfect for ambushes that would swallow Panzers and SS patrols.

But the Germans were not giving them an easy passage. SS soldiers established **checkpoints at the bridge** and manned **watchtowers** on both corners of the city leading to the riverbanks. This created a lethal "danger zone" for anyone attempting to cross, as the devastating **MG-42 machine guns** were aimed to sanctify no one.

Aaron's bewildered men were pushed against the wall. Their final, terrifying resort was to cross the river, either via the heavily guarded bridge or by braving the cold, swift current. It was a **do-or-die move**. To survive, Aaron and his men, still in their German uniforms, had to evade the deadly accurate **Gestapo agents**—the most shrewd hunters—while attempting to mislead the uniformed SS troops. Their only chance was to turn the enemy's own fear and confusion against them.

Chaos and Street Warfare

The constant, unpredictable hostilities made the city a death trap. Sudden **ambushes of SS officers** frequently erupted in coffee shops, parks, and public plazas. These chaotic bottlenecks determined the fate of many, often ending in a hail of gunfire that killed either the SS men or the deserters.

When these attacks occurred, the retaliation was immediate and brutal. The SS and Gestapo would **storm all avenues and streets**, showing no mercy to apartment buildings. They would drag suspected individuals out of their homes and force their identities into the open, leading to summary executions or arrests followed by condemnation to the concentration camps.

In this climate of brutal enforcement, the number of **defectors and sympathizers**—those choosing armed resistance over compliance—rose to unprecedented levels, often resorting to open street warfare.

Paranoia was absolute: nobody could be trusted, and the entire populace was trapped between the fear of Nazi crackdowns and the desperation of the rebels.

Third And Subsequent Assassination Attempts

A Cycle of Failed Assassinations

Even as World War II dragged on, disillusionment festered among the high-ranking officers who believed Hitler was leading Germany only to humiliation and destruction. This belief fueled a continuous, high-risk cycle of assassination plots.

The Borisov Miss (1941)

In the summer of **1941**, Major General **Henning von Tresckow**, a key figure in General Fedor von Bock's Army Group Center, became a primary leader of the conspiracy. Working with his staff officer, Lieutenant **Fabian von Schlabrendorff**, Tresckow and his co-conspirators—all from old German families—planned to arrest the Führer during his visit to their headquarters in **Borisov, Soviet Union**.

Their attempt failed before it even began. Hitler arrived heavily shielded, surrounded by vigilant **SS soldiers** and protected within a fleet of rapidly moving cars. Tresckow's group was never able to get close enough to execute the arrest.

Operation Flash (1943)

Tresckow tried again with a far more daring plot, code-named **Operation Flash**, on **March 13, 1943**. Tresckow's group was stationed in Smolensk, Soviet Union, anticipating Hitler's flight route from Vinnitsa back to Rastenburg.

The plan was executed flawlessly: during the Führer's stopover in Smolensk, an unsuspecting officer was instructed to hand Hitler a **parcel bomb**, disguised as a gift of liquor for two senior officers at Rastenburg. The bomb was set to detonate somewhere over **Minsk** after Hitler's plane took off. The code word "Flash" would signal the co-conspirators in Berlin to seize control of the central government.

The plan failed by a technical fluke: **the detonator was defective**, and the bomb never exploded. Tresckow and Schlabrendorff were forced to retrieve the unexploded package, barely escaping detection.

A Third Attempt: The Suicide Bomb Plot

Just one week after the failure of Operation Flash, Major General **Henning von Tresckow** immediately attempted a third, even more desperate plan on **March 21**.

Tresckow chose Colonel **Freiherr von Gersdorff** to act as a suicide bomber during Hitler's attendance at the annual memorial dedication at the **Zeughaus Museum in Berlin**.

- **The Plan:** Gersdorff carried a bomb in each of his two coat pockets, supplied by Lieutenant Schlabrendorff. Each bomb was fitted with a **10-minute fuse**. The colonel's mission was to stand right beside Hitler as the Führer reviewed the exhibits, igniting the fuses and ensuring the death of Hitler, himself, and everyone nearby.
- **The Failure:** Once inside the exhibition hall, Gersdorff received horrifying news: Hitler's inspection of the exhibit would only last for **8 minutes**. The short duration meant that the fuses would not have enough time to burn down and detonate before Hitler departed. The final, desperate assassination attempt was thwarted by the Führer's schedule.

The Death of Erwin Rommel

The Fall of the Desert Fox

Field Marshal **Erwin Rommel**, revered by Hitler and famous as the "Desert Fox" for his tactical genius commanding the **Afrika Korps**, had been one of the Nazi regime's greatest heroes. His success in North Africa, marked by his ability to inspire troops and maximize limited resources, had earned him the highest rank. Furthermore, he was tasked with fortifying the massive **Atlantic Wall** along the French coast to repel an Allied invasion.

Disillusionment and Conspiracy

By 1943, however, Rommel's loyalty had curdled. He was utterly dismayed by the bombing raids that devastated Germany and learned of the full scope of Nazi atrocities: the **death camps, slave labor, and extermination of the Jews**. He concluded that German victory was a **lost cause** and that prolonging the war would only guarantee the total destruction of the homeland.

Members of the growing military conspiracy to oust Hitler recognized Rommel's disillusionment and brought him into their confidence, revealing their plan to depose the Führer and negotiate a separate peaceful settlement with the Western Allies.

Hitler's Problem

In 1944, Rommel was severely wounded when a British fighter plane strafed his car in the field. He was hospitalized and sent home to Germany to recover. Three days later, Hitler narrowly survived the assassin's bomb during the July Plot.

During the ensuing investigation, disgusted and desperate conspirators implicated Rommel, despite the fact that he was recovering and completely unaware of the assassination attempt. Hitler was infuriated; Rommel's animosity toward the war was well known, and his disloyalty was now a dangerous liability.

However, Hitler faced a major problem: he could not publicly execute the most popular general in the Reich without causing mass rebellion. The **final solution** was calculated and cruel: he would compel Rommel to commit suicide. The official narrative would be that Rommel had succumbed to his battle wounds. Rommel's family was tragically aware of the truth—their father was under suspicion, and his chief of staff and commanding officer had both already been executed. There was no defense.

Chapter 7

Atrocities in Occupied Poland

The Soviet Invasion and Poland's Collapse

With the threat from Japan temporarily neutralized, Soviet Premier **Joseph Stalin** ordered the Red Army into Poland on September 17, 1939. The USSR adjusted the terms of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, agreeing to abandon its interest in territories west of a new demarcation line—which included Lithuania—in exchange for **Warsaw** and the surrounding areas, bringing them firmly into the Soviet zone of interest. The Polish military command, already fighting a losing battle against the *Blitzkrieg* in the west, issued an agonizing order: the defense forces in the east, including the **25 battalions of the Korpus Ochrony Pogranicza (KOP)**, were to **fall back and avoid engaging the Soviets**. Despite the order, some soldiers and the populace desperately attempted to defend their cities, leading to clusters of clashes and hostilities. The consequences were brutal:

- The Soviets executed several **Polish officers and prisoners of war (POWs)**.
- Communist partisans, encouraged by the invasion, organized local revolts marked by looting and the murder of civilians.

The Soviet invasion became the decisive factor that convinced the Polish government the war on its territory was an apparent loss.

The Refusal to Surrender

The original Polish military backup plan had called for a long-term defense in the southeastern "Romanian Bridgehead," intended to hold out while awaiting an expected military offensive from France and Britain in the west. With the Red Army now occupying the east, this plan was impossible.

However, the Polish government firmly **refused to surrender** or enter into peace negotiations with Germany. Instead, they ordered the complete **evacuation and reorganization of Polish forces in France**, determined to continue the fight abroad.

The Brutality of Total War

The invasion of Poland was a **total war**, one where civilian life was a deliberate military target. The **Luftwaffe** attacked not only military positions but also civilian centers and columns of refugees flooding the roads. This was a calculated strategy to sow chaos, disrupt communications, and break the Polish morale.

Beyond the bombings, the ground forces unleashed terrifying atrocities. Both the **SS** and the **Wehrmacht** murdered thousands of civilians, with mass executions carried out by specialized paramilitary death squads known as the **Einsatzgruppen** during **Operation Tannenberg**. This campaign was the first step in Hitler's plan to secure **Lebensraum** (living space) for the ethnic German population. Fueled by a Nazi propaganda machine that successfully vilified Poles, Jews, and other ethnic groups as inferior enemies, the German army committed murder against men, women, and children, viewing their actions as justifiable acts against an "opposing" population.

The Allies' Silence

The invasion triggered the expected response: **Britain and France declared war on Germany on September 3, 1939**.

However, their declarations did little to affect the outcome of the Polish September Campaign. No significant military offensive was launched in the West, and, critically, **no declaration of war was issued by Britain and France against the Soviet Union** for their invasion of eastern Poland. This stark lack of direct military aid or political action against the USSR led many Poles to feel profoundly **betrayed by their Western Allies**.

The Reality of *Lebensraum*

Hitler plainly explained to his officers that the invasion's primary goal was to obtain German **Lebensraum** (living space) for the ethnic

German population. However, the execution of this policy led to one of the most brutal and savage episodes of World War II: the systematic enforcement of the **Final Solution** and subsequent territorial occupations.

The result was an atrocity of unprecedented scale:

- **Extermination Camps:** Over three million Polish-Jews were murdered in extermination camps like **Auschwitz**.
- **Ad Hoc Massacres:** Beyond the camps, countless civilians were subjected to immediate, brutal execution. They were dragged to forests, ruthlessly **gunned down** (often with the high-speed **MG-42 machine gun**), and then buried, sometimes **dead or alive**, in mass graves.

The pursuit of "living space" translated directly into the systematic murder and eradication of the Polish population, particularly Polish Jews.

The Spoils of Defeat: Poland's Partition

The defeat of Poland resulted in its brutal division among three powers: **Germany, the USSR, and a small area to Slovakia.**

The land grab was immediate:

- The city of **Vilnius** was taken by Lithuania from the Soviet Union.
- **Greater Poland and Pomerelia** were annexed by Germany, carved up into new military districts known as Posen and West Prussia.
- Hitler appointed his trusted Field Marshals—including **Gerd von Rundstedt and Wilhelm List**—to oversee the crucial military districts of Łódź and Kraków.

In a move that solidified the Soviet-Nazi pact, another secret agreement was quickly negotiated: all of **Lithuania was shifted entirely into the Soviet sphere of influence.**

Hitler's Cynical Calculus

Hitler, meanwhile, stood poised over the geopolitical wreckage, viewing the conflict with chilling cynicism. He undermined the entire

capitalist system even as he shook hands with the "Reds," calculating a grand, manipulative strategy.

"A war is on between the two groups of capitalist countries, for the re-division and domination of the world!" Hitler reportedly declared, relishing the chaos.

He saw the war as a strategic opportunity to weaken his true ideological enemies: "**There's nothing wrong with their having a good, hard fight and weakening each other! We can maneuver! We pit one side against the other to set them fighting each other as fiercely as possible!**"

The annihilation of Poland was merely a convenient step in this global chess game: "**The annihilation of Poland would mean one fewer bourgeois fascist state to fight with! There is no harm when we extend the socialist system onto new territories!**" Hitler's final, ruthless calculus was to watch the world burn while he planned his future conquests.

Escape and the Years of Occupation

Despite the swift defeat in September 1939, Polish forces never truly surrendered. Thousands of Polish troops fled their conquered homeland:

- Over **30,000 troops** escaped through the **Romanian Bridgehead** into neutral Romania and Hungary, and another 20,000 made it to Latvia and Lithuania.
- The majority of these soldiers, along with Polish refugees evacuated by the **Polish Navy**, eventually made their way to **France and Britain** to continue the fight for the Allied cause.

German Occupation and Terror

Hitler soon abandoned his pact with Stalin. In **June 1941**, Germany attacked the Soviet Union, seized the entire country of Poland, and began an occupation marked by unmatched brutality.

- **The Holocaust:** Nearly **three million Polish Jews** were systematically murdered in Nazi camps.

- **Targeting Culture:** The Slavic majority was severely persecuted, with Poles deported and executed in a ruthless effort to destroy the **intelligentsia and Polish culture**—part of the plan for *Lebensraum*.

Despite the terror, a large and effective **Polish resistance movement** actively fought the German forces from within, often supported by the **Polish government-in-exile**.

The liberation of Poland eventually came in **1945**, but it was the **Soviets** who accomplished it, establishing a communist government that replaced one form of subjugation with another.

Dresden, Germany

Dresden: The Next Step

In **Dresden**, the net was tightening. **Erzen and Jora** were stranded, their escape route to Czechoslovakia now a desperate, high-stakes sprint as the manhunt for the Führer's assassins reached a fever pitch.

"The plan is clear: our first objective is **Czechoslovakia**," Erzen explained, his voice low. "The Nazi occupation isn't as brutal there yet, giving us a staging area. From there, we proceed to our native land, **Albania**. Persecution of the Jews is nowhere near as severe as in the rest of occupied Europe."

"Are you certain?" Jora asked, seeking reassurance after the recent losses.

"I apologize; I didn't get a chance to notify you before we lost Dosier. That was the last strategic update Aaron and the rest of the deployed cells received," Erzen confirmed.

"I trust you," Jora replied.

"I've also signaled Aaron to flee for himself to Czechoslovakia. It's not safe here anymore," Erzen added.

Jora worriedly pressed, "But how can he do that when we lost contact at the airfield?"

"Well, he's on his own now," Erzen conceded, the weight of their isolation heavy in his voice.

The Uniform Gambit

"We need to change clothes now; this uniform doesn't feel pleasant at all," Jora whispered, feeling exposed.

"No," Erzen countered sharply. "We just need to clean them. We **must be in uniform** by all means until we reach Czechoslovakia and Albania. Without the uniform, we're just civilian Jews—it's all over for us." The Nazi uniform remained their only convincing disguise.

"We must hurry," Jora urged. The next leg of their journey had to begin immediately.

Aftermath: Bloody Pursuit in Dresden

Following the failed assassination attempt, **Erzen and Jora** kept a low profile in their hiding place while the Gestapo launched a massive manhunt. The initial fallout had been devastating, costing the lives of five trusted men during the bloody pursuit in Berlin.

Three of those men attempted escape by boat, but the water offered no sanctuary. They were quickly surrounded by the **Waffen SS** who mercilessly cut them down, their boat peppered by the dreadful, high-rate fire of the **MG-42 machine gun**.

The Dresden Chase

The other two men, still wearing their convincing German military uniforms, attempted to escape in a **German armored vehicle**. This ignited a brutal, lengthy pursuit through the streets of **Dresden**, as they were relentlessly chased by a machine gun-equipped SS motorized unit. The two professional soldiers fiercely exchanged fire, causing significant damage and loss of German life, including several officers caught in the crossfire.

However, they met their inevitable end—their **Waterloo**—when the SS cornered them at a strategic bridge. Both ends were sealed by military checkpoints and reinforcements. Trapped, the two men made a final, desperate decision: they accelerated the armored vehicle, smashing through the wooden fence of the bridge. The vehicle plunged into the depths of the river below.

German troops poured fire onto the water, ensuring their destruction. Their **bullet-riddled cadavers** eventually surfaced at a nearby bank, carried downstream by the current. The remaining members of the resistance were now on their own.

Diverging Paths to Rastenburg

While Erzen and Jora were cornered in Dresden, **Aaron** and his men were moving in a different direction entirely. Aaron had failed to join the main cell's doomed final plans in Berlin. Instead, when he received reports detailing **Operation Valkyrie**—the assassination plot by top German officers—he saw a new, vital objective.

Ignoring the chaos in the capital, Aaron mobilized his recruits. He arranged their complex journey by both **air and train**, heading not to the south, but to **Rastenburg, Germany** (in Prussian Poland), the very site of Hitler's headquarters.

Aaron prepared his troops for the highly anticipated event, fully aware that the plot might fail. Regardless of whether Stauffenberg's attempt was a success or a fiasco, Aaron was determined: he and his men would pursue their own mission to fight the resulting chaos.

Last Ditch for Escapees

Escape to the Waterway

Aaron and his men were pushed to a single, desperate conclusion: they had nowhere left to go but the **waterway**. The visible danger at the bridge and along the riverbanks was unavoidable. They were critically **outnumbered** and dangerously **low on ammunition**, making a direct firefight impossible.

Their only advantage was their disguise: they had to maintain their worn, authentic-looking German uniforms. This allowed them to move with a precarious freedom, relying on the respect the enemy still showed their rank.

The General's Interruption

In one nerve-wracking instance, Aaron and one of his men walked down a street with forced confidence. They received the expected salutes

from SS members they passed. But then, a critical situation arose: a military car pulled up abruptly, and a high-ranking officer—a **General**—stuck his head out, clearly searching for something.

Aaron snapped a sharp salute. "What is it that you're looking for, General?" he asked, injecting the right amount of helpful authority into his voice.

The General, distracted, immediately responded: "**Major, we are looking for the command post near the Elbe River.**" Aaron had just been handed a critical piece of intelligence—a target and a location—that could aid their escape.

Close Call: Interrogation on the Street

Aaron immediately took a dangerous gamble. Hesitant to reveal the location of the actual command post, he pointed his finger down a street he was unsure of. **General Hans Baier** scrutinized him.

"Aren't you sure of this place, Major?" the General pressed, suspicion hardening his voice.

"We just arrived three days ago, Sir, so we're not accustomed to the place yet," Aaron replied, trying to sound apologetic yet professional.

"Why? Where did you come from and what regiment?" the General continued, his Adjutant and driver watching intently.

"Sir, we're from the **Berlin Military Detachment Armory Division**," Aaron replied, using a unit name designed to explain their unfamiliarity with the area.

"But why were you here since there is an ongoing military operation there?"

"We are part of the reinforcement, Sir, sent to track down deserters after the fiasco of the Führer's assassination attempt." Aaron's final lie sealed his temporary credibility.

The General paused, glanced at the nameplate on Aaron's stolen uniform, and finally nodded. "Alright, **Major Dewishi**, you two are dismissed."

"Thank you, Sir," Aaron replied, snapping a final salute.

The Stalkers

Only when they were marching rapidly down an isolated avenue, without daring to look back, did Aaron and his man finally breathe freely. Their tension eased, they believed they were safe.

They were wrong.

Unbeknownst to them, a solitary figure in a dirty-white coat and black hat, sipping coffee at a distant café, had witnessed the entire interaction. The man had skeptically watched the two officers' strained posture and forced conversation, and the sight solidified his suspicion. He was a **Gestapo agent**, and he immediately began to stalk them.

As Aaron and his companion quickened their pace, they failed to notice that ten more of Aaron's men—dispersed and pretending to be on patrol in the vicinity—were quickly assembling into formation. They all followed Aaron toward an old row of accommodation flats in the adjoining area, completely unaware that a deadly, professional hunter was now on their trail.

The Trap Springs Shut

The Gestapo agent, **Otto Hearst**, kept his focus locked on the officers as they entered the dilapidated row house. "**There they are. I am not mistaken,**" he breathed, the sight of the assembled men in Nazi uniforms confirming his deadliest suspicion. He didn't waste a second.

He scrambled away from the post of overgrown shrubs and sprinted toward a nearby telephone booth in the commercial zone.

Click. Static.

"Command Post. What can I do for you?" the adjutant answered.

"Agent Otto Hearst speaking," he snapped, his voice tight with urgency. "**Send SS troopers immediately to the vicinity of Neustadt, to the old row house near the church.** A group of unscrupulous elements has been sighted—in Nazi uniform."

"Are you certain?"

"Yes! I personally saw them assemble inside that house," Hearst insisted.

"Alright. **SS troopers are coming right away.**"

The Raid is Imminent

Inside the cramped, dusty row house, **Aaron** and his men were deep in hurried conversation, mapping their impossible route to the river. Suddenly, one of their lookouts slipped back through the door, his face pale.

He didn't need to speak. The sound of heavy engine tracks vibrating through the floorboards announced the immediate danger.

"**They are coming!**" he shouted, the sheer terror in his voice echoing the unmistakable clang of approaching steel: a **Panzer tank** and SS infantry troops were already less than a kilometer away, thundering toward their position. The brief window of sanctuary had slammed shut.

Breakout to the Elbe

Panic erupted inside the row house. Everyone scrambled, scattering in different directions as they realized they were trapped. There was only one way out: towards the **Elbe River** or the old **Augustusbrücke bridge**, both of which were flanked by SS checkpoints.

As the SS troops spotted the fugitives moving toward the water, they immediately commenced firing. A fierce exchange erupted. The German war machine—a massive **Panzer tank**—began to maneuver, its crew loading a shell. The tank fired a heavy shot, which missed the group but underscored the sheer imbalance of the fight.

Aaron barked orders for his men to **scatter** and fight their way toward the river.

The fighting was intense but brief. Initial casualties were light on both sides: **one man hit** from Aaron's group, and **three SS soldiers** taken down by the rebels' desperate return fire.

The narrow confines of the city streets proved a temporary advantage, making it difficult for the Panzer to penetrate. Aaron and his men used this to their benefit, executing a swift mock attack to sow confusion among the SS infantry. The Panzer crew, frustrated by the cramped avenues, began ruthlessly scouring abandoned structures, blasting a path through the rubble to access the main street and continue the pursuit as the skirmishes raged on.

Storming the Elbe

The final rush toward the **Elbe River** became a horrifying gauntlet. German forces, pouring out of the bridge checkpoints, immediately showered them with a relentless torrent of blazing machine gun fire. The rebels were caught in a brutal crossfire, with the awesome **MG-42 machine guns** mounted atop the watchtowers giving them no quarter. "**Shoot the tower! Shoot the tower!**" Aaron roared, his voice cutting through the din of the battlefield.

Drawing on their courage and professional training, the men unleashed the German **howitzer and grenades** they had previously seized from the enemy. Their aim was deadly: they successfully brought down both watchtowers and their deadly MG-42s, then razed the command post itself, killing all defending soldiers. The victory was costly; they lost **two more men** as they clawed their way to the riverbank. Behind them, the combined forces of the SS and the Panzer tank were rapidly closing in.

Bunkered Down

Their escape route now required a temporary fortress. Aaron and his seven remaining men spotted a large bunker near the bank and executed a daring, swift attack after the fall of the towers, killing the SS garrison inside. They secured their new defenses, salvaging **two MG-42 machine guns** and several sub-machine guns from the fallen enemy. They discarded the heavy howitzer—it was useless without ammunition. There was no turning back. Aaron and his team were hardened, cornered fugitives. Even the earlier plea from the bewildered German General they had encountered in the suburbs was forgotten. They were committed to the last: the river, or death.

The Ultimatum

The German General's voice boomed from a loudspeaker, cutting through the tense silence surrounding the bunker.

"There's no more hope for you, Major Aaron Dewishi and your men!
I am giving you all the chances to live. Bring down your weapons if you still want to live! Think it over!"

The General's voice hammered home the grim reality: "**As you can all see, you are surrounded. At any time, we can blow you up there! You have no choice but to come out with your hands in the air!**"

Inside the bunker, the remaining rebels were frozen, every man alert and aiming at the narrow slits that offered a view of their attackers.

"What do we do now, Major?" one of the anxious men whispered.

"No. **We will not surrender**, or they will do the same thing when we give up!" Aaron exclaimed, his voice firm despite the impossible odds.

"But Major, he said we are given a chance to live if we bring down our weapons," the man insisted, clinging to a thread of hope.

"Don't believe him! **It's nothing but lies!**" Aaron shot back, the raw truth replacing false comfort. "We have seen suspected people arrested and shot. What do you think they will do to us—deserters and assassins? **We fight!**"

Last Seconds of the Siege

The German General's voice echoed with one final ultimatum: "**I am giving you three minutes to come out with your hands up!**"

Inside the bunker, the pressure proved too much. Without waiting for Aaron's command, one of his men went berserk, rushing the door with his submachine gun raised. He was instantly spotted by the prepared SS troops. Instead of engaging in a hopeless frontal fight, the rebel made a desperate leap from the concrete, three-story-high stairs, disappearing into the **canal below**, which was thick with concealing dry grasses.

SS guns immediately began to chatter, but the rebel returned fire, igniting a full, spontaneous exchange between the two warring parties. While bullets rained everywhere, two more of Aaron's men seized the chance, leaping from the stairs into the canal, miraculously **unscathed**.

The Bunker is Breached

Then came the new, devastating threat. "**Into the canal! The big gun is moving!**" Aaron bellowed, recognizing the Panzer's shift in position.

The massive tank began to traverse its turret, aiming at the bunker. In the frantic scramble to follow, **three more of Aaron's men were hit**. They tumbled into the water just seconds before the Panzer's gun

roared. The bunker was instantly **obliterated** by the shell, followed by a torrent of covering fire from the MG-42s.

A group of **seven men**—Aaron and six others—now began to creep along the canal.

The SS, focused on the smoking ruins of the bunker and the chaos by the riverbank, failed to track the rebels who were already moving past them. Believing their targets were still ahead, the General ordered his men and the Panzer to advance quickly to cut off the escape route. He had no idea the canal, concealed by thick grasses, was leading Aaron's group not into the river, but directly toward the base of the old **Augustusbrücke bridge**. They were seconds away from a potential escape—or a fatal confrontation with the checkpoint guards.

Into the Darkness

The German General realized his mistake. Aaron and his men were nowhere in sight, and the massive Panzer was wasting precious ammunition bombarding empty space. The SS troops were astonished when they investigated and discovered the wide, open canal leading into a ruined tunnel, completely hidden beneath the grown bushes.

The instant the rebels entered the darkness, Aaron stopped. He used the last of his remaining explosives to **demolish the exit point of the tunnel**, causing a thunderous roar. The structure collapsed, sealing the tunnel with a massive pile of boulders and debris.

There was no going through. The General was forced to order the Panzer to back off and find another, time-consuming route around. They estimated the bridge—Aaron's final objective—was still a few frantic kilometers away.

Aaron and his group, now safe from the immediate pursuit, settled near the foot of the bridge, hidden, to lurk and assess the checkpoint security. But their advantage was short-lived. The General had already recovered. From a radio inside the Panzer, he managed to contact and **alert the checkpoints at the Augustusbrücke**, slamming the gates shut on Aaron's final path to freedom.

Bridge of Desperation

Aaron looked out at the churning water. "We can't swim to the other side. The river is too big, the current flows too rapidly. We will all perish if we dare to. **There's no choice but the bridge.**"

They knew the alert had been sounded. In a final, desperate move, Aaron strategically deployed his men and unleashed an attack on the nearest checkpoint, eliminating all SS soldiers and patrols. The path onto the bridge was clear, but the danger had only moved.

Approximately one and a half kilometers away, at the far end of the **Augustusbrücke**, another SS checkpoint was dug in, ready to ambush them the moment they became visible.

Combat Beneath the Steel

Knowing they would be cut down crossing the exposed span, the group decided on an audacious, yet strategic move: they carefully **climbed down the steel girders and began walking beneath the bridge**, approaching the enemy from below.

But the SS were not foolish. Anticipating this very move, several SS soldiers had already done the same thing, lurking beneath the massive steel structure. **Skirmishes immediately erupted in the shadows** below the bridge deck.

The close-quarters battle was chaotic and brutal. Several SS members plunged into the water. Aaron's group suffered heavy losses: two men were fatally hit. One fell directly into the rushing current, instantly lost, while the other was left suspended precariously at the edge of a beam.

Fighting with the fury of trapped men, Aaron's remaining **five rebels** managed to topple all of their attackers, eliminating both the SS beneath the bridge and those still guarding the top. They had cleared the bridge, but the cost was devastatingly h

Air Attack: The Stukas Arrive

The General, realizing the rebels had vanished beneath the bridge, escalated the pursuit to maximum brutality: he called for **aerial assistance** to strafe the deserters.

Just moments after Aaron's five-man band had cleared the bridge, the sky opened up. Two aircraft, moving with the terrifying speed of diving eagles, swooped from the thick clouds.

"**Stukas! Stukas! Take cover!**" Aaron screamed.

It was a rain of fire. The flaming bullets sizzled as they tore open craters in the ground; any flesh hit would be precisely mutilated, leading to instant death. Aaron and his men, now running across the open deck, desperately sought refuge among the steel posts of the bridge. Their goal: the dense **forest**, less than 100 meters away.

The two Stukas made three to five terrifying strafing runs, but miraculously, they failed to hit the targets. Finally, the aircraft peeled away, allowing the five survivors to reach the far side of the river.

They were safe from the air, but not the ground. Unaware of the danger closing behind them, Aaron's band had just stepped into the path of the relentless pursuit team. The General and his reinforcements, accompanied by ferocious **German Shepherds (Hounds)**, were already making their way across the bridge, ready to track them into the forest.

The Edge of the Virgin Forest

At the threshold of the deep, dark forest, the SS troops halted, their General still driven by fury.

"General, that forest is so treacherous that it has killed all our men who attempted to chase rebels," one SS officer warned, his voice betraying fear of the unknown woods.

"The deserters could have gone so far by now at the expense of that virgin forest," another officer suggested, hinting at the futility of pursuit. The General, however, was undeterred. "It happened because they lacked strategy and the willingness to chase them. Nothing could be more treacherous than the fangs of these starved **hounds** and lethal guns," he retorted, his eyes fixed on the shadows. "**At daybreak tomorrow, we will resume hunting them.**"

Into the Green Abyss

The pursuit resumed at daybreak, a purely infantry operation; no vehicle with "iron wheels" could navigate this terrain. Twenty-five SS

mountain infantry soldiers, part of the German mountain regiment, plunged into the expanse of the virgin forest. The canopy was so thick with tall trees and shrubs that it nearly blocked the sun's brilliance, allowing only stray shafts of light to pierce through when the wind blew strong.

Aaron and his men were already deep inside, unaware that they had a narrow lead on the hunting party. The ferocious, highly-trained hounds strained at their leashes, their keen senses dragging the SS forward whenever they caught a scent.

Eventually, human limitations set in. Aaron and his team needed rest. They found a momentary, restful reprieve, leaning their backs against the bark of inclined trees and lying on the thick, cold wild leaves. For now, the overwhelming silence of the forest offered them a fragile sanctuary.

Into the Green Maze

"How long do you think we could see plains or a prairie from this site?" one of his men anxiously whispered.

"Not so sure. I've never gone to this place before, and neither has anyone else here," Aaron replied, his **machine gun** resting across his chest like a final promise.

He stood up, slinging the gun-belt over his shoulder. "Let's just keep walking and come what may. I know one thing for sure now, though."

"What is it?" his man pressed, desperation tightening his voice.

"They're right behind us. We push on."

The minutes that followed were filled only with the sound of their boots crunching on the cold, damp leaves. Then, it came: a sound that ripped through the fragile silence—the distinct, **husky bark of sniffing hounds** echoing in the distance.

"Quick, **sniffing hounds!**" Aaron hissed.

They abandoned the brief rest. The chase was instantly transformed into a terrifying race against the instincts of animals and the relentless malice of the SS. They vanished deeper into the unforgiving, sun-starved green maze.

Final Sprint: Trapped in the Open

Aaron and his men sprang forward, weapons ready but uselessly empty. They ran, pushing their exhausted bodies to outpace the chilling sound of the hounds.

Suddenly, the dense canopy broke, revealing the blessed, blinding light of the **open fields**. They burst out of the forest shade, sprinting across the clearing. But the relief was momentary: behind them, the ferocious hounds launched from the tree line, followed by the sight of the **SS, who instantly opened fire**.

They ducked into the tall prairie weeds, exchanging a final, futile burst of fire with the SS before continuing their frantic run. That was when they saw it: a **wired fence** surrounding the perimeter. They were not running to freedom, but into a German-controlled prison. The entire vicinity was a fortified, German-possessed compound.

Fangs and Fury

Stunned, their ammunition completely spent, their only remaining weapons were their sheer will and fading strength. They veered sharply left, desperately trying to mislead the hunting party. The SS, seeing the maneuver, unleashed the **hounds from their knots**.

They sprinted back toward the dark safety of the forest. The pack hit them instantly.

A large hound leaped onto the weakest man, its **white fangs** sinking into his leg as he struggled. His comrade, fueled by a surge of desperate strength, grabbed a piece of vine and swung it like a whip, smashing the beast's head. The hound fell, bleeding and placated.

Ahead, Aaron and the remaining three were attacked by the second hound. One man was viciously **bitten in the arm**. They wrestled the beast, finally subduing it by violently strangling it with its own leather braid, all while the SS closed in, firing wildly.

The forest floor gave way to a sudden **rolling terrain that dropped toward the river**. Aaron and his two companions plunged down the incline. They glanced back only once: the two brave men who had saved them from the hounds were already held captive by the SS.

There was no negotiation, no surrender. Aaron and his last two survivors hit the bank and plunged straight into the cold, churning waters of the **Elbe River**, trading the bullets of the German army for the merciless current.

A Question of Loyalty

The General approached, his shadow falling over the five sodden, defeated men. His eyes, devoid of triumph, coldly cataloged the German uniforms on the traitors.

He stopped directly in front of Aaron. "Major Dewishi," he stated, checking the fabricated nameplate, "Your operation caused severe casualties to the Reich and defied direct orders. You are under arrest for high treason and conspiracy."

Aaron, shivering from the cold river water but standing straight, met his gaze. "General, we never conspired against Germany. **We conspired against one man.** A man who is leading our nation not to victory, but to annihilation."

The General's jaw tightened. "Your excuses do not negate your actions. You aided assassins and killed German soldiers."

"We killed SS troops," Aaron corrected, his voice laced with conviction. "Troops who are more loyal to the madness of one man than to the German people. Ask yourself, General: Is true loyalty to the uniform, or to the future of our homeland? We acted to prevent the total destruction of Germany that Hitler guarantees. **We are not traitors; we are radical patriots.**"

He gestured to his men. "We were officers who saw the gas chambers and the mass executions. We saw the true face of the man you protect. If you execute us, you execute the last bit of conscience left in the German military. But if you let us go, you can choose to believe that saving Germany is more important than saving Hitler's life."

The General studied the men—their wounds, their defiance, and their still-wet German uniforms. His expression remained unreadable, but the pause stretched agonizingly, a silent acknowledgment that Aaron's words, however treasonous, held a chilling resonance. The choice was

not between victory and defeat, but between fanaticism and the slight, desperate hope of a future.

The General's Scorn

The General smirked, his eyes trailing over Aaron's still-wet uniform. His cold gaze was a mask of sarcasm, completely unmoved by Aaron's plea for patriotism.

"Your Nazi uniform still fits, **Major Aaron Dewishi**. But you truly would never know this place," the General stated, confirming Aaron's identity and dismissing his defense.

He gestured contemptuously toward the treeline. "The forest is no longer virgin. It was once a favorite ambush site and a grave for our SS soldiers. But since then, **we have conquered the wilderness** and made ourselves its possessors." The meaning was clear: the world, like that forest, was now firmly under German control, and resistance was futile.

The Hunter Arrives

The five captured men were marched away from the river to a separate command post, where they were thrown into a makeshift holding area. Their numbers were grimly bolstered by around fifteen other rebel soldiers who had been rounded up from different skirmishes across the region. They waited, silent and despairing, for the General's final instructions—their death sentence.

Then, a figure detached itself from the shadows.

It was the same man: a sleek, predatory silhouette in a dark coat and hat. **The Gestapo agent, Otto Hearst**, the man who had stalked them from the café, who had placed the call that brought the Panzer down on their heads, sauntered into the command post.

He moved directly toward Aaron, his eyes glittering with cold, calculating satisfaction. The chase was over, but the reckoning—the interrogation and the final, brutal exposure—was about to begin.

The Road to Berlin

The Gestapo agent, Otto Hearst, settled in front of Aaron, his dark eyes glinting with smug satisfaction. "It's all over, **Major**. No deserters would be able to survive our keen eyes," he bragged, savoring the victory.

Aaron met the boast with cold defiance. "**Not all days belong to you,**" he countered.

Minutes later, two army trucks rumbled to a stop. The captured rebels were ordered into the back of one. As the vehicles began to roll out, Aaron addressed the nearest transport officer. "Where are we heading, officer?"

"You will all be transported to **Berlin Headquarters**," the officer replied.

The journey was long, punctuated by an unnerving cordiality. The SS guards exchanged pleasantries, seemingly relaxed now that the chase was done. Eventually, the trucks slowed and stopped on a hillside. The day was fine but misty and cold, and the air carried the surprisingly pleasant scent of the verdant surroundings.

They had been driven out of the city and into a quiet, secluded landscape. The peaceful ambiance was a jarring contrast to their grim fate, yet it suggested only one thing: **this was not a refueling stop.**

The Execution Site

"Alright, everybody, take some time to **stretch and flex your muscles,**" the officer urged, his tone sickeningly casual.

The captured rebel soldiers, exhausted and momentarily relieved by the fresh air, eagerly piled out of the truck. They stretched their arms and kicked their legs, a pathetic, hopeful sight against the misty green hillside.

Unseen by them, the second Army truck was strategically positioned opposite their transport. Two minutes into their false reprieve, the covering curtain on the second truck was violently **snatched back.**

Inside, a terrifying tableau was revealed: a **gruesome MG-42 machine gun** manned by three SS soldiers.

The silence of the verdant hillside was instantly obliterated by a deafening roar. The MG-42 opened fire indiscriminately, a torrent of blazing bullets aimed at the bewildered, defenseless deserters. The men were shocked, realization flashing across their faces an instant before the lead hit. They scattered, their last hopeful strides dissolving

into a panicked, hopeless scramble. Some didn't even manage a step, falling to the ground and bleeding out before the echo of the first shots faded.

Aaron managed only a few frantic steps away from the execution truck. It wasn't enough. He was struck by **three slugs straight to his chest**. He fell, joining the rest of his comrades on their final, futile trip to death. The Gestapo had gotten their revenge, and the last surviving cell of the conspiracy was liquidated on a beautiful, misty hillside.

Chapter 8

Czechoslovakia

The Munich Deception

In **March 1938**, fueled by the successful *Anschluss* (annexation) of Austria, Adolf Hitler turned his predatory gaze toward the last bastion of democracy in Central Europe: **Czechoslovakia**.

The occupation began not with a direct invasion, but with a meticulously crafted political deception. Under the infamous **Munich Agreement**, Nazi Germany seized the nation's northern and western border regions—a territory known as the **Sudetenland**. Hitler's cynical ploy was to claim the alleged "sufferings" of the ethnic German populace living there, a lie designed to mask his true objective: strategic conquest. To secure the newly acquired land and prevent retribution, extensive border fortifications, built to defend Czechoslovakia, were now absorbed and manned by the Germans.

The political fallout was immediate and devastating. On **October 5, 1938**, shattered by the betrayal of the Western powers and facing the inevitability of the Nazi coup, **Edvard Beneš** resigned as president of the First Czechoslovak Republic. The country had been sacrificed piece by piece, an elaborate prelude to its total absorption into the Third Reich.

Exile and Rebuilding the Fight

After his forced resignation, **Edvard Beneš** immediately organized a **Czechoslovak government-in-exile in London**. His primary goal was to secure international recognition for his government and force the Allies to **renounce the Munich Pact**, the agreement that had dismantled his nation.

Recognition came slowly: Britain finally acknowledged the exiled government in 1940, followed belatedly by the Soviet Union that summer, and the U.S. that winter.

The military quickly followed suit. On January 24, 1940, the **Czech Army was allowed to reconstitute in France**. Units of the 1st Infantry Division

fought bravely in the last stages of the Battle of France, and Czech fighter pilots flew in various French Fighter Squadrons.

Post-War Strategy and the Minority Problem

Beneš deeply understood that the pre-war **subversive activities of the Sudeten Germans** had paved the way for the Munich Agreement. Determined to resolve the German minority problem once and for all, Beneš worked relentlessly, eventually securing consent from the Allies for the **post-war transfer (expulsion) of the Sudeten German population.**

Having seen the Western Allies sacrifice the First Republic once before, Beneš focused on strengthening Czechoslovak security against future German aggression. He shifted his foreign policy, attempting to forge alliances with both **Poland and the USSR**. While the Soviet Union initially opposed a tripartite Czechoslovak-Polish-Soviet commitment, Beneš was pragmatic, ultimately concluding a critical truce with the Soviet Union to secure his nation's future.

The Final Betrayal

With the **Sudetenland** torn away under the terms of the Munich Agreement, the remainder of Czechoslovakia was left strategically exposed and mortally wounded. The nation was rendered utterly powerless to repulse the subsequent invasion.

The final, brutal act of conquest was swift. In **1939**, just before the occupation of the capital city, Prague, Hitler formally proclaimed the remaining territories of Bohemia and Moravia as a Nazi "**Protectorate.**"

The Midnight Ultimatum

The true moment of terror arrived in the early hours of **March 15**. Hitler summoned the aged President **Emil Hácha** to Berlin.

In a terrifying confrontation, Hitler informed the President of the imminent Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia. The threat was not just one of military might, but of absolute destruction: the Führer delivered a chilling ultimatum, explicitly threatening a massive **Luftwaffe bombing attack on Prague** unless Hácha immediately signed over his nation's

sovereignty. The choice was total capitulation or the fiery obliteration of the capital.

The Capitulation of a Nation

The early morning meeting with Hitler was a brutal farce. As a condition of sparing Prague, the Führer demanded the immediate, complete **capitulation of the Czechoslovakian Army**.

The pressure was too much for the elderly President Hácha. He suffered a **seizure** right there during the meeting and had to be forcibly kept awake and medically attended to by staff. Yet, the threat of the Luftwaffe raining fire on his capital city was the ultimate leverage. Eventually, broken and suffering, **Hácha gave in to Hitler's surrender terms**.

The Bloodless Conquest

In 1939, the invasion followed immediately, marking the final tragic outcome of the **Munich Pact**—a futile, "sacrificial lamb on the altar" of appeasement meant to halt Hitler's relentless imperial ambitions.

That same day, German troops marched into **Bohemia and Moravia**. The occupation was nearly **bloodless**, with no coordinated resistance meeting the invaders. By that evening, Hitler and his troops made a victorious, chilling entry into **Prague** itself.

Only one recorded incident of organized defiance broke the silence: a fierce but isolated stand led by Captain **Karel Pavlík**, whose small force fought the Nazi Wehrmacht in **Místek**. It was a futile gesture, but the sole spark of armed resistance against a nation that had been strategically dismantled and betrayed.

The Munich Pact: A Sacrifice for "Peace"

The **Munich Pact**, signed on **September 30, 1938**, by Adolf Hitler (Germany), Benito Mussolini (Italy), Édouard Daladier (France), and Neville Chamberlain (Great Britain), sealed Czechoslovakia's fate in the name of peace, though it was ultimately a spectacular failure of diplomacy.

The agreement officially ceded only the **Sudetenland** border regions to Nazi Germany. This region was home to approximately **3 million ethnic**

Germans. Critically, it was also the economic heart of the nation, containing:

- **66 percent** of Czechoslovakia's coal reserves.
- **70 percent** of its iron and steel production.
- **70 percent** of its electrical power capacity.

By stripping the Czech Republic of these vital economic and military resources, the agreement left the rest of the nation structurally and militarily weak, making it completely susceptible to German domination.

The Death of Concession

The subsequent occupation of the rest of Czechoslovakia—with the establishment of a **protectorate over Slovakia**—proved definitively that Hitler had lied at Munich. The pact was the "death of a concession," exposing Hitler's actual goal: unbridled **German expansionism**, not simply the "liberation" of ethnic Germans.

The failure was so profound that even Prime Minister **Neville Chamberlain**, the main architect of the policy of appeasement, was forced to reverse course. On **March 17, 1939** (after the full occupation of Czechoslovakia), he famously declared that he could no longer trust Hitler not to invade other countries, offering a belated assurance that Britain would stand to **defend Poland** if it were attacked by Nazi Germany.

The Crushing Iron Fist

Neville Chamberlain's infamous declaration that the Munich Pact had purchased "**peace in our time**" was a grave miscalculation. The pact was, as many later realized, merely a **negotiating ploy** of Hitler's, only temporarily delaying the Führer's insatiable lust for blood and land.

The German occupation of Czechoslovakia was exceedingly harsh, though initially not as severe as the brutal takeover of Poland. This changed when **Heinrich Heydrich**—one of the chief architects of the Holocaust—was appointed Governor General.

Heydrich replaced Konstantin von Neurath, the former Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia, who was deemed **too lenient** toward the Czech

population. Heydrich brought a chilling new level of terror. A disclosed occupation document laid out a **draconian future** for the Czech people:

- Half the Czech population would be forcibly **integrated** (Germanized).
- The other half would be systematically **executed**.
- A massive German population would be brought in to colonize the regions of Bohemia and Moravia.

The appointment of Heydrich signaled that Czechoslovakia was to be fully broken and remade to serve the genocidal ambitions of the Third Reich.

Plans for Czech Annihilation

By 1940, after intense deliberation, various Party agencies and Central Authorities in Berlin finalized their brutal plans for the Czech population, outlined in several chilling memorandums:

1. **Initial Unsatisfactory Plan:** The first idea involved German settlement in Moravia and the forced movement of Czechs into Bohemia. This was dismissed as "unsatisfactory" because it still allowed the Czech identity to survive and persist.
2. **Radical, Impractical Solutions:** A more radical option called for the wholesale **deportation of Czechs**, though a revealed memorandum indicated this couldn't be practically carried out on the scale they desired. The extreme suggestion of dispersing Czech nationals directly into **concentration camps** was also considered.

Ultimately, the Führer chose a comprehensive, centralized plan: **Assimilation and Germanization**. Directives were issued stating that the **Reich Protectorate** would carry out the assimilation over many years. This meant the systematic destruction of Czech culture, language, and national identity, with the population being forcibly integrated into the German race.

Czechoslovakian Resistance Movements

Defiance from Exile

Even as their homeland was consumed by the Nazis, the spirit of Czech and Slovak resistance remained unbroken. A spontaneous formation of an army command was organized in exile, with crucial branches established in **Britain and France**.

Czech and Slovak units served with various Allied forces, forming a potent military presence:

- **The Czechoslovakian Legion** fought alongside the Polish Army.
- The **1st Czechoslovakian Armor Brigade** was integrated into the French Army.
- Soldiers served in both the **Royal Air Force (RAF)** and the **British Army**.

In North Africa and Palestine, over **2,400 Czechs and Slovaks** fought alongside the British in the **11th Infantry Battalion-East**.

The resistance even produced heroes of the air war: Czech pilot **Sergeant Josef František** became one of the most famous ace pilots in the entire **Battle of Britain**, showcasing the fierce resolve of the exiled nation.

Resistance Leadership in Exile

Despite the Nazi occupation, a clandestine network of resistance immediately began to form. The **Political Center**, organized by **Prokop Drtina** and collaborators loyal to former President **Edvard Beneš**, quickly emerged. Though this group was nearly dissolved by waves of arrests, younger, more resilient politicians immediately stepped up to take control.

Edvard Beneš, who resigned as the first President of the Czech Republic when the Nazis seized the country, was central to the ongoing resistance. From his exile in **Great Britain**, he formed the **government-in-exile**. His mission was clear: to gain international recognition and forcefully call for the **renunciation of the Munich Pact** and the reversal of its devastating consequences.

Meanwhile, intellectual resistance took shape within Czechoslovakia itself. Intellectuals from the Social Democrats, in association with

powerful trade unions and educational institutions, formed the **Committee of the Petition**, ensuring that dissent and planning continued even under the Reich's brutal rule.

The Communist Underground

The **Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSC)** formed the fourth major resistance group during the German occupation, operating under extremely difficult conditions.

Following the Munich Agreement, the party's leadership moved its base of operations to **Moscow** and went completely underground until 1943. Initially, the KSC was weak, but it remained rigidly faithful to the Soviet political line.

Its activity against the Nazi occupation dramatically increased only after Hitler broke the non-aggression pact and attacked the Soviet Union in **June 1941**. From that point on, the KSC became a far more active force in the armed resistance against the Reich.

The Shadow War and Heydrich's Terror

Early in 1940, the **Central Committee of the Home Resistance (ÚVOD)**—an alliance of democratic resistance groups—was formed. Their primary mission was the dangerous work of **intelligence gathering**, often in collaboration with Soviet Intelligence operatives in Prague. Following the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, the various resistance factions finally forged a united front.

However, their efforts were brutally thwarted with the arrival of **Reinhard Heydrich** in the fall. Heydrich's reign of terror was swift and devastating. By mid-1942, the Nazis had largely succeeded in **eradicating the most experienced and dedicated elements** of the Czechoslovakian resistance movements.

The Resurgence: Guerrilla Warfare

The resistance refused to die. In **1942–1943**, Czechoslovakian forces regrouped, and the **Communist underground (KSC)**

emerged as the dominant local resistance force. They prepared to strike, initially aiming to assist the liberating armies of the U.S. and the Soviet Union. The movement soon collaborated with Red Army partisan units, quickly developing into a formidable guerrilla force.

Guerrilla activity rapidly intensified with a rising number of Allied paratroopers joining the fight, leading to the formation of powerful partisan groups dedicated to sabotage and harassment.

The Prague Inferno

The climax of the resistance arrived on **May 5, 1945**. A massive popular uprising erupted in **Prague**, led by the **Czech National Council**.

The city was transformed into a deadly battlefield. Barricades shot up across every thoroughfare as Czech men and women—civilians and partisans alike—battled the overwhelming German military machine. They faced throngs of well-armed German troops backed by the terrifying might of **tanks and artillery**. In a desperate, bloody fight for their capital, the resistance held their ground, inflicting such heavy damage that it eventually forced the local **German Wehrmacht to capitulate**. The city had bought its freedom in a final, fiery revolt.

Flight to the Border

At exactly **0500 hours** in the misty dawn, **Erzen and Jora** successfully slipped onto the tarmac at the **Dresden-Klotzsche airfield**. Their lifeline was a trusted German pilot named **Rutger**, a contact of Colonel Samron Frasher. Rutger was under the impression this was an urgent, classified drop to the Czechoslovakian border.

The flight was a risky gamble: the plane was primarily carrying **German Wehrmacht Paratroopers**, along with the two fugitives.

Erzen and Jora maintained a facade of unwavering courage and confidence, posing as high-level liaisons.

One of the paratroopers, slightly presumptuous, addressed Erzen. "Which way will you go, Sir?" he asked.

"We're on a **special mission over Liberec** to join forces with the German military command," Erzen insinuated, his tone leaving no room for further questions.

"Good luck!" the paratrooper replied, completely fooled. The plane's engines roared to life, carrying the two resistance fighters directly toward their planned escape route near the city of **Liberec, Czechoslovakia.**

Into the Czech Underground

The plane reached its target. In a swift, terrifying rush, Erzen and Jora separately plummeted from the aircraft, parachuting into the dense forest land near Liberec. After navigating the thick woods, they were met by members of one of the Czech guerrilla forces aligned with the communist resistance.

"We ought to change our attire now," Erzen stated, stripping off his compromising German uniform. "This will no longer serve our mission here. We have to put on the same clothing as our comrades in order not to mislead them."

"Exactly," Jora replied, relief palpable as she shed the heavy disguise. "We are all of the same kind now."

The guerrilla leader leaned in, his voice low and urgent. "Intelligence reports say that the British-based Czech government of Beneš is dispatching a would-be assassin of Heydrich. Code name: Anthropoid." He named the two men: Warrant Officer Josef Gabčík, a Slovak, and Staff Sergeant Jan Kubiš, a Czech, who had already reached Prague.

"We will not get closer and interfere with their mission, but we will wait for further instructions," the leader continued. "However, we can't just enter a German-fortified Prague; it would be impossible to fight that stronghold and perish."

He pointed west. "Instead, we will proceed to Lidice, where we can hang out and wait for the result of *Anthropoid*."

The air was thick with tension. The fate of the entire resistance, and possibly the Czech population, now hinged on a secret mission unfolding miles away in the Nazi capital. Erzen and Jora were moving not toward safety, but toward the inevitable, explosive fallout of an assassination attempt.

Chapter 9

German-Occupied France

Blitzkrieg Sweeps Europe

Germany unleashed its terrifying war machine across Europe. Towns and cities were rapidly penetrated and besieged by German forces, while the Luftwaffe relentlessly devastated London from the air. The invaders advanced deep into the territories of Belgium, the Netherlands, and Poland.

The ultimate shock came with the swift conquest of France. The nation was occupied and forced into an unconditional surrender to Hitler, culminating in the humiliating sight of German forces marching triumphantly through the remarkable Arc de Triomphe in Paris, the "City of Lights."

The Shame of Vichy

Following the signing of the Armistice at Compiègne with Germany, France was split. The Armistice granted Germany control over the north and west of the country, including Paris and the crucial Atlantic coastline. This left roughly two-fifths of the pre-war territory unoccupied.

General Philippe Pétain, a hero and Marshal of France from World War I, later became the Chief of State of the collaborationist regime known as Vichy France. Pétain's government collaborated directly with Hitler. Although Vichy was technically the governing authority in the unoccupied zone, Paris remained the de facto capital of France, firmly under the heel of German occupation.

The Autocracy of Vichy

Under Philippe Pétain's regime, a "**New European Order**"—mandated by Nazi Germany—was brutally enforced in France. Pétain immediately abolished the presidency, concentrating all

authority into his own hands. He gained the constitutional power to appoint and dismiss ministers and civil servants, effectively seizing the entirety of the legislative, executive, and judicial powers. He wielded the absolute power of the Head of State, leading some to consider him the most powerful French leader since Louis XIV.

Anglophobia and Collaboration

Despite this total subservience, Vichy France technically remained formally at war with Germany. However, following the **British naval attacks on the French fleet on July 2, 1940**, Pétain's government became fiercely **Anglophobic** and increasingly collaborative with the German invaders.

French collaborators successfully urged Pétain to create a dedicated collaborationist armed militia known as the **Milice**. Pétain accepted, and this militia was mobilized under the command of **Joseph Darnand**. The Milice, working hand-in-glove with the German forces, became instrumental in leading a brutal campaign of repression against the burgeoning French resistance, known as the **Maquis**.

The Purge of the Maquis

Joseph Darnand's Milice forces, fueled by collaborationist zeal, launched an all-out, brutal campaign against the French guerrilla movements, both small and large, across the entirety of France. From the outskirts of villages to the wide avenues and parks of major cities, hostilities raged, resulting in mounting casualties among the Resistance members.

Driven by the need to completely extinguish the rebellion, **SS Chief Heinrich Himmler** ordered the campaign to be violently intensified as more rebels took up arms to fight back.

Massive reinforcements, including powerful **Panzer tanks**, began to roll out, scouring the avenues. They violently slammed through buildings and establishments, their mission singular: to capture and wipe out every rebel. The German forces and the Milice ensured that after they had sacked and destroyed an area, **no signs of life** would remain—a terrifying display of ruthlessness meant to quell the French Resistance permanently.

Vichy: A Fortress of Power

Vichy, the seat of the collaborationist French government, became the de facto **central headquarters of the German High Command** in France. It was here that Pétain and Hitler conducted their chilling military and political talks, sealing the fate of the occupied nation.

To secure this critical hub and protect it from both Allied raids and the organized French Resistance, Vichy was transformed into a fortress. The most sophisticated **German Panzers and heavy artillery** were heavily stationed throughout the area.

Meanwhile, persistent rumors of political and military destabilization—whispers of plots within the German High Command itself to **oust Hitler**—made the entire station hyper-vigilant. A **red alert** was permanently in effect, ready to repel any conceivable attack and ensure the absolute safety of the Führer should he visit. Vichy was not just an administrative center; it was a paranoid, heavily armed citadel.

Oradour-Sur-Glane Haute- Vienne, France

The Quiet Before the Inferno

Nestled within the isolated countryside of the Haute-Vienne Department, about 15 miles northwest of the city of Limoges, lay

Oradour-sur-Glane. It was a place of quiet industry, known for its delicate porcelain, far removed from the brutal front lines.

Crucially, it sat not far from Limoges, which was situated within the nominal control of **Vichy France**, Hitler's pathetic ally. Oradour was a small, tranquil pinprick on the map, seemingly shielded by its remoteness and the fragile truce of collaboration.

But this quiet hamlet was destined to become a name synonymous with pure evil. On a seemingly ordinary day during World War II, Oradour-sur-Glane was chosen as the site where the **Waffen SS** would commit an act of such savage, calculated brutality that the name would forever be scarred onto the conscience of France. It was a place where peace was brutally extinguished, leaving behind only ash and horror.

Ambush at Forest Hill

On the outskirts of Oradour-sur-Glane, the French Resistance was preparing a decisive blow. From the concealment of **Forest Hill**, barely two kilometers from the unsuspecting village, **Qamil Leka** and his fighters were lurking, their German **M34 sub-machine guns** primed and ready.

Their target: an approaching convoy of German trucks loaded with crucial supplies and ammunition, heading toward the Nazi Military Detachment near Limoges.

The moment the convoy passed their position, Leka's men unleashed a hellish barrage. They opened fire on the SS escort, immediately following up with a volley of grenades. The ambush was swift and lethal, killing all the SS soldiers riding in the transport. The army *truck* escort was completely engulfed in flames and burned to the ground.

Crucially, they spared the **cargo truck** loaded with the precious supplies and ammunition. They hijacked the vehicle, drove it hard

out of the Limoges area, and sped toward the backwoods near **Angoulême**, where the heart of their hidden resistance base was located. The strike was a major victory, leaving a gaping wound in the German supply chain.

Immediate Retaliation

The ambush site was discovered almost instantly. An SS Inspector and a Gestapo officer, conducting a routine check on the road to Limoges, stumbled upon the carnage: the burning wreckage of the army truck, the bodies of slain SS soldiers scattered across the road, and the complete, glaring absence of the vital cargo of supplies and ammunition.

"They won't get any further! **Alarm all checkpoints to entrap the rebels!**" the Inspector barked, the order racing to every German unit in the sector.

The response from the German military headquarters in Limoges was immediate and massive. A convoy of lorries, half-tracks, and cars surged out from the south along the Limoges road. Their first, terrifying strategy was to **seal the village of Oradour-sur-Glane** completely, preventing anyone—friend or suspected foe—from entering or escaping.

The officers established their command post at the Masset, a small farm slightly northeast of the village. Crucially, the troops were ordered to approach only from the south, deliberately **avoiding a claw-style movement**. They avoided closing in on Oradour from multiple paths simultaneously, an intentional move that would later tragically determine the direction of their vengeance.

Hidden in the Backwoods

Deep within the secluded backwoods of Angoulême, **Qamil Leka** and his men were working frantically. They had successfully hidden the stolen cargo truck beneath a thick layer of leaves and

low-hanging branches, meticulously attempting to erase the wheel marks from the dusty ground.

"Precisely, the Nazis are hunting us by now. They won't stop until they get us and the truck," Qamil hissed, the adrenaline beginning to wear off, replaced by cold dread.

"They'll deal with us swiftly once they find us. We know their tactics," one man replied grimly. "It's their own ammo that will kill them, or they kill us with their own slugs."

The Sudden Departure

After an hour of tense silence, Qamil retrieved the radio and urgently contacted someone. He then gathered his men and issued a startling set of orders.

"**Faros**, I am entrusting you with my leadership of our group," Qamil stated, his voice final. "I hope to see you all again after the war." He looked around at the faces of his loyal fighters. "**Sander Bogdini** is now on his way, so I have to leave you now."

With that, Qamil prepared to abandon the safety of the woods, leaving his men and the valuable, stolen truck behind for a mission known only to him.

Solo Run to the Coast

Qamil Leka, assuming the ultimate risk, departed immediately. He drove the captured German cargo truck, with a lone lookout accompanying him, aiming for the **sea coast of Royan**.

His objective was a clandestine rendezvous: **Sander Bogdini** was scheduled to meet him, not on the shore, but from a German Navy warship plying the dangerous waters of the **Bay of Biscay** en route to **Brest, France**.

From Brest, Qamil's journey would become even more audacious: he planned to infiltrate a nearby **Nazi Air Force base** to secure

passage out of France entirely, destined first for **Nuremberg**, and then finally to **Czechoslovakia**.

Still wearing his highly conspicuous Nazi uniform, Qamil knew the stakes were absolute. This was a desperate, one-way mission: **do or die.**

Rising Fury and Hidden Secrets

The ambush on the supply convoy was just the beginning. Subsequent, frustrating encounters between Nazi soldiers and resistance fighters in the vicinity of **Oradour-sur-Glane** drove the Nazis into a terrifying rage. As their patrols met repeated resistance, dark thoughts of retribution began to fester in the soldiers' minds.

Crucially, the resistance's **clandestine passages** and hidden depot in the backwoods remained undiscovered by the Nazis until *after* the inevitable, bloody pursuit that followed the horrific Oradour massacre. This network had been a vital supply line, secretly stocking **fuel and ammunition** and sustaining the resistance even while the German military command was firmly entrenched in the area.

Onboard the Wolf's Den

Meanwhile, **Qamil Leka** successfully reached the coast and, in an audacious feat, embarked onto the German Navy warship patrolling the **Bay of Biscay**. The commanding officer was none other than his contact, **Bogdini**.

Still relying on their Nazi uniforms, both men began the lengthy trek to Brest, presumptuously intermingling with other German officers. They had to maintain an intricate web of lies and composure, but the charade was dangerously thin. On one occasion, their cool confidence faltered—a group of **skeptical**

navy officers cornered them, their eyes narrowed with professional suspicion.

Confrontation on the High Seas

The tension on the German warship was palpable. A skeptical Navy Captain, noticing their unusual route, cornered them. "I just don't know why you have to extend traversing past Brest almost to the tip, meeting the **Celtic Sea?**" he challenged.

Bogdini maintained his composure, audacity masking his fear. "We are not extending our navigation to the Celtic Sea," he explained smoothly. "We specifically intend to traverse there for Captain Qamil Leka. It's a special and urgent mission to Nuremberg. There is no easier way for his air passage than taking Brest, without the hassles of a slower route."

The Captain said nothing more. He simply held their gaze before walking away, keeping his deep skepticism—and what he clearly believed was a brazen act of collaboration between **Bogdini and Leka**—to himself.

Leka, ever observant, immediately picked up the danger. "I believe he was absolutely skeptical of the real motive of our plans," Leka murmured to Bogdini. "**An atmosphere of belligerence is now obvious** with him and his two subordinates. They could do stupid things."

The two resistance fighters were now trapped on a warship with a crew actively suspicious of their treasonous identity.

Betrayal on the Airwaves

"Yes, I can see it explicitly. I am ready any time," Qamil hissed, his eyes narrowed, the danger now immediate.

Qamil drew and checked his **Luger pistol** while Bogdini, anticipating the Captain's move, rushed toward the radio room. He

found the Captain already inside, trying to contact the military detachment in Limoges.

Bogdini lunged, shutting the iron canopy door just as the Captain was about to transmit his accusation. The Captain spun around, shocked. "**I said, No!**" Bogdini roared, firing his pistol.

The shot was sharp and final. The Captain dropped the speaker and fell dead, but not before the coding—the signal of suspicion—was transmitted to the command post.

The radio operator at the other end immediately responded: "C'mon in, Roger. What was that noise about?"

Thinking fast, Bogdini snatched the swinging wire line of the speaker. "Roger, it's nothing but a **fallen iron stool** I accidentally knocked down," he pronounced, forcing his voice into an official tone. "**This is ship commander Bogdini making a routine check and updating on the air as to our exact location.**"

They had stopped the immediate threat, but the silence on the line after Bogdini's lie was more menacing than any shout. The chase had just moved from the land to the high seas.

A Deadly Deception

"Okay. Roger, loud and clear, Sir," the operator replied, convinced by Bogdini's quick lie. The immediate danger was averted, but the Captain's body remained.

Bogdini quickly dragged the corpse out of the radio room and wrapped it tightly in a black leather burial suit used by sailors for deep-sea interment.

Under the cover of night, the grim task began. The Captain's two suspicious subordinates started actively looking for their missing commander. Bogdini, playing his role perfectly, ordered them to continue their search, ensuring they were preoccupied and looking in the wrong direction.

Qamil assisted Bogdini in throwing the heavy, shrouded body into the dark water, the silent splash barely breaking the ocean's surface. Both men meticulously checked to ensure no other navy personnel witnessed the disposal.

Then came the final, brutal action. As the two German sailors—the Captain's last loyalists—stepped back up onto the main deck, Qamil was waiting. Hidden behind the deck structure, he raised his **Luger**, now fitted with a **silencer**. He fired twice. The two men plunged instantly into the dark, churning water, never having the chance to raise their own weapons or sound an alarm. The conspiracy on the German warship was now confined to two men: Qamil and Bogdini.

Disembarking at Brest

The German warship finally dropped anchor in the deeper part of the sea near **Brest's coast**. Qamil prepared for the final, dangerous leg of his journey.

"Aren't you coming with me now?" Qamil asked Bogdini.

"Not at this point. It's too dangerous for us. Communication is threatening to thwart our mission too easily," Bogdini replied, acutely aware that the disappearance of three men could be discovered at any moment.

"I understand. I still have a long way to go, and I see it as fatal when everything fails," Qamil admitted.

"Come what may. Soon, I will follow," Bogdini assured him, adding, "I've learned that **Frasher is on his way**, too."

Qamil pressed him one last time. "Why not now? You're in danger and accountable for the loss of your Captain and two others. It will give you a hard time."

"Don't worry. I can manage. Anyway, **Good Luck**," Bogdini said, his voice firm.

"Alright, I wish you the best," Qamil replied. The two men, having committed treason together, parted ways, one stepping onto the hostile shore, the other remaining on the enemy vessel.

Final Passage: Infiltrating the Reich

At Bogdini's order, a small fleet boat was lowered, manned by three unsuspecting sailors. **Qamil Leka** stepped aboard and was rowed to the coast, disappearing into an unspecified location in **Brest, France**.

Still in his Nazi uniform, Leka quickly made his way to the Nazi railway station. He secured a plane ticket, and at the airfield, his forged identity papers—complete with his fabricated rank—made it easy to board a passenger plane destined for **Nuremberg, Germany**.

Upon arrival in Nuremberg, Leka studied his map. The crucial Nazi Air Base was just **four kilometers** from his position. He decided to spend the night at a nearby Inn along his route.

The atmosphere was dangerously relaxed. Several **SS soldiers** were out for a "good time" in the adjacent tavern. With his life hanging on his composure, Qamil walked into the tavern and ordered a bottle of beer, embedding himself seamlessly within the enemy, just hours away from the final, decisive gamble of his mission.

Final Deception at the Tavern

In the smoky tavern, Qamil Leka approached an Air Force staff member whose uniform displayed the telltale bronze eagle and encrypted German Air Force patch.

"Hey, comrade, is the air base near this area?" Qamil asked, keeping his voice confident and low.

"Yes, Sir. It's about three kilometers to walk from this site. Why?" the man replied, already half-drunk.

"I am heading that way for a plane out to **Czechoslovakia**," Qamil continued.

The man squinted, trying to focus on Qamil. "Why? Who are you and why go to Czechoslovakia?"

"I am on a special mission to be part of the **Wehrmacht assigned in Prague**," Qamil explained, leveraging the perceived importance of his fabricated assignment.

The Air Force man struggled to read Qamil's nameplate and insignia. "You're **Captain Qamil Leka**, right?" he finally asked.

"Exactly," Qamil confirmed.

Qamil pressed his advantage, befriending the man, exchanging pleasantries, and convincing him of the urgency of his mission. Finally, the man agreed to drive Qamil straight to the air base where he was stationed.

"Tomorrow, check the **last plane out for parachutists** bound for Czechoslovakia, and you'll be able to board the flight," the airman advised, oblivious to the fact that he was aiding a high-ranking enemy agent. The final obstacle was now reduced to a single, dangerous flight.

A Last-Second Summons

The following day, Qamil Leka, parachute secured and blended in with the SS paratroopers, walked toward the last military plane scheduled to fly to Czechoslovakia. He had cleared the final air base personnel and was moments from boarding.

Then, the pilot stopped him dead in his tracks.

"Captain Qamil Leka, you are being summoned by the air base command to report to the command post right away," the pilot said, his voice flat with officialdom.

Qamil's heart hammered against his ribs. "For what reason?" he asked, trying to keep the panic out of his voice.

"It wasn't confirmed over the radio, but I was just told to tell you the urgent message," the pilot replied, confirming the ambiguity of the order.

"But my flight will be delayed! This is the *only* plane out for Czechoslovakia," Qamil insisted, gambling on his fabricated rank. "It was an order to me, Sir. I am just following orders as we receive them on the radio," the pilot insisted, showing Qamil the absolute rigidity of the system.

"Where's the radio?" Qamil demanded, needing to understand how his mission had been compromised at the final moment.

"In the cockpit," the pilot replied. The distance of a few feet was now all that separated Qamil from either his escape or his execution.

Final Showdown in the Cockpit

From his seat in the fuselage, Qamil drew his **Luger pistol**—holstered but ready—and stepped into the cramped cockpit. The pilot, oblivious to the danger, shut the door, grabbed the speaker, and relayed the message to the command post.

Qamil immediately snatched the speaker. "This is **Captain Qamil Leka** from SS-Standartenführer Walter Zimmermann. Anything I can do for you?" he demanded, using his assumed authority to seize control.

The voice on the other end was cold, hard, and devastatingly clear. "**Captain Leka, you are hereby summoned to clear your name and explain your involvement in the loss of German Navy Captain Hans Becker and his two petty officers aboard KMS Tirpitz.**" The trap snapped shut. "Its commander, **Sander Bogdini**, is now being held for investigation in Limoges, France."

Qamil's mind raced. He had been compromised, and Bogdini had been captured. "I have nothing to do with that, nor have any idea

about their loss," he insisted, falling back on denial. "I am on an urgent mission, so please don't delay my mission."

"**No, you can't!** That's an order of the high command. **Give me the pilot!**" The command post had escalated the situation, demanding the pilot to enforce the arrest. Qamil was completely cornered, the mission hanging by a thread and the pilot now a lethal witness.

Takeoff at Gunpoint

Qamil didn't hesitate. He slammed the radio off. The two pilots stared, stunned, as Qamil drew his **Luger** and leveled it at them. At gunpoint, he issued the terrifying command: start the engine. "Alright, nobody will get killed if you cooperate," he said, his voice tight but controlled.

The plane began its slow roll down the runway. As it accelerated, Qamil looked over his shoulder and saw the glint of an **armored car** speeding toward them across the tarmac. He had been minutes, maybe seconds, from arrest.

The military plane lifted off just in time. The **SS paratroopers** in the fuselage remained blissfully unaware of the deadly hostage drama unfolding in the cockpit.

Into the Free Air

The flight toward the Czechoslovakian border was a knife-edge act of deception. Qamil held the two terrified pilots at gunpoint the entire time, ensuring they couldn't communicate with the air base. Simultaneously, he made calculated trips back into the fuselage to assure the paratroopers that everything was normal, quieting any curiosity or worry among the German soldiers.

Finally, just before they reached the designated Czechoslovakian airspace, the entire group of paratroopers jumped out for their

mission. Qamil was alone in the cockpit with the two pilots. The last obstacles to his escape were now sitting right beside him.

Last Jump into Enemy Territory

Qamil Leka leveled his gun at the two stunned pilots one last time. "Alright, you're almost done with your job for me. I have to go now," he announced.

The moment the plane crossed the border and sailed over the wild, rugged terrain near Liberec, Czechoslovakia, Qamil executed his final, terrifying gamble. He clipped himself to the harness, threw open the door, and plunged out in broad daylight. He landed safely in the wild, the silk canopy collapsing around him. He was immediately greeted by the familiar faces of resistance fighters—the very same group that had welcomed Erzen and Jora—and instantly melted into the underground. Their combined fight against the SS around Liberec and Prague had finally begun.

The Price of Treason

Back in France, the consequences of Qamil's escape were already unfolding. Sander Bogdini was being interrogated at the German military detachment, held responsible for the suspicious loss of his Captain and two petty officers.

The investigation took a grim turn when the bloated bodies of the two sailors were recovered, having drifted onto the sea coast of Royan from the Bay of Biscay. The forensic report confirmed the horror: both bodies sustained gunshot wounds from a pistol. The ballistics were clear—the weapon did not belong to Bogdini or anyone on the warship; it matched the caliber of Captain Qamil Leka's Luger.

The German Navy Captain's body was never found. It had been weighted with iron and would never surface, a final, perfect act of erasure. Despite the evidence of Leka's involvement, Bogdini was dragged before a military court for the murder of his petty officers. The High Command, needing a simplified narrative, chose to pursue Bogdini while intensifying the massive hunt for Leka, making him solely liable for the deaths.

The spy was free, but his accomplice was now paying the ultimate price.

Chapter 10

Atrocities at Oradour-Sur-Glane

The Search Begins at Oradour

On **June 10**, the village of Oradour-sur-Glane was shattered by a sudden, brutal intrusion. A force of approximately **180 Waffen SS soldiers**, primarily from the 3rd Company of the 1st Battalion of the 4th Regiment of the 2nd SS Panzer Division, began to enter the isolated farms and houses south of the small village.

The SS troops moved methodically, dragging every inhabitant they found out into the open as they advanced north. Their search was meticulous and terrifying: they combed through farms, buildings, and barns, using **bayonets to probe the straw** and ensure no single soul was left behind or hidden.

But the horror did not stop with the forced roundup. To the absolute dismay of the terrified inhabitants, the SS troops, as they left each structure, **systematically set the buildings on fire**. The smoke rising from the south signaled that this was not a simple search, but an act of calculated destruction.

The Demand for Assembly

The grim procession of SS soldiers culminated at the **Champ de Foire** (Fairground or Agora). Here, the commander of the detachment, **Sturmbannführer Adolf Diekmann**, halted the Mayor of Oradour.

Speaking through an interpreter, Diekmann issued an absolute command: there was to be an immediate **identity check**, and all inhabitants—every single person—were to assemble on the fairground at once.

The Mayor, recognizing the terrifying necessity of compliance, instantly summoned the **Village Crier**. His message to the panicked population was clear: they must **cooperate quietly** with the SS. He warned against

any act of aggression—no one was to flee, attack the soldiers, or offer armed resistance, believing that quiet compliance offered the best chance of survival.

The Forced Gathering

The Village Crier, now accompanied by a menacing SS soldier, doubled his pace, marching through the streets while furiously beating his drum. The message was repeated relentlessly: gather at the fairground with identity papers for the check.

The order was absolute: **from the youngest baby to the oldest citizen**, no one was excused, not even the sick. The inhabitants complied, moving in stunned silence. A teacher from the girls' school, suffering from a high fever, was given no time to dress properly; she made her way to the assembly in a dressing gown pulled over her nightclothes, a chilling testament to the ruthlessness and urgency of the SS summons.

Guns on the Fairground

To instantly suppress any notion of a mass attack or rebellion, the SS deployed a terrifying display of force: they set up **tripod-mounted machine guns** around the fairground perimeter. This was meant to mimic the "normal process" of handling large crowds, but it only served to heighten the terror.

The inhabitants, already gathered and panic-stricken, were frozen by the sound of **gunshots echoing periodically** from different parts of the village. This was the gunfire aimed at those poor souls who had attempted to flee or hide, confirming the deadly intent behind the SS presence.

Despite the initial order, the supposed **identity check was a lie**: no one was ever actually asked to produce their papers. Later, the SS would try to claim their main objective was to search the village for weapons. Their implied logic was chillingly simple: finding weapons would confirm the presence of the Resistance, which would then justify the next step—a full, deadly examination and execution of every inhabitant. The true massacre was simply waiting for a pretext.

The Horrors Unleashed: Oradour's Final Act

The official (and sickeningly false) SS justification for the events that followed was that the action was a **reprisal for Resistance attacks**. In reality, what occurred was a planned extermination.

Approximately **200 SS soldiers** stormed the village square, supposedly hunting for hidden explosives and ammunition. Instead, they began a monstrous process of separation:

1. All **652 inhabitants** of the village were rounded up.
2. The **men were herded into barns** located throughout the area.
3. The **women and children were forcibly locked inside the village church.**

With the inhabitants securely separated, the massacre began. The soldiers sealed the church doors, ensuring there was no escape. They then began igniting **dynamite and incendiary devices** inside and around the sacred building. A deafening explosion ripped through the church, instantly followed by the rapid spread of flames. Simultaneously, the SS set the **entire village on fire**. Oradour-sur-Glane was not just destroyed; it was systematically consumed by fire and blood.

The Death of Oradour

The church, now an inferno, ensured a horrific end for the people trapped inside. Those who were not immediately consumed by the fire and smoke—the women and children—were met by the SS with **machine gun fire and grenades** as they struggled to escape the burning structure.

Of the total population, only **ten people** managed to survive the massacre, escaping the flames by feigning death and remaining motionless until the SS troops, believing their work complete, finally left the scene.

The final, chilling death toll cemented the atrocity:

- **245 women** and **207 children** were killed in the church.
- **190 men** were killed in the barns.
- **Total dead: 642 souls.**

- **Justice Denied**

In the years following the war, attempts to bring the perpetrators to justice were severely hampered. Locating and identifying the estimated **200 SS soldiers** involved in the brutal murder was nearly impossible, as many had already been killed in subsequent actions on the Eastern and Western Fronts.

By **1953**, when trials were finally convened, only **21 of the SS men** were convicted. The scale of the punishment was tragically minimal compared to the crime: only **five were imprisoned** and a mere **two were executed**. The vast majority of the murderers of Oradour-sur-Glane vanished unpunished into the aftermath of the war.

Testimony of a Survivor

June 1944

After the Massacre: The Grinding Search

Even after the main killing was over, the SS fury was far from spent. The search for any remaining fugitives intensified, transforming the ruins of Oradour into a scene of methodical, lingering violation. Soldiers thoroughly **sacked and entered** every remaining building, searching for anyone who had evaded the compulsory summons to the Fairground. What the soldiers left behind was a gruesome testament to their savagery. Over the next few days, **aid workers** who dared to enter the village discovered scattered horrors. They reported finding **cadavers in many locations**, evidence that the count of the dead might be higher than recorded. In one instance, a gutted house revealed the **charred body of an elderly, bedridden man**. He had been burned to death where he lay, the remains so completely consumed that identification was virtually impossible. The silence of Oradour was now weighted with the unspoken knowledge of those victims consumed entirely by the flames.

More Victims and Witnesses

The relentless brutality of the SS continued even after the main separation of the villagers. A group of **cyclists** riding out from Limoges that day were apprehended as they arrived at Oradour-sur-Glane,

arriving after the men, women, and children had already been segregated into the barns and the church. They were immediately lined up and **shot in front of the Beaulieu forge**, executed just moments before the SS set the church and barns ablaze.

The evidence of the mass killing was grimly scattered. A cluster of dead bodies was later discovered down the **well on the road to St. Junien**, a testament to the desperate, final moments of those who tried to hide.

The sounds of the massacre—the shouts, the explosions, and the continuous gunfire—were heard by people outside the village. Driven by terror and a desperate hope, these individuals approached the village, frantically searching for their children and relatives. The risk was absolute: any person who came too close and was spotted by the departing SS troops would be instantly shot, adding to the day's overwhelming death toll.

Hunting the Survivors

Even after the fires began to consume the village, the SS troops were not finished. They split into **small roaming groups** to methodically hunt down the few inhabitants who had escaped the initial roundup. Every entry and exit point to the village was **sealed and guarded**, turning Oradour into a cage.

Despite the obvious danger, a few desperate people managed to sneak in for a quick, terrifying look. These were mostly parents frantic with worry over their children's safety. One woman, **Madame Demery**, successfully snuck in, reached the Boys School, and then escaped again without being detected by the searching SS.

The Weight of Rumor and Reality

As the afternoon wore on, increasingly desperate people began to gather on the village outskirts. Many were parents whose children had not returned from school that day. Others were village residents hoping to return home. Fueled by hopeful thinking and the sheer inability to comprehend the scale of the horror, a comforting **rumor grew overnight**: that the children had been safely hidden away in the woods.

However, as more French people managed to make their way into the village, the comforting lie dissolved. They were utterly shocked as they witnessed the true extent of the tragedy: the full scale of the killings and the scorched, ruined remains of the church. This chilling reality was confirmed by witnesses like **Hubert Desourteaux**, who had made his own desperate way to safety and lived to tell of the total destruction he saw.

The Fate of Diekmann

The man directly responsible for the massacre at Oradour, **Sturmbannführer Adolf Diekmann**, did not long survive his atrocity. His end came swiftly and abruptly on **June 29, 1944**, when he was killed by a shell splinter north of Noyers, leaving his command post shelter to the north.

With the death of the commander, the immediate crisis surrounding the Oradour affair subsided for the German Army. Diekmann's elimination allowed the entire incident to be **abandoned from the high command's attention**.

It was widely speculated that had he lived, Diekmann's fate would still have been sealed. Figures like **Field Marshal Erwin Rommel**—who was later implicated in the assassination attempt on Hitler—might have been compelled to intervene. It was believed that Rommel, known for his harsh discipline, would have had Diekmann either **court-martialled** or **compelled to commit suicide** (the same forced "dignity" Rommel himself was later given) to cover up such a politically damaging war crime. In death, Diekmann escaped accountability and allowed the German military to bury the incident.

The Haunting Echo of Oradour

By any civilized standard, the events that took place in **Oradour-sur-Glane** on Saturday, June 10, 1944, constituted a monstrous **war crime**.

Over the following years, countless attempts were made to bring justice to the victims of this gruesome massacre. Yet, the outcome was a profound failure: despite the overwhelming evidence of the systematic

mass murder, **no officer or soldier within the German Wehrmacht was ever tried or punished** for the massacre of the citizens of Oradour. The chilling truth remains that for the majority of the perpetrators, the scorched ruins of that small French village became the perfect alibi, allowing them to escape justice entirely.

Operation Anthropoid

Launching Operation Anthropoid

The high-stakes mission was finally initiated by the British **Special Operations Executive (SOE)**. Originally slated for **October 28, 1941** (Czechoslovakian Independence Day), the mission aimed to execute the ultimate act of defiance against the Nazi occupation.

The team initially consisted of Warrant Officer **Jozef Gabčík** (a Slovak) and Staff Sergeant **Karel Svoboda** (a Czech). However, due to a head injury suffered during training, Svoboda was replaced by Staff Sergeant **Jan Kubiš** (another Czech), using false identity documents. The audacious assassination plot was codenamed **Operation Anthropoid**.

The Drop Behind Enemy Lines

The mission suffered immediate setbacks. Kubiš's injury caused a delay, pushing the launch to the dark night of **December 28, 1941**. At 10 p.m., Gabčík and Kubiš were airlifted, alongside seven other soldiers from Czechoslovakia's army-in-exile (including the other groups, Silver A and Silver B, who had different missions), by a **Royal Air Force Halifax 138 Squadron**.

Unfortunately, the drop was dangerously miscalculated. The pilot, struggling with orientation, failed to hit the target near **Pilsen**. Instead, Gabčík and Kubiš landed near **Nehvizdy, east of Prague**—miles from their intended location. They were now deep behind enemy lines, isolated, and forced to improvise their way to the target.

Infiltrating Prague

Despite the botched drop, the agents moved swiftly. Gabčík and Kubiš traveled to **Pilsen** to make contact with their local allies, before finally making the dangerous move to **Prague**, the heart of the Nazi command.

Once in the capital, they immediately began coordinating with trusted anti-Nazi resistance movements and courageous Czech families who risked their lives to shelter them and help prepare the plot.

Their initial assassination plans were thwarted one by one:

1. **The Train:** They first considered killing Heydrich on a train, but reconnaissance quickly proved the logistics were impossible.
2. **The Forest Road:** Next, they planned to ambush him on a desolate forest road during his commute to Prague. The idea was to stop his car by stretching a steel cable across the road. After hours of waiting, the attempt was abandoned when Lieutenant **Adolf Opálka** (from the same exile army group) arrived and ordered them back to Prague.

With time running out and the Gestapo constantly hunting, they settled on the final, most dangerous plan: **kill Reinhard Heydrich in Prague itself.**

The Ambush at Bulovka

The day of the attempt arrived: **May 27, 1942, at 10:30 a.m.** Gabčík and Kubiš took up their positions near the **Bulovka Hospital** in Prague 8-Libeň. The location—a tight, uphill curve—was perfectly chosen; it was a mandatory slow point for the green-convertible Mercedes that **Reinhard Heydrich** took daily on his commute from his home to Prague Castle.

A third operative, **Valčík**, stood 100 meters north, acting as the crucial lookout for the approaching target.

Two minutes later, Valčík's signal confirmed the sighting. As Heydrich's car reached the curve, **Gabčík** stepped directly into its path. He raised his **Sten submachine gun** and pulled the trigger, ready to unleash a torrent of fire.

But the plan instantly collapsed. **The gun jammed.** It failed to fire a single round.

Heydrich, arrogant and exposed, ordered his driver, SS Oberscharführer Klein, to stop. He drew his **Luger pistol** and prepared

to shoot Gabčík. In that chaotic, terrifying moment, **Kubiš** made a desperate move: he hurled a modified **anti-tank grenade**—concealed in his briefcase—at the exposed Mercedes.

The Explosion and The Escape

The anti-tank grenade hurled by Kubiš detonated with terrifying force beside the Mercedes. Although it didn't penetrate the interior, its fragmentation **ripped through the car's right rear bumper**, tearing apart the metal and upholstery. Shrapnel, mixed with the car's fibers, embedded deep into **Heydrich's body**. Kubiš himself was also wounded by the blast's shrapnel.

In the ringing silence that followed, both Gabčík and Kubiš desperately fired their pistols at the slumped figure inside the car, but the shock of the explosion caused them to miss.

The Chase

Heydrich, unaware of his mortal shrapnel injuries, stumbled out of the wreckage, drawing his own pistol. He briefly exchanged fire with the agents before attempting to chase Gabčík but immediately collapsed. Profusely bleeding, Heydrich managed to gasp an order to his driver, SS Oberscharführer Klein: "**Get that bastard!**"

Kubiš, injured but functional, abandoned his bicycle and fled the scene. Klein immediately pursued Gabčík on foot. The chase ended near a meat shop, where Gabčík, cornered, turned and fired his revolver twice, hitting Klein in the leg. The driver dropped, the threat neutralized.

Gabčík then managed to board a tram and escape the dragnet, making his way to the local safe house maintained by the heroic **Novák family**. The assassins had escaped, but the fate of the "Butcher of Prague" was now sealed.

The Immediate Aftermath and Heydrich's Collapse

In the immediate chaos following the blast, **Gabčík and Kubiš** initially believed their plot was a failure due to the Sten gun jamming. They were tragically wrong: the grenade had mortally wounded **Reinhard Heydrich**.

The search for the assassins began almost instantly and was massive in scale. By 9 p.m. on May 27, over **21,000 German soldiers** began sacking more than **36,000 houses** across Prague in a terrifying hunt for the perpetrators.

The Butcher's Last Days

A profusely bleeding Heydrich was rushed to **Bulovka Hospital** after an off-duty policeman and a Czech woman managed to stop a delivery van. His injuries were severe: major damage to his **diaphragm, spleen, and lung**, as well as a fractured rib, all caused by shrapnel and upholstery fibers embedded in his body.

Surgeons worked desperately, reinflating his collapsed lung, removing the rib tip, suturing the diaphragm, and performing a life-saving splenectomy, which successfully removed a grenade fragment.

Himmler, Heydrich's direct superior, immediately dispatched his personal physician, **Karl Gebhardt**, who took over his care with a team of SS physicians. Heydrich initially seemed to stabilize, but he soon developed a high fever and wound drainage. After seven days, his condition appeared to be improving. Tragically, while sitting up and eating a noon meal, he suddenly **collapsed**.

The man nicknamed "The Iron-Hearted" and "The Butcher of Prague" spent his final hours in agony, dying the next morning around **4:30 a.m.** Himmler's physician officially declared the cause of death as **septicemia** (blood poisoning), likely caused by the contaminated fibers from the car seat upholstery driven into his wounds by the blast. The attempt, though flawed, was a lethal success.

The Hunt for the Assassins

The Storm of Retaliation

The death of Reinhard Heydrich unleashed an immediate and terrifying wave of Nazi retaliation. **Adolf Hitler** himself ordered the execution of **10,000 Czechs** in a frenzy of revenge. This was followed by the daily arrest and execution of innocent civilians, turning Prague into a horrifying slaughterhouse even before the full scope of the assassination was known.

In the chaotic aftermath, the Novak family immediately risked their lives to cover the assassins' tracks. Mrs. Novak sent her daughter, **Jindřiška**, to retrieve **Jan Kubiš's abandoned, blood-stained bicycle**—critical evidence left near the Bata shoe shop. Tragically, Jindřiška's desperate act was witnessed by a lurking **Gestapo officer**.

Despite the dragnet, Gabčík managed to reach a temporary safe house in the Vinohrady District, finding brief shelter with his girlfriend, Liboslava. However, the hunt was tightening, and the Gestapo was already closing in on the network of collaborators.

The Deadliest Silence

Despite the unprecedented dragnet of **21,000 soldiers** searching 36,000 houses, the Nazis found **no leads** on the assassins. Frustrated, they resorted to psychological warfare.

On **June 18, 1942**, a terrifying deadline was publicly issued: the assassins had to surrender. The threat was explicitly clear—failure to comply would result in a massive escalation of bloodshed among the Czech people. This brutal ultimatum was designed to break the citizens' will, forcing a potential informant to sell out the culprits. Fear and anxiety spiked, making it exponentially harder for anyone to conceal information.

Betrayal in the Crypt

Initially, the assailants, including Gabčík and Kubiš, found temporary safe harbor, sheltered by two courageous Prague families. They were later moved to the ultimate sanctuary: the **Karel Boromejský Church**, an Eastern Orthodox church dedicated to Sts. Cyril and Methodius.

The assassins were elusive, and the Gestapo was completely unable to locate them until the resistance network was destroyed from within. **Karel Čurda**, a member of the sabotage group code-named "**Out Distance**," was arrested and brutally interrogated by the Gestapo. Faced with the Nazi threat and seduced by wealth, Čurda broke. He betrayed his comrades, giving the Gestapo the names of the group's local contacts for a reward amounting to **1,000,000 Reichsmarks**. The location of the assassins was finally known.

The Informant and the Final Hunt

While the assassins were hiding in the church crypt, their elaborate network of support began to crumble. **Karel Čurda**, the parachutist who had trained with them in England, went to the infamous Gestapo headquarters at the **Peček Palace** and sold out his comrades.

Čurda provided the Gestapo with crucial, damning information: he confirmed that the abandoned briefcase belonged to **Gabčík**, and he exposed the entire network of safe houses run by the **Jindra group**. Most critically, he identified the **Moravec family** in **Žižkov** as the epicenter of the entire resistance movement.

The Gestapo acted immediately on the betrayal. At **05:00 a.m. on June 17, 1942**, the Moravec family home was **besieged**. The net was closing in rapidly on the men hidden in the church crypt.

That's a profoundly tragic and historically significant story, detailing the devastating methods used by the Gestapo. Since you asked for a **rewrite that is persuasive**, I'll craft a narrative that focuses on the immense courage and horrific sacrifice of the Moravec family, aiming to evoke empathy and emphasize the brutal reality of the occupation and resistance.

Here is a persuasive retelling of the Moravec family's ordeal:

The Unbreakable Spirit: The Moravec Tragedy

The air was thick with the chilling finality of a Gestapo raid. As the officers ransacked the family flat, the Moravec family was forced to stand by, powerless. Yet, even in that moment of despair, Marie Moravec displayed an extraordinary, defiant courage. Feigning a need to use the toilet, she made a silent, agonizing choice for freedom, swallowing a cyanide capsule. Her suicide was not an act of surrender, but the ultimate refusal to be broken or betray the cause she held dear. She bought her silence with her life.

Unaware of the depth of his family's involvement in the resistance, Mr. Moravec and his 17-year-old son, Ata, were dragged away to the infamous Pecek Palace, the Gestapo's brutal headquarters.

Young Ata, a boy on the cusp of manhood, faced unimaginable horrors. Throughout the day, he endured relentless torture, yet his commitment to the cause—and his raw, youthful courage—held firm. He would not talk.

Then came the calculated, soul-crushing psychological blow. Dazed and disoriented with brandy, Ata was led to a grotesque tableau. Inside a fish tank, he was confronted with the severed head of his mother, Marie. A Gestapo officer delivered the chilling, inescapable warning: his father would be next.

It was this calculated, pure evil—not the physical pain, but the unbearable sight of his mother's sacrifice mocked and the threat to his father's life—that finally shattered the young man's willpower. In a moment of absolute psychological agony, his heroic resistance crumbled. He broke down and revealed the hideout of the paratroopers and the location of the church on Resslova Street.

At dawn, as their comrades slept in the crypt, Opálka, Kubiš, and Švarc took their posts on the church balcony. They were the first to spot the grim sight: hundreds of Waffen SS troops surrounding the church, commanded by Generalleutnant Karl Fischer von Treuenfeld. A fierce, hour-long battle immediately erupted. The SS troops, numbering over 600, stormed the church only to be met by a hail of gunfire from the choir loft. Though the attackers exerted every effort, they could not capture the paratroopers alive. Down in the vault, the four remaining men knew their three friends above were locked in a desperate, deadly fight. Then, an overwhelming silence suddenly descended upon the church.

The Last Stand: Defiance in the Choir Loft

The roar of the gunfight was suddenly replaced by a terrifying silence. When the SS troops finally ascended the narrow stairs to

the choir loft, they found a gruesome scene: the blood-soaked bodies of Kubiš, Opálka, and Švarc. The three had fought like lions against hundreds. While Kubiš was said to have briefly survived the initial two-hour onslaught, he quickly succumbed to his catastrophic wounds. As for Opálka and Švarc, cornered and facing a truly hopeless situation, they made the final, agonizing choice: to deny the Germans their victory. Rather than face capture and torture, the two brave men took their own lives, cementing their ultimate sacrifice. The battle for the main church was over.

But the fight wasn't done.

Under duress, a local preacher named Petřek was forced to reveal a devastating truth: four more men were hidden in the crypt below.

The SS, desperate to claim a live prize, pressed the siege. They clamored for the hidden men to surrender, offering empty promises. The chilling reply that echoed up from the cold stone vault was not a plea for mercy, but a magnificent roar of defiance: a burst of gunfire and the thunderous, unyielding cry: "We are Czechs and we will never surrender!" The final, most brutal chapter was about to begin.

The Flood and the Fury

The German response escalated, turning from brute force to cold calculation. The SS commander called upon the Prague Fire Brigade, ordering them to turn their hoses and gas launchers against the defenders. Streams of water and thick tear gas were blasted into the crypt through a narrow street-level window, hoping to drown or choke the paratroopers out. But even in the watery darkness, the men fought back, hurling the tear gas

canisters right back out as the level of the frigid water began its ominous creep upward.

Thwarted, the Waffen SS Commander changed tactics. His men located the main crypt entrance—hidden chillingly beneath a carpet near the main altar. With a deafening blast, they blew apart the stone covering the entrance, revealing a dark, steep stairway descending into the defenders' lair.

The command was given: SS troops were ordered to storm the hole in small groups. They plunged into the blackness, expecting a quick end to the siege. Instead, they were met by a devastating, concentrated torrent of fire. The paratroopers, fighting fiercely from below, drove them back. Group after group went down that bloody staircase, only to retreat, wounded and broken. The battle for the crypt had become a desperate, close-quarters nightmare, and the SS realized with chilling clarity that these men would not go quietly—they were fighting to the last bullet, and the last breath.

The Final Salvo

The stalemate in the crypt was broken by a horrifying, definitive sound. At approximately noon, four isolated shots cracked through the strained silence of the church above, followed immediately by a profound, echoing stillness. It was the sound of ultimate finality. A German soldier was immediately dispatched into the subterranean gloom to confirm the carnage. Moments later, he reappeared, his voice tearing through the tension with a triumphant, chilling shout: "Fertig!" (Finished!)

The Battle was over.

Down in the watery darkness, Gabčík, Valčík, Bublík, and Hrubý lay side-by-side, their mission and their

lives ended by their own revolvers. They had used their last bullets not against the enemy, but for the ultimate act of defiance—refusing capture.

Despite being armed only with small pistols against the SS arsenal of machine guns, submachine guns, and hand grenades, the paratroopers had extracted a massive toll. Even the manipulated official SS report admitted to five wounded, but the initial, truer count was devastating: at least 14 SS soldiers killed and 21 wounded.

In that crypt, seven heroes, cut off and surrounded, fought the Nazi war machine to a standstill. They did not retreat; they did not surrender. They went out in a blaze of action, making their final stand a monumental, bloody victory against overwhelming odds.

The Reckoning and the Traitor's Price

Following the bloody climax in the crypt, the horrors continued. The dead heroes were identified by none other than the treacherous turncoat, **Karel Čurda**, confirming the bodies of **Kubiš and Gabčík** among the fallen.

In a supreme act of selfless leadership, **Bishop Gorazd** stepped forward. He took full responsibility for the tragedy at the church, a desperate attempt to shield his innocent congregation from the inevitable Nazi reprisals. He formally wrote to the German authorities, a final, courageous gesture that led directly to his arrest on June 27, 1942. Gorazd was subjected to brutal, unspeakable torture until his eventual death.

The Nazis showed no mercy. On September 4, 1942, they lined up the spiritual leaders—the Bishop himself, the church's priest, and senior lay leaders—at the **Kobylisy Shooting Range** in Prague. They were executed by firing squad. The sacrifice of the paratroopers was mirrored by the martyrs of the church.

And what became of the man who sold them out? The turncoat, **Karel Čurda**, briefly attempted to end his own wretched life, but

he would not escape justice. His fate was sealed after the war: he was convicted of high treason and **hanged in 1947**.

The Price of Freedom

The core of this heroic mission rests upon the willingness of ordinary people to make extraordinary sacrifices. Among the most instrumental:

- **Marie Moravec:** A vital helper to the paratroopers during the chaos of the occupation, she sealed her commitment with the ultimate sacrifice. When faced with capture and the certainty of betraying her friends under torture, she swallowed a **cyanide capsule**, refusing to let the Gestapo break her spirit or her silence.

The Price Paid: Victims of the Heydrich Assassination

The tragic fallout from the resistance extended far beyond the church crypt, claiming the lives of countless brave helpers and their families. Their stories are a chilling testament to the Nazi regime's brutal revenge:

- **Ata Moravec**, the young man whose willpower finally broke under psychological torture, met a grim fate. Despite his forced confession, the 21-year-old was executed at **Mauthausen Concentration Camp** on January 24, 1942.
- The **Fatek family** paid the ultimate price for their loyalty.
 - **Rela Fatek** played a vital, nerve-wracking role in the assassination plot itself. Tasked with driving ahead of Heydrich's car, she used a silent, pre-arranged signal—wearing her hat—to

confirm that Heydrich was driving without extra guards.

- **Peter Fatek** and his wife, **Liboslava**, sheltered the assassins, Josef Gabčík and Jan Kubiš. This act of profound bravery led to their arrest in June 1942.
- **Liboslava Fatek**, who also served as a courier in the resistance and was Gabčík's girlfriend, was executed on the same day as her family, October 24, 1942, at 10:40 AM. The entire family was wiped out in October 1942.
- **Ludmila Malá**, a 34-year-old teacher and accomplice of paratrooper Josef Valčík, chose the same final, defiant escape as Marie Moravec. Arrested by the Gestapo, she **took her own life by poison** rather than face torture and risk betraying her comrades.

Their quiet courage, willingness to help, and ultimate sacrifice underscore the heroic, yet devastating, cost of Czech resistance.

Chapter 11

Revenge For Heydrich's Death

Hitler's Fury and the Brutal Retaliation

The moment news of the assassination reached him, Adolf Hitler exploded in a demand for immediate, brutal vengeance. He not only ordered an instant investigation but suggested that Heinrich Himmler dispatch SS General Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski to Prague. This choice was chillingly calculated; according to postwar testimony, Hitler knew Zelewski to be even harsher than the recently murdered Reinhard Heydrich, whom Hitler himself had once praised as "the man with an Iron Heart."

Hitler initially favored a catastrophic response: the execution of tens of thousands of "politically unreliable" Czechs. However, Himmler intervened with cold pragmatism, arguing that widespread killings would cripple the region's productivity, which was essential to the Nazi war machine.

Yet, the resulting retaliation was brutal beyond measure. Himmler ordered the execution of more than 13,000 Czechs in response to the attack. The vengeance targeted those connected to the resistance fighters and countless innocent civilians:

- Anna Malinová, Jan Kubiš's girlfriend, was arrested and later perished in the hell of the Mauthausen-Gusen concentration camp.
- The families of the paratroopers were systematically targeted. Marie Opálková, the aunt of Lieutenant Adolf Opálka, was executed at Mauthausen on October 24, 1942. His father, Viktor Jarolím, was also killed.

The total death toll for this act of reprisal was staggering, with an estimated 5,000 Czech citizens killed. The Nazi regime's response was a chilling demonstration that they would punish a nation for the audacity of its heroes.

The Destruction of Lidice and Ležáky

The Nazi regime's final, most infamous act of revenge following the Heydrich assassination was the obliteration of two entire Czech villages, based on dubious Gestapo allegations and the discovery of resistance links. This was not retaliation, but an act of terror.

Lidice: Total Annihilation

The village of **Lidice** was targeted after the Gestapo falsely alleged that it had provided aid to the assassins. It was also known that several Czech army officers exiled in England came from the village, providing a pretext for the Nazi attack. On **June 9, 1942**, Lidice was completely devastated:

- **Men Executed:** Hundreds of men were immediately rounded up and executed.
- **Women Deported:** The nearly 200 women of Lidice were immediately deported to the **Ravensbrück concentration camp**.
- **Children Kidnapped:** The children were separated. The majority were later murdered in **gas vans** at the **Chełmno extermination camp**. A small number deemed racially suitable were taken for forced Germanization and adoption by German families.
- **The Village Erased:** The village itself was leveled, its buildings bombed, and its ruins scattered, with the Nazis attempting to literally remove the village from all maps and records.

Ležáky: The Silent Massacre

The village of **Ležáky** met a similar, brutal fate. The primary reason for its destruction was the discovery of a **resistance radio transmitter** hidden there by the paratroopers' network.

- On **June 24, 1942**, the village was sealed off.
- **Every single adult**—both men and women—was murdered.
- The children were deported, with most being killed in concentration camps, mirroring the tragedy of Lidice.
- The village of Ležáky was subsequently burned and razed to the ground.

These atrocities were designed to instill fear across Czechoslovakia, sending the unambiguous message that any association with the resistance would result in the complete destruction of families and communities.

The Unforeseen Price of Resistance

The utter devastation of **Lidice** and **Ležáky**, which were burned and leveled down, reveals the terrible scale of the Nazi response. This level of brutality was arguably *not* fully foreseen by the **Czechoslovak government-in-exile** when they planned Operation Anthropoid.

However, historical analysis suggests that the government-in-exile, led by Edvard Beneš, was willing to risk severe reprisals. This calculus was based on two main goals:

1. **Eliminating Heydrich:** Heydrich, known as "The Butcher of Prague," was ruthlessly consolidating Nazi power and effectively crushing the internal Czech resistance. His death was a necessary blow to the occupation regime.

2. Provoking Reprisals to Spur Resistance: The leadership desperately needed to signal to the world and to the Czech people that Czechs were actively fighting Nazism. By forcing a brutal Nazi retaliation, they hoped to **shatter the appearance of Czech "concurrence"** or passive acceptance of German sovereignty, thereby reducing collaboration and galvanizing true resistance.

Despite the horrific human cost, **Operation Anthropoid** remains uniquely significant: it is the **only successful government-organized targeted killing of a top-ranking Nazi official during World War II.**

Fire and Flight: Ambush in the Woods

The retaliatory rage ignited by Heydrich's death tore through the landscape, pulling **Erzen's group** out of the relative safety of the **Lidice forest**. They watched, horrified and helpless, as the village burned—a towering pyre of innocent lives, execution fire, and pure, concentrated Nazi fury. The relentless German scouring of the area was so intense it drove them back into the deep woods, where they were immediately plunged into a frantic, unceasing firefight.

In one desperate, chaotic retreat, the group fractured. **Jora** and the other resistance fighters sprinted ahead, scrambling for a hidden refuge, while **Erzen and Qamil Leka** found themselves lagging behind, facing a unique and terrifying threat: a commanding officer of a **Panzer**.

The massive tank, a roaring steel beast, became their personal hunter. It didn't just advance; it cornered them. The heavy cannon and coaxial machine guns spat fire wherever they ducked, wherever they ran, shredding the trees and blasting the earth

around their heels. Every burst of gunfire was a near miss, forcing them into deeper cover. They were isolated, pinned down, and hunted by a moving fortress. The air vibrated with the roar of the engine and the thunder of the tank's relentless, murderous pursuit. Could they outrun the steel fist of the Wehrmacht long enough to rejoin their comrades?

Panzer Down: A Moment of Reckoning

Just as the tank seemed certain to crush them, fate—or perhaps sheer luck—intervened. The massive Panzer, relentlessly pursuing them, became momentarily hung up in a wide, exposed canal. **Qamil Leka**, a veteran of tank warfare, saw his chance and moved with blurring speed and calculated precision.

While the tank struggled, Qamil vaulted toward it, agile and low to the ground. He didn't hesitate; he wedged a **grenade** directly between the vital track bearings. A deafening blast ripped through the air, sending the tank's ball bearings scattering like shrapnel. The Panzer was crippled.

As the explosion rocked the steel behemoth, the tank commander frantically tried to pull himself out of the turret hatch. Qamil leveled his weapon and fired. The commander tumbled to the ground, his body already consumed by the fire that erupted from the crippled machine. Inside the burning shell, the other two crew members failed to escape and perished instantly.

"Well done, **Leka**," Erzen gasped, finally catching his breath.

Leka, his eyes scanning the horizon, simply replied with grim determination: "**There are more along the way.**"

The immediate danger was over, but the relentless shadow of the Nazi manhunt still loomed large over the forest.

The Hunt Intensifies: Retreat from the Inferno

The immediate, explosive victory over the Panzer offered only a fleeting moment of relief. With Heydrich gone, Hitler had unleashed a terrifying new escalation: **General Karl Fischer von Treuenfeld** had replaced him, bringing a cold, brutal efficiency to the Nazi retaliation.

Treuenfeld launched a massive, merciless campaign across the Czechoslovakian countryside, targeting any village even suspected of harboring resistance fighters. The woods surrounding Lidice and Ležáky became a death trap. **Tanks, devastating machine guns, and swarms of SS infantrymen** scoured every inch of the forest floor, tightening the noose around the scattered resistance.

Erzen and his group watched their already weakened position dissolve. The methodical, overwhelming presence of the enemy meant only one thing: **total eradication** if they stayed. They found themselves facing a siege that had no front line, a hunt that covered every side. With survival demanding immediate action, Erzen issued the grim order: **they had to run**. They plunged into the deeper wilds, driven by the desperate fear of being cornered and annihilated by the Nazi juggernaut.

Homage to Reinhard Heydrich

Reinhard Heydrich: The Architect of Terror

Reinhard Heydrich was not merely a high-ranking Nazi; he was a central, chilling figure in the regime's machinery of terror and mass murder.

Key Roles and Power

Known to Hitler as "**the man with the iron heart**," Heydrich was an **SS-Obergruppenführer** and **General der Polizei**. His immense power was centralized as the **Chief of the Reich Main**

Security Office (RSHA). This meant he directly controlled all of the Third Reich's primary security and intelligence organizations, including:

- The **Gestapo** (Secret State Police)
- The **Kripo** (Criminal Police)
- The **SD** (Security Service)

Additionally, he served as the **Stellvertretender Reichsprotektor** (Deputy Reich Protector) of Bohemia and Moravia, effectively ruling the occupied Czech territories. In a chilling irony, he also served as **President of the ICPC** (Interpol).

Mastermind of Genocide

Heydrich was a principal architect of the Holocaust. His actions cemented the Nazi commitment to systematic genocide:

- **Wannsee Conference:** In January 1942, Heydrich chaired this infamous conference, which formalized the plans for the "**Final Solution to the Jewish Question**"—the deportation and extermination of all **Jews** in German-occupied territories.
- **Kristallnacht:** He helped organize the coordinated attacks against Jews across Nazi Germany and parts of Austria in November 1938.
- **Einsatzgruppen:** Heydrich was directly responsible for deploying these special task forces. Operating in the wake of the German Army, the *Einsatzgruppen* became mobile killing units, murdering **over one million people**, predominantly Jews, through mass shootings.

Rule in Czechoslovakia

Upon his arrival in Prague, Heydrich's mission was clear: to crush the Czech spirit and maximize production for the German war effort. He immediately sought to eliminate all opposition by

ruthlessly suppressing Czech culture and launching waves of **deportations and executions** targeting members of the Czech resistance. His brutal efficiency in this role made him the prime target of **Operation Anthropoid**.

The Legacy of Operation Anthropoid: Heydrich's Death and Its Impact

The assassination of Reinhard Heydrich was an event of immense symbolic and political significance, shaking the foundations of the Nazi regime and fundamentally altering Czechoslovakia's international standing.

The Funeral of a Nazi Titan

Heydrich was afforded two colossal funeral ceremonies, underscoring his importance as one of the most powerful and feared Nazi leaders:

1. **Prague Ceremony:** A thousand SS soldiers lined the route toward **Prague Castle**, demonstrating the regime's iron grip even in mourning.
2. **Berlin State Funeral:** The ceremony was attended by the highest Nazi figures, including **Adolf Hitler**, who personally placed two of the regime's most prestigious decorations—the **German Order** and the **Blood Order**—on Heydrich's funeral pillow.

Dissolution of the Munich Pact

The most profound political impact of Heydrich's death was the **immediate dissolution of the Munich Pact** (which Czechs bitterly referred to as the **Munich Dictate**).

- Signed in 1938 by the **UK and France**, with the participation of Germany's ally, Italy, the Pact had forced Czechoslovakia to cede the **Sudetenland** border regions to Germany.

- In the wake of Operation Anthropoid, the Allied powers—impressed by the Czech resistance—formally repudiated the Munich Pact. Both the **UK and France agreed** that the Sudetenland would be **restored to Czechoslovakia** after the war. This act was a critical diplomatic victory, validating the Czechoslovak government-in-exile and securing the country's pre-war borders on the international stage.

Into the Abyss: Fleeing the Nazi Fury

The forests were no longer a refuge; they were a hunting ground. With an unending torrent of **Nazi troops, Panzers, and heavy weaponry** pouring into the territory, the resistance movement was utterly **paralyzed**. The systematic campaign to exterminate them was relentless. Having barely escaped the inferno of Lidice, Erzen, Jora, and Qamil Leka, now just a fraction of their original force, knew their time was up. The rest of their group had already dispersed, vanishing into isolated, desperate hideouts to avoid liquidation.

"There's no way for us to survive the fury of the Nazis if we remain in this vicinity. We have to abandon Czechoslovakia already before they get us," Erzen hissed, his voice raw with the weight of absolute defeat and immediate danger. Every minute spent in the open was a coin toss with death.

"It seems that all entry and exit points have already been sealed," Qamil countered, his eyes dark with the realization of their trap. **"What do you think?"**

"We have to find any possible exit point to abandon this territory," Erzen insisted, the decision final, the desperation driving him. They couldn't fight; they could only run.

It was **Jora** who offered the sliver of hope, a desperate gamble: "**I believe on the other side of the woods was a railway. We can tread our way to find out.**"

"**Let's find out,**" Erzen confirmed, a steel resolve hardening his gaze.

The three men moved, melting out of the shadows and deeper into the forest, leaving behind the ravaged earth and the looming threat of the Nazi hunters, staking everything on the slim chance that a forgotten railway track might lead them to salvation—or straight into a final, bloody ambush.

Vichy, France

Frasher's Interrupted Rendezvous

Meanwhile, Samron Frasher, a member of the resistance operating deep undercover as a German Officer, received an urgent, disruptive order. Along with other officers, he was summoned by his commanding officer, General Rudolph Henkel, for immediate dispatch to the German-occupied territories of Croatia and Yugoslavia.

This directive shattered Frasher's personal mission: he had been meticulously preparing for a crucial furlough, planning to sneak away for a vital rendezvous with his resistance group in Liberec, Czechoslovakia. The untimely order to deploy to the Balkans left him trapped—caught between his patriotic duty to the resistance and the iron fist of the Wehrmacht. He was utterly constrained, unable to prioritize his secret plans without exposing himself and his network. Frasher was forced to abandon his rendezvous and join the convoy heading south.

"Time is running out. I may or may not make it since the situation in Czechoslovakia is worse than before," he sighed, the weight of

the new crisis heavy on his shoulders. His forced detour to the Balkans meant every moment was lost, widening the gap between his team and salvation. With the Nazi crackdown intensifying daily, he knew the window to help his comrades—or even to escape himself—was slamming shut. Every passing hour brought his friends closer to total liquidation and his own deep cover closer to a terrifying unraveling.

Jasenovac, Independent State of Croatia

Jasenovac: The Balkans' Own Killing Field

Jasenovac was a horrific extermination and concentration camp established not by Nazi Germany, but by its fanatical local allies: the **Ustaše regime** of the **Independent State of Croatia (NDH)**. This camp stands as a stark and unique atrocity, often called "the Auschwitz of the Balkans," and was considered one of the **largest concentration camps in Europe**.

The Rise of the NDH and Ustaše Terror

The context for Jasenovac's creation was the collapse of Yugoslavia:

- **Foundation:** On April 10, 1941, following the invasion by the Axis powers, the **NDH** was founded. This puppet state comprised modern-day Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and parts of Serbia. As an Italian-German protectorate, its very existence was entirely dependent on the Axis occupation.
- **The Leader and Ideology:** The head of the NDH was **Ante Pavelić**, who immediately adopted the virulent **racist ideology of the Ustaše**. Modeled on Nazi Germany's principles, his regime swiftly issued decrees restricting the rights of **Jews**, seizing their property,

and initiating a campaign of genocide targeting Serbs, Jews, and Roma people, as well as anti-fascist Croats.

Jasenovac was the brutal engine of this Ustaše state terror, a place where hundreds of thousands of victims were subjected to systematic extermination through inhumane conditions, forced labor, and mass murder.

Legislative Terror in the NDH

The establishment of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) was immediately followed by the implementation of draconian, racist laws designed to solidify Ustaše power and initiate their campaign of extermination.

Decrees for National Protection

The most critical of these was the **Decree for the Protection of the Nation and the State**, issued on **April 17, 1941**. This legislation formalized terror by mandating the **death penalty** for "high treason." This crime was broadly defined as having "done harm to the honor and vital interests of the Croat nation and imperiled the existence of the Independent State of Croatia." This sweeping, vague language allowed the regime to target any political opponent or ethnic minority with lethal force.

Racial Laws and Enforcement

This was paired with a decree concerning nationality, which stated that only individuals of "**Aryan origin**" could be considered nationals of the NDH. This explicitly stripped Serbs, Jews, and Roma people of their citizenship rights and legal protection, fully aligning the Ustaše with Nazi racial ideology.

These laws were not just theoretical; they were ruthlessly enforced through an expanded and terrifying judicial system:

- The existing regular court system was co-opted.

- New **special courts** were created to handle political and racial crimes.
- **Mobile courts** with extended and often summary jurisdiction were established to carry out swift, lethal justice across the territory.

This combination of racist law and accelerated judicial murder created the framework for the mass atrocities committed at camps like Jasenovac.

Jasenovac: The Camp's Expansion

By **July 1941**, the Ustaše government was forced to significantly expand its Jasenovac camp system because its existing jails could no longer handle the rapidly increasing number of inmates. This surge was a direct result of the Ustaše's genocidal policies against Serbs, Jews, and Roma people.

Jasenovac itself was strategically located within the **German-occupied zone** of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH). This placement, while under NDH administration, situated the major killing center within the broader geography of the Axis occupation. The camp's expansion signaled the Ustaše regime's commitment to large-scale, systematic extermination.

A Commandant's Deception

The grim reality of his new assignment crashed upon **Colonel Frasher**i—the resistance agent operating deep undercover—as the Ustaše Slaughterer, **Verdurić**, laid out the camp's mandate.

"Colonel Frasher, being a commandant in one of the camps of Jasenovac, I would like you to know that it is the mandate of the Nazi regime and the regime of Ustaše to implement anti-Jewish and anti-Roma actions to show support for the extermination of the Serbian population," Verdurić pronounced, his voice chillingly devoid of emotion.

Frasher, the spy among killers, had to maintain his façade of loyalty and compliance.

"Explicitly noted, as I am part of the **Waffen SS Expeditionary Forces in Croatia**," Frasher replied, masking his revulsion with military discipline. Quickly, he shifted to a professional line of inquiry, feigning interest in logistics to maintain his cover.

"When was this complex built?" he asked.

"The Jasenovac complex was built between **August 1941 and February 1942**," Verdurić replied. He added a chilling detail: "It was an explicit declaration from Hitler himself—given to Slavko Kvaternik at their meeting on July 21, 1941—that the main goal of the Nazi regime was **genocidal**."

"How is Jasenovac compared to Auschwitz?" Frasher pressed, seeking information that would be invaluable to the resistance.

"Well, Auschwitz may be distinct from Jasenovac, perhaps in terms of administration and implementation of policy," Verdurić explained dismissively. "You will learn many things along the way."

He then detailed Jasenovac's unique and horrifying mission: "In addition, Jasenovac certainly contributed to the Nazi '**Final Solution**' to the **Jewish Problem** by the mass murder of the **Roma people** and the elimination of political opponents. But the Ustaše's most significant goal was to achieve the total **destruction of the Serbian population** of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH)."

Frasher now understood: while serving the larger Nazi genocide, Jasenovac was the specific, localized engine for the Ustaše's own campaign of ethnic cleansing against the Serbs.

Frasher merely raised a skeptical eyebrow and paused, his gaze fixed on Verdurić as he processed the chilling description of

state-sponsored mass murder. The mask of the German officer held firm.

"Exactly. You're right," Frasherí simply sighed, confirming the brutal reality without offering any genuine agreement. The less he said, the better.

Shortly thereafter, his briefing complete, Frasherí was escorted to the central headquarters. He was now to report to the ultimate authority of terror within the complex: **Vjekoslav Luburić**, the notorious and ruthless head of the Ustaše Security Force. The true danger of his deep cover mission was only just beginning.

Testimony of an Author

The Dark Chapter: Clerical Involvement in Ustaše Atrocities

The horrifying atrocities committed by the Ustaše regime in the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) were, shockingly, not without the direct participation of certain religious figures. As detailed by John Cornwell in his book *Hitler's Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII* (Viking, 1999, pp. 254-260), this involvement represented a profound betrayal of religious principles:

- **Clerical Participation in Massacres:** The record indicates that **Franciscan Priests** actively took part in the massacres of **Jews, Roma, and Serbs** during the Ustaše's brutal campaigns. These priests were allegedly **armed** and directly involved in executing the horrific violence.
- **Widespread Atrocities:** Beyond direct murder, these groups of Franciscans were accused of setting fire to homes and systematically sacking villages, contributing to the ethnic cleansing of the region.

- **Individual Acts of Terror:**
 - A particularly chilling accusation names **Father Božidar Bralow**, who was reportedly seen **dancing around the massacred bodies** of the victims. He was known to be a "persistent companion" to a **machine gun**, demonstrating his direct and enthusiastic role in the violence.
 - Another Franciscan, **Father Simić of Knin**, participated in attacks on the Orthodox population, actions that culminated in the **destruction of the Orthodox Church**, blending religious hatred with genocidal violence.

This evidence documents a dark and controversial chapter, illustrating that the Ustaše terror was sometimes carried out with the active, murderous complicity of individuals within the Catholic clergy.

The Church's Role in the Ustaše State

The swift collapse of Yugoslavia in 1941, following the Axis invasion, provided a massive surge of influence for the Catholic Church within the newly formed Independent State of Croatia (NDH).

A central and controversial figure in this dynamic was the Catholic priest and Archbishop of Zagreb, **Alojzije Stepinac**. While his post-war status remains complex, contemporary accounts documented his initial alignment with the Ustaše regime:

- **Greeting the Leader:** Stepinac met and personally greeted **Ante Pavelić**, the leader of the Ustaše regime, immediately following the NDH's formation.

- **Assurance of Intolerance:** Stepinac reportedly assured Pavelić that the Catholic Church would show "no tolerance" for the rival **Orthodox Serbian Church**.

This collaboration between the high-ranking Catholic clergy and the genocidal Ustaše regime provided critical legitimization to the NDH, empowering the state as it embarked on its campaign of persecution and mass murder against Serbs, Jews, and Roma people.

The Vatican and the Ustaše Regime

The relationship between the Vatican and the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) remains one of the most contentious topics concerning the Holy See during World War II.

Meetings and Allegations of Complicity

The Vatican's awareness of the Ustaše atrocities is strongly suggested by key events:

- **Pope Pius XII's Meeting with Pavelić:** It is confirmed that **Pope Pius XII met with Ante Pavelić** at the Vatican. Crucially, this meeting occurred just days after the infamous Glina massacre, suggesting that news of the Ustaše's brutality may have already reached Rome.
- **Bestowing Blessings:** The Pope's decision to meet with the Ustaše leader and allegedly bestow his blessings on the new state—a state founded on genocide—is often argued as providing a degree of **legitimacy** to Pavelić's regime.

Arguments for Complicity

The argument for the complicity of the Vatican hierarchy is often anchored on two main points:

1. **Clerical Participation:** As previously noted, documented evidence confirms the horrifying fact that

members of the Catholic clergy, particularly Franciscan priests, actively **participated in the massacres** and forced conversions of Serbs, Jews, and Roma people in Yugoslavia and Croatia.

2. **Papal Benevolence:** According to Cornwell, Pope Pius XII continued to show a degree of **benevolence toward the leaders of fascist Croatia** as late as 1943, even as the scale of the atrocities was becoming clearer.

These factors form the basis of the argument that certain Cardinals and officials in the Vatican were, at the very least, **accomplices** through silence and legitimization in the Holocaust and the specific genocide against Serbs, Jews, and Roma people perpetrated by the Ustaše regime.

The Vatican, Stepinac, and the Anti-Bolshevik Alignment

The actions and statements of the Catholic hierarchy during the existence of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) often reflected a prioritization of the struggle against Communism, which was perceived as the primary threat to Europe and the Church.

- **Pope Pius XII's Concern:** Reports suggest that Pope Pius XII expressed disappointment to Croatian representatives that the perceived "primary and real enemy of Europe," namely **Bolshevism** (Communism), was not being fully acknowledged or countered with a decisive military campaign. This preoccupation with Communism is frequently cited by historians as a factor that heavily influenced the Vatican's diplomatic stance toward fascist and collaborationist regimes.
- **Stepinac's Role in Conversions:** Archbishop **Alojzije Stepinac** of Zagreb supported the policy of **forced**

conversions of the non-Catholic majority (primarily Orthodox Serbs) to Catholicism, though some defenders argue he intended it as a pragmatic measure to save lives from the Ustaše executioners. However, by cooperating with the Ustaše to facilitate these conversions, he was seen as an **ally of the clergy** who implemented this policy across the NDH.

- **Clerical Integration into the Ustaše Regime:** A significant number of Catholic priests served in **high administrative and military positions** within the Ustaše government and militia. This direct participation meant that the Catholic Church, in a functional sense, operated as an integrated component of the fascist state. This context leads to the historical assessment that the Archbishop, as the head of the church hierarchy, essentially served as the **highest military vicar** in Croatia.

Church and Ustaše Collaboration in Atrocity

The collaboration between the Catholic Church hierarchy and the Ustaše regime extended deep into the military and ideological framework of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), directly contributing to the campaign of terror.

- **Field Chaplains:** The Ustaše army had **Field Chaplains** appointed for each military unit. A central function of these clerics was to **incite** their Ustaše units in the mass murders of the peasant population, effectively sanctioning the atrocities from a religious authority.
- **Forced Conversions:** High dignitaries of the Catholic Church openly **collaborated** with Ustaše officials to

implement the policy of **mass conversion** of the Orthodox Serbian population to Catholicism. This was part of the regime's strategy to eliminate the Serbian ethnic identity through a campaign often described by historians as forced "re-Catholicization" or "re-Croatization." This collaboration was instrumental in the Ustaše's broader genocidal aims against Serbs, Jews, and Roma.

The Horror Church: Frasher's Memoir and Forced Conversion

The preceding account of the church siege and its tragic aftermath in Czechoslovakia forms a chilling segment of **Samron Frasher's memoir**, recorded while he was deep undercover at the Jasenovac camp complex.

Frasher, acting as a German officer, secretly documented the grim reality of the Ustaše regime's genocidal process after witnessing the forced conversion of a group of inmates to Catholicism. These forced conversions were overseen by clergy, including **Bishop Stepinac** (Alojzije Stepinac) and **Father Angelo Venturi**.

The details were confirmed to Frasher by an Ustaše member named **Miroslavić**, who openly described their ethnic cleansing scheme. This plan involved a two-stage process:

1. **Forced Conversion:** Inmates were compelled to convert to the Catholic faith as a false solution, aimed at destroying their existing religious and ethnic identity.
2. **Extermination:** This conversion was ultimately a hollow reprieve, as it was frequently followed by **liquidation** and mass murder.

Frasher's memoir thus links the persecution of resistance members in Czechoslovakia with the systematic, religiously-sanctioned genocide occurring in Croatia, revealing the comprehensive nature of the Axis powers' brutality.

The Ambiguity of Church Involvement

The role of the Catholic Church in the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) presents a complex and deeply disturbing picture, characterized by both official cooperation with the Ustaše regime and internal dissent against the violence.

The pervading and stunning revelation was the extent to which parts of the local **Catholic clergy were supportive and deeply cooperative** with the Ustaše regime's genocidal aims. This support included:

- **Political Legitimacy:** The enthusiastic welcome and collaboration by Archbishop Stepinac and other high dignitaries initially provided the Ustaše state with critical legitimacy.
- **Active Participation:** As detailed previously, some **Franciscan priests and other clerics** not only sanctioned but actively **participated in the massacres** and the burning of villages.
- **Forced Conversions:** Church officials actively collaborated with the Ustaše in the campaign for the **mass, forced conversion** of Orthodox Serbs to Catholicism, effectively serving as a religious arm of the ethnic cleansing policy.

Vatican Policy and Internal Opposition

The situation was not monolithic, leading to what is often described as "evils all around pulling the righteous to their knees":

- **Alleged Vatican Opposition:** It is argued that the **Vatican's international policy** was, at least officially and diplomatically, against the Ustaše movement's violence, particularly the mass murder. The Holy See did attempt to intervene privately to mitigate the atrocities.
- **Internal Clerical Opposition:** Not all clerics supported the regime. Many individuals within the Catholic clergy were genuinely **opposed to the violence** being enforced by the Ustaše against Serbs, Jews, and Roma. Some quietly or privately lodged protests, and a few actively risked their lives to save victims, underscoring the deep moral crisis within the Church itself.

The tragedy lay in the fact that while some in the clergy and the Vatican may have opposed the violence, the institutional and visible support provided by others, and the official status given to the Ustaše state, allowed the horrors to continue with an implicit, often explicit, religious sanction.

The Parish Church: A Site of Coercion and Authority

In the grim landscape of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), a large parish church, officiated by **Father Angelo Venturi**, became a focal point for the Ustaše regime's campaign to compel the religious conversion of minority populations.

This site was instrumental in the Ustaše's two-step ethnic cleansing process: forcing conversion upon minorities slated for deportation and eventual execution (as noted in Frasher's memoir).

The church was frequently visited by **Bishop Alojzije Stepinac** (Aloysius Stepanoc), who served as the Archbishop of

Zagreb and was considered the representative of the Pontifical Church in the capital. His official visits served to:

1. **Edify and Advise:** Stepinac offered counsel and spiritual direction to Father Venturi and the local parishioners—comprising native Croats, foreigners, and members of the persecuted minorities—advising them all to "**withstand the challenge of time.**"
2. **Lend Authority:** Stepinac's presence, despite his later private protests against Ustaše violence, provided a degree of **ecclesiastical authority and legitimacy** to the proceedings at the church, which were inextricably linked to the Ustaše's genocidal plan for forced conversions.

Confronting Ustaše Lawlessness

The tension between obedience and morality flared within the walls of the church.

"Our relations with the Ustaše will be imperiled, and we can be all destroyed if we don't abide by their law," **Father Angelo Venturi** insisted, his words reflecting a grim concern for institutional survival amid the fascist state's terror.

Bishop Alojzije Stepinac (Aloysius Stepanoc), however, refused to acknowledge the regime's brutality as legitimate authority. He exclaimed in righteous defiance: "What law do they have? The violence that they inflict on innocent civilians and the mass murder that they conceal in remote villages of the camp?" Stepinac's outburst highlighted the moral chasm: he saw no legal authority in a regime whose actions were defined by genocide and illegal execution, even if acknowledging this risked his own safety and the Church's standing.

The Demand for Benediction

The anxiety in the parish church was palpable as Father Venturi delivered a terrifying ultimatum from the regime.

"Tomorrow, Miroslavic and his men will come to receive your **benediction and blessing of support** for their regime," Venturi added, the weight of the demand heavy in the air. The Ustaše sought not just compliance, but the spiritual seal of approval for their terror.

"I will not be around tomorrow. Just tell them to come back some other day," the Bishop replied, his refusal firm, choosing deliberate absence over complicity.

Venturi's anxiety boiled over into a fearful stammer. "But Bishop, they will get mad, and I can get scolded or harmed by them! You know who these people are? They are notorious murderers in this village. What shall I do now?" Venturi pleaded, his voice cracking with the terror of having to face the Ustaše killers without the shield of the Bishop's presence.

"Leave and shut the church. Come with me, and we will return together with other priests to face them when they get back," the Bishop commanded, his voice tight with urgency and defiance. It wasn't a retreat; it was a tactical withdrawal.

"Oh, thank you. I think that will be better," Venturi breathed out, relief and panic warring in his tone.

That night, under the cloak of darkness, they abandoned the parish, slipping away to the city to confer with the Archbishop, leaving the sacred ground silently locked against the encroaching evil.

The following morning, the anticipated shadow fell upon the deserted church. **Miroslavić** and a squad of Ustaše arrived, expecting compliance and a blessing. The sight of the massive wooden doors sealed shut ignited their rage. They hammered on

the wood, the echoing blows reverberating like gunshots in the quiet village.

"Father Venturi! Bishop Stepanoc! Are you there?!" an Ustaše screamed, his voice raw with fury, but the silence inside was absolute.

Miroslavić, his face contorted, slammed his fist against the frame. "Let's get back later. They will be back for sure," he growled, the threat hanging heavy in the air.

"Where are we going?" an Ustaše asked, eager for action.

Miroslavić's eyes narrowed, a sinister plot already forming.

"To Father Šarić at the other church."

The immediate confrontation was averted, but the Ustaše killers were now turning their wrath toward another house of God, seeking a more compliant cleric to sanction their terror. The clock was ticking for every dissenting voice in the region.

When Miroslavić and his Ustaše squad arrived at the second church, they encountered a far more receptive figure in **Father Šarić**. Šarić was known as a cooperative priest and an outright **ally of the Ustaše doctrine**, fully aware of the genocide and atrocities being committed, including those at the Jasenovac camp.

"Father Šarić, we know you are our friend, as you have been loyal to us since you arrived here. Can you help us execute our doctrine of exterminating the inmates?" Miroslavić urged, cutting directly to the horrific request.

"What do you mean?" Šarić asked, though his question was likely one of caution rather than genuine confusion.

Miroslavić, confident in the priest's complicity, grew impatient: "Do I have to elaborate that to you? You have two assistants here. **This is our way of doing an ethnic cleansing.** I know you are aware of that. Don't you worry, you won't get

punished or killed when you do that, but rather **we will reward you**," he continued, offering protection and incentive for the priest's direct participation in mass murder.

Father Šarić, despite his previous cooperation, recoiled from the direct demand for murder, momentarily placing principle before pragmatism.

"Are you crazy? We were not ordained to do that, else we would get punished and expelled from the church," Šarić countered, the gravity of the request forcing him to cite ecclesiastical law.

Miroslavić's warning was swift, absolute, and chillingly pragmatic: "**If you fail to do that, all of you will vanish from this State.**"

He then laid out the Ustaše's brutal policy in stark terms: "Force them to be converted to spare their lives, otherwise kill them. We will send them to you. **That's our policy for ethnic cleansing.**"

To quell Šarić's moral and institutional fears, Miroslavić offered a damning assurance: "Don't think about the Pontiff, they don't know what's going on here. We will conceal things from them. **You are inside our jurisdiction and protection.**"

The terrified priest made one final, desperate protest, clinging to his spiritual oath: "But, our duty is to save lives and spirituality. I can't do that!" he exclaimed, facing the horrifying choice between his conscience and his survival.

The terrifying ultimatum left **Father Šarić** reeling, trying to fully grasp the lethal consequences of non-cooperation.

Miroslavić, sensing the priest's faltering resolve, pressed the advantage with chilling casualness. "You will get used to that thing when we show you how to do it. You just have not experienced

seeing and doing it. If you do it, then you are helping us clean our society from these enemies," he urged, framing mass murder as an act of civic duty.

To ensure the killing was done according to their doctrine, Miroslavić offered a compromise that removed the direct execution from Šarić's hands: "I got an idea. I will deliver my men to replace your assistants and do the job."

Šarić, now primarily concerned with maintaining the illusion of the church's sanctity, seized on a practical objection: "The parishioners and the minorities will be scared and won't come anymore," he stated, a final, futile attempt to preserve the church's attendance despite the surrounding terror.

Miroslavić, fully exploiting Father Šarić's fear, finalized the terrifying plan, turning the church ceremony into a process of betrayal and murder.

"My men will do it in their **priest garbs** while you read your prayer book in the pulpit," Miroslavić insinuated, establishing a chilling scene where Ustaše killers would blend into the clergy, lending a horrifying religious mask to their actions.

He then detailed the method of delivery: "Likewise, after your prayer, the minorities will line up for **solitary confession**, and you will deliver each one at a time at the exit point leading to the empty dark room where no one can see."

The confession booth—a place of spiritual solace—was to be transformed into a funnel for the slaughter. Šarić's sacred duty of guiding his flock was twisted into an act of cold, precise delivery to the executioners waiting in the hidden darkness.

Defiance at the Closed Church

Faced with the terrifying prospect of betrayal, **Father Šarić** kept silent, the weight of Miroslavić's plan settling upon him, and

slowly proceeded with his ecclesiastical ceremony—a silent acquiescence to the Ustaše's terms.

Meanwhile, the following day, Miroslavić and his Ustaše squad returned to **Father Venturi's church**, where **Bishop Stepinac** (Stepanoc) and the other priests had gathered to confront them.

The Bishop's defiance was immediate. "**We can't bless and give benediction to an evil activity**," he stated firmly, refusing to provide the spiritual endorsement the Ustaše craved.

Miroslavić responded with a chilling, pragmatic threat: "**Your presence here will not be conducive to your ecclesiastical mission if you will not cooperate with us**," he warned. The implication was clear: the Bishop's authority and mission would be instantly destroyed, and his life endangered, should he continue to resist the Ustaše's demands for complicity.

The confrontation between the spiritual authority of the Church and the ruthless military power of the Ustaše reached a fever pitch.

"Our objective in this state is part of the **Pontifical mission** in cooperation with the Nazi regime since the **Führer is part of this faith**," Miroslavić falsely claimed, attempting to legitimize their actions by invoking a nonexistent unity between the Vatican and Nazism. He finished with a command: "Aside, we are not bound to obey your evil law."

The Bishop seized on the flaw in the claim and stood his ground. "Well, we will not force you to abide by our law, but I am telling you that this is a **time of turbulence** for all nations and anyone can put the law into his hands. It is inevitable, so **watch out and be careful**," Miroslavić warned, his words thinly veiled death threats wrapped in fatalistic pronouncements about the war.

"We are not afraid of you as long as we do our duty for the church," the Bishop added, confirming his refusal to be intimidated and affirming his moral obligation over his physical safety.

Terror in the Sanctuary

As lawlessness and violence prevailed across the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), more and more terrified inmates were deported to the Jasenovac camp complex, becoming victims of systematic persecution and mass murder. In the surrounding villages, the only perceived haven for the scared, desperate, and hopeless was the church. It was here that the Ustaše—known chillingly as the "**Cut-throats**"—began to execute their wanton, horrifying mission.

A distraught old woman, representing the countless victims, approached the priest: "**Help us, Father, to be spared by the Cut-throat. We still want to live, but there is no place to go,**" she lamented.

Father Šarić, having already agreed to the Ustaše's dreadful plan to deliver victims to the executioners disguised as priests, could only offer a hollow comfort. Trapped in his moral prison, he whispered: "**Just pray hard, my sister, that everyone be delivered from evil.**" His words, meant as a benediction, were overshadowed by the knowledge that he was about to participate in the very evil they feared.

He **froze**. He sensed the three figures in dark robes lurking behind the dark room's door. The moment an old woman stepped toward the exit, they struck. They **seized her instantly**, crushing any sound with a **towel stuffed in her mouth** before they **slit her throat**. The remaining victims met the identical, horrific end. Their

bodies, wrapped in dark blankets, were **piled high in the convent's basement**. Under the cover of night, a **(6x6) army truck** would arrive to collect the dead, dumping them into the deep excavation pit at the foot of the mountain..

Miroslavic: "You aren't going anywhere, Father Saric. We've **hanged the Bishop, Father Venturi, and other priests** right in the church—a necessary lesson for their disobedience."

Saric: "I'm aware. The grim news travels. But tell me, Miroslavic, will you offer us the same rope when we have been so **perfectly compliant** with your demands?"

Miroslavic: "Not yet. But you should know that **obedience is merely a stay of execution.**"

Saric: "Our hands are already stained, aren't they? They're **slick with the blood of your inmates**. We've gone mad, haven't we? We're as evil as you. We've turned this sacred parish into a slaughterhouse for you! Do you seriously believe we aren't following your command?!"

Miroslavic: "That's the spirit! You are, indeed, a **loyal servant**. And your loyalty has been well rewarded; we've seen to your every need, down to generous sums of money."

Saric: "Money that only serves to fund our complicity. Do you think we could actually **use that money to escape?**"

Miroslavic: "Now, why would you do that, Father? It would be quite **unwise** to wander. The world outside is teeming with enemies who would gladly slit your throats for what you've done. You are **safe only here**. Stay within the church vicinity, and keep your eyes peeled for intruders. **That's where you belong.**"

This version makes the knife a symbol of Saric's final, enthusiastic surrender to evil.

Scene: After a moment, Miroslavic produced a **shiny, razor-sharp knife**, identical to the ones the executioners used.

Miroslavic: "I'm replacing your old, dull blade. **Use this one** for the new batch of newcomers tomorrow."

Saric: "What a sharp and **beautiful murder tool.**" Saric studied the gleam, his voice now strangely excited. "My feelings have entirely changed. There's a thrill in this now, a joy in seeing the bloodshed of my victims. I feel a **thirst for blood** springing up from deep within me. I can't quite understand it."

Miroslavic: "It sounds odd coming from a man of the cloth, but I told you: **you'd get used to it.** There's a perverse joy in taking a life, isn't there?"

Saric: "Yes. You're right. I **always** thirst for blood now."

Father Saric stepped closer, his eyes locked on Miroslavic. He slowly stroked the razor edge of the new knife as he circled his commander.

Saric: "You always enjoy killing, don't you?"

Miroslavic: "Exactly. We are now truly one in this spree," Miroslavic replied, grinning with delight.

Father Saric flaunted a demonstration, bringing the knife's sharp point close to Miroslavic's throat. The moment Miroslavic turned his back, Saric suddenly plunged the blade deep into his neck. Blood immediately sprang out, but Saric didn't stop. He applied heavy, deliberate pressure, drawing the blade until Miroslavic's throat was wide open.

Saric: "This is the price for **dragging us all to hell,**" Saric whispered into the dying man's ear. "You murdered my assistants, my Bishop, and my priests. Now, I will exterminate your men, too."

He quickly wrapped Miroslavic's body and hid it with the other corpses until the army truck arrived for its gruesome pickup.

Later, at the pulpit, Father Saric delivered his sermon and read the prayer book with **chilling compassion**. When the time came, he asked the inmates to approach the confession booth. However, he directed the women and children to use the alternate exit door, separating them from the men.

Saric (whispering to an inmate): "Tell your friends it's time to get ready. **They are waiting to kill now.**"

Inmate: "Yes, Father. We're ready."

As Miroslavic's three men, disguised in priest robes, waited in the dark room, Father Saric and the male inmates **hurried to seal every passage** of the church. They effectively locked the murderers inside the dark, confined space.

Ustashe Guard: "What's taking them so long?"

Other Guard: "Let me check."

Inside the Dark Room He was stunned. Everybody was gone, and every door and window was locked from the outside. They scrambled, running frantic circles, searching for any exit, but it was too late.

The Fire Outside, Father Saric and the freed inmates spilled gasoline across every corner of the church. A match struck, and the fire erupted instantly, fanned by the wind and spreading rapidly. Soon, the entire church was engulfed, incinerating the Ustashe murderers trapped within.

The Pursuit Father Saric and the inmates, however, were unable to flee far. They were quickly intercepted and hunted down by a new wave of Ustashe forces. Trapped near the river banks, they were executed and unceremoniously dumped into the dark, churning mud flows. The vengeance was complete, but the cost was absolute.

Chapter 12

Life and Atrocities in Jasenovac

Jasenovac, February 1942

Frasher arrived in the chilling, desolate village of **Jasenovac** in February 1942. The air itself felt heavy with dread. He met **Vjekoslav "Maks" Luburić**, the ruthless head of the Ustaše—the Croatian Security Force. Luburić, whose eyes held a manic gleam, wasted no time, spewing chilling details about the camp's operations.

They toured the site. The landscape was a grim expanse of half-finished projects and sickening efficiency. Frasher watched as Luburić proudly pointed out the emerging **extermination sites**.

"These places are **awful**," Frasher finally managed, his voice a low rasp. "I haven't witnessed such cold, industrialized horror since **Auschwitz**. And here, the new inmates arrive by the hundreds, every single day."

Luburić: "This place is our **dumping ground** for the unwanted: Serbians, Jews, Roma, Sinti—all of them. They arrive **without end**."

Frasher: "Then how do you manage the volume? What is your policy for processing them as they stream in?"

Luburić: "Unlike Auschwitz, we don't need gas chambers. We have our own policy, you see. Our methods are... **more direct**."

Luburić: "As you can see, upon arrival, all prisoners are **color-coded**, much like the Nazi badges: **red for Communists, blue for Serbs**, and so on."

Frasher: "And what is the exact process for the executions? How is that phase carried out?"

Luburić: "We don't kill indiscriminately. We **spare those with needed professions**—doctors, pharmacists, electricians, shoemakers, goldsmiths. They're essential; we employ them in the workshops and services right here at Jasenovac."

Frasher: "And for the rest? Where does the extermination take place?"

Luburić: "The majority of victims are processed at specific **execution sites** near the main camp: **Granik, Gradina**, and a few other designated locations."

The **Ustaše** were notorious for their barbaric practices, chiefly aimed at the **genocidal erasure** of ethnic **Serbs** from the Independent State of Croatia (NDH). Their victims also included **Jews, Roma, and dissident Croatians** who opposed the fascist regime.

The infamous **Jasenovac** concentration camp complex was situated in the marshland at the **confluence of the Sava and Una rivers**. This sprawling operation wasn't a single camp; it was a cluster of **five sub-camps** covering over **2100 square kilometers** across both river banks.

The Ustaše's initial testing ground for extermination was the **Jadovno concentration camp**, which began operations in **May 1941**. Its run was brief: it was closed by **August** of the same year, coinciding with the immediate formation of the massive **Jasenovac** complex that same month. Of Jasenovac's initial sub-camps, **Krapje and Broćica** were shut down quickly by **November 1941**. This rapid closure and consolidation signaled a chilling shift toward greater, more 'efficient' genocide.

Frasher: "Given the scale of operations here, which **ethnic population** has suffered the highest number of executions in Jasenovac, and specifically, **where are those killings concentrated?**"

"Before August 1942, most Jews were executed right here at Jasenovac. Afterward, the Ustaše began deporting them to Auschwitz. They were initially gathered from all over Croatia in Zagreb and from Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo, then transported to our camp from those cities."

"These prisoners also included a great many Roma and Sinti, rounded up from various areas in Bosnia, especially the Koazara region. Regarding nutrition, hydration, shelter, and sanitation—all were far below any standard. As a result, the figures for murdered Roma here are a matter of controversy, with estimates ranging from 20,000 to 50,000."

The day was done. Frasherí retreated to his quarters for a meal and a desperate attempt at rest. What he had seen and learned at Jasenovac had shattered him; the camp's atrocities were a **psychological torment** far beyond the clinical nightmare of Auschwitz. Sleep offered no escape; he was plagued by a waking vision that was **more savage than any nightmare** he could conjure.

At Jasenovac, there were no gas chambers. Instead, hundreds of men were **hacked apart with saws and axes** or tossed alive into the Sava River, their legs weighted with concrete. Girls were **gang-raped** hundreds at a time. Women were butchered by trained executioners—some even having their **hearts slashed out**.

One afternoon, seeking to distance himself from the horror, he was roaming the perimeter, observing the camp's chilling activity. Approximately a hundred meters away, he saw a group of **Ustaše guards approaching**, escorting a large, terrified contingent of **women and children**. The movement was unmistakable, and his dread spiked.

Ustaše Guard: "Alright, everybody on the ground!" the guard roared.

Frasheri watched, **stunned**, as the specialized **butchers** suddenly materialized from behind the guards, armed with **knives, iron bars, and heavy mallets**. They immediately descended upon the helpless column. Women instinctively **clutched their children tightly** as they braced for their bloody end.

Frasheri **spun away**, unable to witness the slaughter, but the sound was unavoidable: an overwhelming, hideous chorus of **shrieking and groaning** from the victims.

Victims' Clamor: "No! Pity us!" "Don't kill us! Help!"

Butcher's Roar: "Nobody runs!" a butcher bellowed over the screams.

Frasheri staggered back, **clapping a hand over his mouth** to stop the surge of nausea. "**Barbaric! Dehumanizing!**" he breathed to himself, his voice raw with disgust.

On the other side of the compound, away from the scene of the massacre, Frasheri engaged the Ustaše guards with a pressing list of concerns. Their exchange was quiet, their route taking them quickly toward the barracks.

Frasheri: "What's the urgency in the camp's routine?"

Ustaše Guard: "A Red Cross delegation is due to inspect the inmates tomorrow, Sir."

Frasheri: "I know nothing of this. How exactly do you plan to explain away the starvation rations, the crumbling accommodations, and the brutality?"

Ustaše Guard: "That's unpleasant, Sir. Chief Luburić has the orders. You'll need to go straight to his office for those details."

Sensing a massive cover-up, Frasherri **immediately broke away and sprinted for Luburić's office**. After a short, tense wait, the door opened...

Here are a few ways to rewrite the dialogue, amplifying the **political tension, Luburić's casual cruelty, and Frasherri's final breaking point** with the Ustaše's methods.

Frasherri: "I've learned the **Red Cross delegation is visiting tomorrow**. Why was I not informed?"

Luburić: "I was just about to tell you, but you weren't available. Good that you're here, though. We need to complete the **makeover** so they see only what we want them to."

Frasherri: "A **makeover**? To deliberately obscure the miserable conditions? And the moment their backs are turned, everything reverts to this barbarity?!" Frasherri's voice rose in disbelief.

Luburić: "Hey, what is your issue? You sound strangely **sympathetic** to those doomed prisoners. Where do your loyalties lie?"

Frasherri: "This is not about sympathy! It is **not in accordance with the Nazi goal** to employ such barbaric, localized killings against helpless women and children! These theatrics and hypocrisies for the delegation are **not the operational norms** of the German regime!"

"The Ustaše regime operates under **its own doctrine**—one that is not obligated to mirror the German one. We are an independent state, and when it comes to the prisoners deported here, we follow **our own law**."

"We have no choice but to **drastically reduce the population**; otherwise, this camp will be overwhelmed and fail. At the very least, we are fully aligned with the Nazi regime's overarching goal: the **Final Solution**."

Luburić's chilling insinuation left Frascheri **deeply disturbed**. He finally stepped out of the office and headed for his quarters, spending a crucial period contemplating his ethical position and refining his urgent need to flee the camp.

Then, a new, **powerful realization** struck him. He prepared his diary, determined to abandon the immediate focus on escape for the sake of documentation. He would meticulously record the day-to-day events of Jasenovac, convinced that this account would serve as **irrefutable testimony** when shared with any future visiting charity organization.

He titled his clandestine chronicle: "**The 1942 Jasenovac Diary.**"

Day 1: Sunday

"I arrived at the desolate village of **Jasenovac** today. The welcome was unsettling: an **SS officer**, whose presence here speaks volumes, greeted me and introduced me to **Verduric**, the man in charge. He is not a commander; he is a **horrible butcher** whose reputation precedes him."

Day 2: Monday

"The sheer **primal brutality** of the Ustaše's methods is astounding. I spent the day observing different sub-camps and am truly startled by the rampant, **barbaric killings** the butchers employ. This is a level of personal, deliberate cruelty I had not anticipated."

Day 3: Tuesday

"I spent the day observing the prisoner quarters. The conditions are **unbearable**. Sanitation is non-existent, the diet is starvation level, and the overall living condition is a systematic act of cruelty. The inmates are visibly weak, succumbing to disease and exhaustion while being forced into brutal **hard labor**—a slow, miserable death for the majority."

Day 4: Wednesday

"Today, I focused on documenting the starvation rations. The diet is intentionally designed to kill. At **Camp Broćica**, the food has steadily deteriorated: inmates receive a thin soup of hot water and **starch** for breakfast, followed by meager portions of **beans** for lunch and dinner."

"In contrast, the conditions at **Camp No. 3** started slightly better, initially offering **potatoes** instead of beans. However, that relative decency was soon abolished, replaced by a single daily serving of **thin turnip soup**. By year's end, the diet degraded further—three daily portions of **thin gruel**, made only of water and starch. Food changes repeatedly and arbitrarily thereafter, always trending toward zero sustenance."

Day [5/Other]: [Day of the week] - Life Support Failures

"No potable water; inmates must drink directly from the **Sava River**. Overcrowding is severe. **Broćica and Krapje** use triple-stacked bunks. **Camp No. 3** initially crammed over 3,000 prisoners into attics, a tunnel, and open depots. Two newly built barracks, labeled as a 'clinic' and 'hospital,' are essentially **killing centers** for the sick and infirm."

Day 5: Thursday - Forced Labor

"The inmates are driven into **brutal, eleven-hour workdays** under the constant, menacing eye of their Ustaše captors. Failure or slowdown is met with immediate, arbitrary murder; inmates are routinely **executed for the most trivial reasons**. Lashing is commonplace—a tool to force impossible exertion."

"The labor force is systematically organized into groups: construction, brickworks, metalworks, agriculture, and more. All groups share the same purpose: to **perish in their hard labor**. The ultimate irony: prisoners work as **blacksmiths, forging the**

very knives and bladed weapons the Ustaše use for their ongoing slaughter."

"The state of sanitation is **catastrophic**. The barracks are contaminated with **cluttered blood, decomposing remains, and vomit**. The stench of **overflowing latrines** is constant, and pests infest every corner."

"The immediate effect is a mass breakdown of health. The inmates' exposure has guaranteed large-scale epidemics. We are seeing major outbreaks of **typhus, typhoid, malaria, pleuritis, influenza, dysentery, and diphtheria**—diseases that ensure the Ustaše do not have to waste a bullet."

Day 6: Friday — The Latrine Pits

"The conditions for bodily functions are horrific. Inmates must relieve themselves during breaks at **open latrines**—huge pits dug in the fields, thinly covered by planks. This is no accident: the Ustaše use this design as a ploy to **murder prisoners**. They force internees (newcomers) onto the planks, which are deliberately spaced to collapse, causing the inmates to **plunge inside and drown** in the filth."

"During heavy rains and flooding, these pits overflow. The contaminated waste is intentionally allowed to drain into the nearby **lake from which the camp's 'drinking water' is taken**. The entire system is designed for extermination, both quick and slow."

"The conditions during winter are a slow execution. Inmates are terribly exposed to the **lethal frost** because their rags and blankets are far too thin and worn to provide any warmth. To make matters worse, clothes and blankets are **rarely and poorly cleaned**. Inmates are permitted to wash them only briefly, just

once a month, in the freezing lake water before it freezes completely for the season."

Day 7: Saturday – Deprivation and Deception

"The process of **dehumanization is total**. Inmates are immediately stripped of their personal belongings and garments, left with only thin, ragged clothing. They are given thin raincoats, which they must use to fashion their **meager, light footwear** for the freezing winter."

"The food bowl itself is a tool of starvation: designed to hold a maximum of **0.4 liters of soup**. The lack of compassion breeds violence—any inmate whose bowl is **lost or stolen receives no food whatsoever.**"

"The hypocrisy is astounding: only during the **scheduled visitation of the delegation** are inmates given bowls **twice as large**, complete with spoons, and provided with colored identification tags. A pathetic, temporary stage show."

Day 8: Sunday – The Anatomy of the Camp

"The **anxiety of death** is the defining feature of existence here. It's a constant psychological weapon. I see the prisoners' camp life broken down into three stages: Arrival, Living Inside, and (theoretical) Liberty."

"The initial **Arrival** is designed to shock. The Ustaše leverage the prisoners' disorientation from the harsh transit, **slaughtering several inmates** immediately. The survivors are housed haphazardly—in warehouses, train tunnel attics, or simply outdoors."

"After this shocking introduction, the prisoners enter the grinding reality: the second phase. This is the **anguish of survival**, defined by perpetual sorrow, extreme hardship, and systematic abuse."

Day 9: Monday – Death and Resistance

"Death is a certainty here, usually arriving through **public punishment or random selections**. Inmates are lined up in groups, and individuals are arbitrarily chosen to receive the death penalty."

"The Ustaše intensify this process into pure **psychological torture** by prolonging the phases. They patrol slowly, asking unsettling questions, staring down prisoners, choosing a victim, then deliberately **refraining and choosing another**. The whole line suffers."

"The inmates are reacting in both active and passive ways. Passively, they endure. Actively, they **conspire to form resistance movements**, steal food to survive, plan escapes and revolts, and risk everything to make contact with the outside world."

"The inmates' passive approach is a simple, desperate effort: to see the day through **unscathed**. In a way, this focus on raw survival—on *not* running to the slaughter—is their last, tiny act of defiance against Ustaše dehumanization."

"Yet, it is utterly **primitive**. Their entire lives now revolve around two acts: **obeying orders and chasing a bowl of meager soup**. In doing so, they become the very victims the Ustaše intended: **living dead, walking skeletons**, mentally stripped of their humanity, and beyond all hope of salvation."

Day 10: Tuesday – The Mental Toll and Kozara Fate

"The darker truth is that every inmate suffers **profound psychological damage**. Obsessive thoughts of food, paranoia, delusions, constant daydreaming, and a complete lack of self-control are now universal. The scene here is as horrifying as Auschwitz, but the cruelty is more intimate."

"In the summer of 1942, the camp absorbed the tragedy of the **Kozara region** in Bosnia, where tens of thousands of Serbian villagers were deported here. Their fate was systematic: most men were immediately executed; the women were shipped out to forced labor camps in Germany. Most tragically, the **children were ripped from their mothers** and were either brutally killed or transferred to Catholic orphanages."

Day 11: Wednesday – Methods of Annihilation

"The sheer lack of care is staggering: the Ustaše **cremate indiscriminately**, tossing in corpses and inmates who are still alive—sometimes drugged, sometimes **fully conscious**—into the fires started in **January 1942** at the brick factory."

"While sophisticated crematories were reportedly built at Gradina, it seems many bodies are simply buried. They are also seeking faster means: at Stara-Gradiška, they tested gas and poison. The horror intensified at **Camp Đakovo**, where gas vans were first used on women and children, later replaced by **Zyklon B and sulfur dioxide.**"

"Despite all the science, the Ustaše still rely heavily on direct slaughter, utilizing **sharp and blunt craftsmen's tools**—knives, saws, and hammers—to execute their victims."

Day 12: Thursday – Nightly Extermination

"To manage the idle winter workforce and new arrivals, the Ustaše executioners utilize a **crane** at the **Granik ramp** by the Sava. This functions as an efficient gallows and dumping mechanism for the corpses."

"The process is routine: Ustaše arrive at the warehouse nightly with death lists. Inmates are stripped, chained, beaten, and hauled to Granik. Weights are secured to the wire wrapped around their

arms and intestines. Their throats are cut, their heads are smashed with a blunt tool, and they are discarded into the current."

"The method later evolved: prisoners were **tied back-to-back**, **their abdomens sliced open** just before they were thrown into the river."

Day 13: Friday – Gradina and Mass Slaughter

"The Ustaše use the open land near **Donja Gradina and Uštica** as centralized execution zones. The designated areas are simply encircled with wire. Victims are systematically slaughtered—either **cut with knives or their skulls crushed with mallets**—and immediately disposed of in mass graves."

"Cruelly, groups of **Roma** prisoners are forced to dig these graves and even participate in the killing at Gradina. As a result, the Gradina site has become a vast, **infamous killing field**. Grave sites are also confirmed in Uštica and Drakšenić."

Day 14: Saturday – The Tally of Death

"The Ustaše camp guards engage in a **ghastly competition**, placing bets on who can amass the highest body count among the inmates. I heard one boast of **slaughtering more than 3,000 new arrivals**; his rivals quickly countered, claiming tallies of 500 or 900. Killing is a matter of pride."

"Later, I learned of a specific incident: one guard tortured an old man who refused to utter praise for the Ustaše leader. For this simple defiance, the guard first mutilated him, severing his **ears, nose, and tongue**. The final act was utterly savage: he **gouged out the old man's eyes, tore out his heart**, and then slit his throat. A doctor was tragically forced to witness the entire event."

Having witnessed and learned the horrific scale of the Ustaše regime's dehumanizing policies, Frasher was utterly **shattered**. The barbaric nature of the slaughterers, driven by a complete

insensitivity to human life, went beyond anything he could comprehend.

Frasher sighed, his voice hollow: "**I have seen men die by the hundreds in combat, from bullet wounds and bombs. But never, in my whole life, have I witnessed death like this.**"

He could scarcely imagine, even in his **wildest nightmares**, how one human being could inflict such devastating cruelty upon another. In his solitude, he wrestled with the agonizing realization that the Ustaše's treatment of their victims was so **degrading and barbaric** it surpassed the savagery of any animal. The relentless onslaught of these bizarre, horrifying sights completely **overwhelmed Frasher, driving him into deep depression**. He was suffocated by the atmosphere of unimaginable acts of men against men.

The following morning, the routine was grimly familiar: another truck loaded with "sacrificial lambs" rumbled into the camp. Inmates were harshly ordered to form two lines, right and left, with the young and able-bodied immediately segregated from the weak. Seeing this chilling Ustaše procedure unfold yet again, Frasher marched straight toward the guards.

Frasher: "**Halt this procedure.** None of these inmates are going to Gradina. Everyone will remain here and be assigned to farm labor immediately."

The guards froze, exchanging bewildered looks, taking a hesitant step toward him.

Guard: "**But Sir, we must follow the Ustaše principle.** If we don't reduce the numbers, the barracks will be completely **full-packed with these burdensome inmates.**

As usual, a new transport of victims arrived the next morning. Inmates were efficiently divided into two columns—the young

segregated from the weak—a process Frasherri had seen lead straight to the slaughter pits. This time, he intervened, approaching the execution guards.

Frasherri: "Cancel the transport to Gradina. **All inmates are to be diverted** to the farm to begin work immediately."

The guards were visibly taken aback, stopping their work and cautiously advancing on Frasherri.

Guard: "But Sir, our duty is to follow the Ustaše's directive. If we allow this, the camp will soon be **stuffed beyond capacity with these burdens.**"

" The Nazi principle does not allow barbaric killings of humans . I know that the

moment you send these inmates to different camps they will end up the same as

those you have murdered and dumped into the Sava river." He explained. "

But Sir, Chief Luburic will be mad when he finds that we violated the Ustashe

rules. " a second guard exclaimed.

" He

is no human being. Tell him that I ordered it. Otherwise, he and you will be

liable for violating the norms of the Nazi. This land is under Nazi sovereignty

and an occupied territory." He added

Here are a few ways to rewrite the dialogue, focusing on amplifying Frasherri's **moral authority, the political threat he wields, and the guards' genuine fear** of both their Ustaše commander and the Nazi regime.

Frasher: "The Nazi principle does not sanction the barbaric killing of humans. I know exactly what happens when you send these inmates to Gradina—they end up butchered and dumped into the Sava River, just like the rest."

Second Guard: "But Sir, Chief Luburić will be furious. We can't violate the Ustaše rules! We'll be punished!"

Frasher: "Luburić is no human being. Tell him I gave the order. Failing to follow my direct command means that both he and you will be held liable for violating the operational norms of the Reich. This land is under Nazi sovereignty and is occupied territory. My word is German policy."

Frasher: "Stop this! The Nazi code forbids such barbaric slaughter. I know that sending these people out means they'll be murdered and dumped into the Sava, just like the others."

Second Guard: "But Sir, Luburić will be insane with rage if we break the Ustaše rules!"

Frasher: "He is a monster. Tell him I personally countermanded the order. If you proceed, you and Luburić will be guilty of violating German norms. Remember, this territory falls under Nazi sovereignty."

Option 3: Emphasizing Moral Judgment and Legal Liability

This version highlights Frasher's disgust and his immediate move to use the German legal framework against the Ustaše.

Frasher: "The Nazi doctrine does not countenance the barbaric killing of human beings. I have documented evidence that the moment these inmates leave, they are butchered and dumped into the Sava."

Second Guard: "Sir, Luburić will be enraged if we disregard the Ustaše statutes!"

Frasherí: "His rage means nothing. He is beneath contempt. Tell him I issued the directive. He and all of you will face charges for violating Nazi regulations. This land is under German authority; it is occupied territory, and my orders supersede the Ustaše."

The guards submitted, obeying Frasherí's command and diverting the inmates from the certain path to the slaughter camps.

The news hit Chief Luburić like a slap. He immediately rushed to the military detachment. Accompanied by one of his grim-faced guards, he slammed into Frasherí's room.

Luburić: "Colonel Frasherí, your interference is directly hostile to the Ustaše principles of this camp. I am the absolute authority here—the head of Jasenovac. You will not disrupt our work! I decide what happens to these prisoners the moment they step off the truck!"

Frasherí: "Chief Luburić, you seem to forget that my presence here is by the direct order of the Führer, issued from the Nazi High Command in Paris. My purpose is specific: to officially assume administrative oversight of all Jasenovac camps. Reports of barbaric, subhuman treatment have reached the top. Furthermore, if the visiting delegations document this dehumanization, both you and the Nazi government will be held liable for war crimes when this war concludes."

Luburić: "Your allegations are baseless rumor! Where is your proof? Have you personally witnessed any of these supposed 'situations'?"

Frasherí: "Yes, I did. And that is why I am assuming command."

Luburić: "Impossible! We are the Ustaše, and this is the Independent State of Croatia! We still hold sovereignty here. There is no agreement with Berlin granting you administrative

control over this camp or this village. You are **limited to observation.**"

Frasherí: "The limitations have been lifted. Your independence is an illusion. Croatia is now a **puppet state**. You are a war criminal, and I will ensure you are held liable for every inmate slaughtered at Jasenovac."

Luburić: "By protecting these inmates and violating our rules, you have made yourself an **enemy—not just of the Ustaše, but of the Nazi government!** You betray the cause!"

Frasherí: "I violate rules that are designed to **dehumanize**! That cruelty is unacceptable!"

Luburić: "Look at Auschwitz! What is their method? Imprisonment, followed by the secret murder in **gas chambers**! We achieve the same goal. The only distinction is that we don't bother with gas or poison; we rely on **manual, direct methods of killing!**"

Frasherí stood from his table and took a measured, deliberate pace toward the enraged Ustaše commander.

Luburić (voice strained): "What do you propose we do with these arriving inmates if we can't send them to the designated killing sites? We'll create an absolute chaos here—a massive, unmanageable gathering! Tell me, what's the use of the **Final Solution** if we cannot execute it?"

"I will not risk being shot for disobeying Ustaše authority! Tell me, Frasherí, **what is your answer?** What is the German solution?"

Frasherí simply stared at Luburić, his eyes fixed on the man while his **right hand slowly and deliberately concealed the act of drawing his pistol**. Luburić's guard remained frozen by the door, watching the argument.

"I must tell you to **shut up**," Frasheri said, his voice cold. In the same instant, he **snapped his pistol out and shot Luburić directly in the chest.**

Luburić collapsed to the floor, grasping desperately for breath as blood instantly spread across the planks. Frasheri moved fast, **grabbing Luburić's own pistol** from its holster and placing it squarely in the dead man's open palm. Luburić's guard stood immobilized, rooted to the spot by shock.

Frasheri looked directly at the stunned guard. "**You did not see anything, right?**"

Just as the smoke cleared, the **snarl of an armored vehicle** forced Frasheri to step to the door. He was immediately confronted by the approaching commander of the SS command post, **General Ludwig Bubier**, flanked by two SS soldiers who had clearly heard the shot.

General Bubier: "**What in God's name happened here?**"

Frasheri: "We struggled. He tried to shoot me in the heat of our argument," Frasheri explained, maintaining a deceptive calm.

General Bubier strode inside and knelt to check on the rapidly failing Luburić. While the General was distracted, Frasheri quickly gave his guard a warning glance, **shunned away from the chaos**, and rushed toward his service vehicle. The **dying declaration** whispered by Luburić instantly enraged the General. Bubier sprang to his feet, turning to see Frasheri escaping.

General Bubier (screaming): "**Shoot him! Shoot the traitor!**"

Frasheri barely managed to get his hands on the wheel, but before he could **accelerate the engine**, he was instantly hit by a **hail of bullets** from the SS submachine guns. He collapsed without ever firing a single shot in his defense. His body was recovered and sent back to the command post, later to be **buried**

unceremoniously in the grave site reserved for fallen Nazi soldiers.

Chapter 13

Limoges, France: The Trial of Commander Bogdini

German Navy Commander **Sander Bogdini** sat before the German Military Tribunal, facing a terrifying investigation. He was being tried for the death of two Petty Officers and the presumed death of a missing Navy Captain.

The cross-examination was brutal, a relentless volley of **interpolations** between his military defense lawyer and the Tribunal's prosecutors. Though subsequent deliberations cleared Bogdini of any direct relationship with the actual culprit, Qamil Leka, the focus of the prosecution now shifted: his **liability for neglect of duty** was being hammered home relentlessly.

The prosecutors pressed their case, insisting that Commander Bogdini **must be held liable** for the loss of his men, citing **gross negligence** as the cause.

In his rebuttal, Bogdini stood firm:

"Your Honor, I was indeed in **full control of the ship's voyage**, but I did not—and could not—have absolute control over my men's **personal affairs**. Though they served under my command, they remained responsible for their individual actions aboard that vessel."

"We must acknowledge that **human relations** are complex; ultimately, it is individual judgment, even at sea, that determines what is **safe and what is perilous** when dealing with others."

Prosecutor: "When you discovered your men were missing, were you not **alarmed**? What was your immediate response to their sudden absence on a warship?"

Bogdini: "Your Honor, I was **shocked**. I immediately issued the order for a comprehensive search of the entire vessel.

Concurrently, I initiated a full internal investigation to determine the cause."

Prosecutor (insinuating): "Did it not occur to you that a killer had already boarded your ship at the port? Given the wartime risk, just how secure is your vessel from **intruders** during a voyage?"

Bogdini: "Your Honor, because we operate in a state of war, our standing orders for all crew are to maintain **constant vigilance** against infiltrators. We strictly verify the identity of everyone aboard and monitor all neighboring vessels. That is our standard operating procedure."

"The culprit, who was able to sneak into the ship, did anyone realize he was an impostor?" the Prosecutor added.

"I understand he was in a Nazi SS uniform, as they say, but I was never able to get a glance of him because my concern was my duty as I always kept abreast with our voyage and the transmitter. Hence, I only talked with my deputy all the time." He continued.

Bogdini's rebuttals to the Tribunal's sensitive questions were ultimately unsatisfactory, and the hearing was adjourned without a consensus. Commander Bogdini was remanded to his **detention cell** for the duration of the trial, with only unavoidable enemy attacks or encounters able to postpone a scheduled session. His situation was now doubly bleak: his long-held plan to escape and meet his co-resistance fighters in **Czechoslovakia** had to be **foregone entirely**, crushed by the recent massive Nazi campaign and subsequent occupation of the country.

His knowledge of the massacres in **Lidice and Ležáky**, following the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich, only deepened his dread. He rightly presumed that the Czech resistance had been **shattered**, its fighters either dispersed or killed. With his contacts gone, only one reality remained: he must either **escape to**

Albania before the impending Allied invasion of Europe, or he would certainly be **discovered and killed by the Nazis** when they uncovered his true identity.

Mountains of Lidice, Czechoslovakia

Erzen and his group moved cautiously, descending the rugged mountain terrain until they reached the railroad track. They concealed themselves low among the dense **shrubs and wild leaves**, waiting for their moment. After an agonizing hour, the silence was shattered: the track began to **jolt violently** just as a loud train horn blared.

The slow-moving train was a prize and a threat: it carried massive **guns, tanks, and a contingent of SS soldiers**. As the ten-car convoy crept past, the five men rushed a nearby high point for a better angle. Believing the final two cars to be empty, they made a desperate, synchronized sprint. They swiftly **hooked onto the cars**, their destination unknown, driven only by the primal need to escape that perilous site.

As the train rattled toward its distant destination, the SS guards on the rooftops maintained a constant watch for intruders. The resistance group knew they needed to be **SS incognito**—a disguise essential for paving their way ahead.

Under the cover of darkness, as the train periodically slowed or stopped at Nazi checkpoints, the infiltration began. One by one, the original SS guards were neutralized and **replaced by the five resistance fighters**. The swap was flawless. At every stop, they were approached, frisked, and checked, but their deep knowledge and **indubitably good German** left no room for doubt. They looked, spoke, and acted like genuine SS soldiers.

The group successfully transitioned from one train to the next until they reached **Salzburg, Austria**. Their journey continued to the **Berchtesgaden station**, a Bavarian municipality right on the Austrian border, where they needed to catch a final connection into Italian territory. To avoid drawing suspicion from the patrolling **SS officers**, they dispersed.

Erzen and **Jora** chose a table outside a coffee shop, nesting themselves against the wall, while **Qamil** sat across the street, keeping watch. The final two resistance fighters moved away, strolling casually to gain a clearer view of the area.

As the two men walked, a **Gestapo agent**, who had been quietly browsing the morning news over coffee, caught sight of them. His eyes narrowed with suspicion. He immediately rose, approached an **SS patrol guard** on the promenade, and whispered a quick, low message. The guard then entered a nearby building and was last seen holding the telephone.

The **Gestapo agent**, wearing the unsettling **swastika emblem** armband of the Nazi police, approached the two resistance fighters.

Gestapo Agent (curiously): "You gentlemen look new to this place. Right?"

Resistance Fighter: "Yes, we are. Why the interest?"

Gestapo Agent: "Nothing at all. I simply noticed you looking around. Perhaps you're searching for something you can't quite place? I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have."

Resistance Fighter (firmly): "No. Thank you."

Gestapo Agent (pressing): "You're both SS soldiers. Where are you arriving from?"

Resistance Fighter: "From **Czechoslovakia**. We're waiting for our connecting trip. This is a beautiful town. Now, if you'll excuse us, we'd like to continue our walk."

Gestapo Agent: "May I see your identity papers?"

Resistance Fighter (feigning indignation): "What for? We're Nazi soldiers. It's frankly **discourteous** to treat our own men this way."

Gestapo Agent: "My apologies, but this is a standard operating procedure for all personnel in this Nazi-occupied territory."

Resistance Fighter (handing over the papers): "Don't worry, we have the necessary documents."

The Gestapo agent took the papers, his eyes immediately focusing on the flaws: **obscured markings on the photos and several illegible letters.**

Gestapo Agent: "Excuse me, I need to take these inside the building. The light is better there for a clearer view. **Come with me.**"

Meanwhile, the SS soldier who had been on the telephone emerged from the other café, now signaling to an approaching **motorized SS patrol**. The trap was sprung. The two resistance fighters, seeing the approaching backup and knowing their fake papers had failed, were seized by **sheer panic**.

They had only one choice: escape now. With a desperate move, one of the fighters **whipped out his pistol and shot the Gestapo agent squarely in the back**. The sound of the shot instantly dissolved the crowd, sending patrons scattering away in every direction.

The gunshot immediately **snapped Erzen and the others** out of their cover; they abandoned the coffee shop and bolted for safety. The two fighters who had just shot the Gestapo agent were already

running, simultaneously **wielding their pistols and firing at the pursuing SS soldiers**. They desperately zigzagged through the scattering crowd, exchanging fire as they sprinted toward the **train depot**. They finally reached the massive, garaged train, using its bulk as a temporary shield from the relentless SS pursuit. The chaos peaked as a command cut through the frantic noise:

SS Soldier: "Everybody down!"

The sudden burst of gunfire silenced the running battle: the two resistance fighters had been **gunned down at the railroad track**.

Erzen (his voice tight): "They got them. We have to move out now and avoid the Nazis."

Qamil (desperate): "Let's jump any train we see that will take us clear of this area!"

Jora (a calming presence): "Hold on. We can't act while things are still this hot. Let's cool it off and wait for the right train—we need time."

Erzen (nodding, regaining control): "Jora's right. We have to be confident and stay alert. We can't risk taking a random train that won't get us to our destination."

They immediately retreated from the station, finding a secluded refuge to lie low until the right train arrived. Finally, with regained **confidence and courage**, they boarded the train that would take them on the long journey across Italian territory: first to **Artegna**, then towards **Udine**, and finally to **Venice**.

Erzen (impatiently): "How long do you think this will take? Venice can't come soon enough."

Qamil: "At least six hours, perhaps more."

Erzen: "Six hours. I'm going to stretch my legs and see what the view is like."

Erzen stepped out into the narrow porch, leaving Jora absorbed in a women's magazine and Qamil focused on his pocketbook. For a few brief minutes, Erzen enjoyed the fresh air and the passing scenery.

His peace was shattered without warning. A **Gestapo agent**, systematically roving the coaches for suspicious travelers, suddenly appeared. Behind him stalked **two SS soldiers** armed with submachine guns, their eyes keenly fixed on checking papers.

The intrusion was immediate and unsettling.

Gestapo Agent (with heavy sarcasm): "What a nice and gentle breeze, Major, isn't it?"

Erzen, startled, whirled around. "Of course, **obviously**," he replied, forcing a smile.

Gestapo Agent: "No doubt, Major. It truly is pleasant, and the landscape is beautiful. It looks like you're embarked on quite a long trip, Major?"

Erzen: "Yes, but the final leg won't take much longer. We'll be in Venice soon. And where did you come from, Agent?"

Gestapo Agent: "Nuremberg." Then the tone shifted, turning cold: "**How many of you are in this coach, and where exactly are your comrades?**"

Erzen (remaining composed): "Just my wife and a friend. We're on a **furlough** and heading back to our country of origin, **Albania**."

Gestapo Agent (skeptically): "Furlough? That's quite surprising to hear, Major, given the current urgency in all occupied territories. Why travel now, during such a turbulent time?"

Erzen (grumbling, pushing back): "We are returning to our unit at the German Military Command in Albania, which is where we came from. **What exactly is the problem?**"

Gestapo Agent (ignoring the question, eyes fixed on the uniform): "Your uniform does look exemplary. But I hope you won't take offense, Major, if I ask to see your papers."

Erzen froze for a beat, then calmly produced his papers. The Gestapo agent snatched them, scrutinizing the documents and comparing the photograph with a **sharp, disbelieving gaze**. He passed the papers back.

"They are credible. The documents appear perfectly genuine," the Agent admitted, his tone suddenly hardening. "However, the sight of you and your comrades adopting such a **smart position** at the café, and then escaping so swiftly during the confusion when your two colleagues were trapped and killed—that act is **cunning and directly contradicts your story.**"

Stunned by the Gestapo's accusation, Erzen was caught off-guard as the agent **shoved a pistol against him**. Erzen instantly fought back, grappling for the weapon. He managed to land a powerful shove, kicking the agent's legs out from under him. The Gestapo officer, unbalanced, screamed as he **plunged over the cliff edge**. The two SS guards saw the fatal fall and reacted immediately: one soldier **shot Erzen dead where he stood**. But the SS reaction was too slow. **Jora and Qamil, already in position**, retaliated instantly, killing both SS soldiers in a swift exchange of fire.

With ruthless efficiency, they grabbed the two enemy corpses and **dumped them from the swiftly moving train** to erase any trace of the killings. They then rushed to Erzen, who was **gravely wounded, hovering between life and death**.

Jora was weeping and moaning, but Erzen struggled to speak, uttering a final plea:

Erzen (weakly): "Jora, you must go and **take care of our infant.**"

"Qamil, promise me you'll look after Jora and our baby."

Qamil (firmly): "I will."

Qamil, suddenly understanding, turned to Jora for confirmation:

"**Are you... are you pregnant?**"

Jora (sobbing): "Yes. Almost **four months** now."

They moved quickly to conceal Erzen's body, carefully pulling him into a nearby cargo coach and hiding him beneath crates of fruits and vegetables. Their immediate task was escape. To avoid the sharp eyes of the **Gestapo and SS patrols**, they began a treacherous trek, moving along the train's **narrow porches and roofs** toward a safer section of the convoy.

At the next station, Qamil and Jora risked sneaking out and immediately waited for another train. Their patience was rewarded: they soon boarded a passenger train bound for **Venice**, settling in for the next anxious journey of more than five hours.

Jora was utterly **bereaved**, the loss of Erzen leaving her shattered. She found no peace; sorrow threatened to overwhelm her entirely. It was only due to **Qamil's overwhelming moral support** that she stayed grounded. The rest of their journey became a wistful, aching memory of the man they had lost.

Jora's grief easily could have driven her off the edge, but Qamil's persistent encouragement pulled her back. Above all else, the life she carried—**Erzen's conceived baby**—became her sole inspiration, a living memory to be cherished and protected.

Upon arrival in the beautiful Italian city of **Venice**, they kept clear of both crowds and uniformed men, focusing only on finding a

secure place to stay. Due to a fragile agreement between the Allies and Germans in 1943, Venice was spared the widespread destruction; its architectural treasures and historical sites remained intact.

Jora and Qamil secured refuge on the city's fringes, using the quiet to establish contacts with local resistance fighters who agreed to assist their escape to **Albania**. But the political situation was volatile: their contacts were forced to **immediately abandon the area** as German forces advanced and the new, brutal **Fascist Salò Republic** consolidated power.

When Italy formally surrendered to the Allies in 1943, the peace was fractured. Large areas—particularly the central and northern zones—remained firmly under the control of **German forces and their Fascist allies**. Anarchist groups erupted from the turmoil, immediately plunging into armed struggle and establishing resistance formations wherever they could gain a foothold.

Qamil (with urgency): "We can't stay here much longer. The city is surrounded by enemies now—on all sides. Our situation has become absolutely **critical**."

"We have to leave now," Jora insisted.

"I agree, but we're trading one critical problem for another," Qamil explained. "**Albania is under German control**, just like here. However, it's also where the resistance movements are fighting most fiercely. Despite the risk, there's simply **no other place** where we could face less persecution and find support. We have to get there by any means necessary, even if it costs us our lives. I am certain we will be **protected and rescued** once we reach those contacts."

"I hope you're right," Jora replied, her voice tinged with fear.

Albania

Albania, officially known as the Republic of Albania, is a country in southeastern Europe with its capital in **Tirana**.

Geographically, it is strategically located:

- It has a coastline on the **Adriatic Sea** to the west and the **Ionian Sea** to the southwest.
- It shares borders with **Montenegro** to the northwest, **Kosovo** to the northeast, **North Macedonia** to the east, and **Greece** to the south.
- Crucially, Albania is separated from Italy by just **70 kilometers** across the Strait of Otranto.

Italy Invades Albania

In a pivotal event just months before the start of World War II, **Italian troops invaded Albania on April 7, 1939**. Despite a valiant armed resistance, the defense quickly crumbled, leading to Italian occupation.

The defeat triggered a hasty exit: **King Zog I**, along with his wife, **Queen Geraldine Apponyi**, and their infant son **Leka**, fled to Greece. They allegedly took a portion of the **Central Bank of Albania's gold reserves** with them. News of the King's flight and the missing gold incited an angry popular backlash. A mob immediately **attacked the prisons, freeing the inmates**, and then furiously **ransacked the King's royal residence**.

The very next day, **April 8**, the Italian advance accelerated. **Tirana** was quickly besieged, and troops rapidly secured all key government structures. By evening, after hours of fighting, Italian forces had also successfully entered **Shkodër, Fier, and Elbasan**. As the troops advanced into **Shkodër**, a furious local mob took advantage of the chaos, **besieging the prison and liberating a**

number of inmates—a potent sign of the resistance already brewing.

Albania was swiftly converted into an **Italian protectorate**, losing its sovereignty just as Bohemia and Moravia had become German protectorates. The crown was unified with Italy's, effectively placing Albania under the rule of **King Victor Emmanuel III**, with **Rome managing all foreign policy**.

The subjugation was total: the Albanian military was integrated into the Italian forces, and **Mussolini's Fascism governed every level of the country's administration**. The Albanian Fascist Party was thus a mere **extension of Italy's National Fascist Party**. This colonial status opened the gates for Italian citizens to **settle and acquire land** in Albania, handing control of the nation's natural resources directly to Italy.

Historically, **Albania** has deep ties to the Mediterranean, dating back to the **Roman Empire**. During the Middle Ages, key coastal regions, such as **Durazzo (Durrës)**, were heavily influenced and occasionally controlled by powerful Italian entities, notably the Kingdom of Naples and the Republic of Venice.

The **Italian Fascist** regime used these ancient ties to legitimize its 1939 invasion. Fascist studies promoted a concept of "**racial affinity**," deliberately linking Albanians to Italians through shared ethnic heritage. This propaganda claimed descent from prehistoric **Italiotes, common Illyrian and Roman populations**, and cited the historical Roman and Venetian influence as definitive proof of Italy's **natural right to possess** the territory.

In addition to historical claims, Italy attempted to secure sovereign legitimacy over Albania by actively supporting Albanian **irredentism**. This political movement was aimed at

territories with large Albanian populations, specifically **Kosovo** in Yugoslavia and **Epirus** in Greece.

However, King Zog I refused to subject Albania to outright annexation by Italy, rejecting the demands of Benito Mussolini. Mussolini quickly manufactured a **pretext for aggression** by citing King Zog's suppression of Fascist elements within Albania. To force the issue, Mussolini delivered a final **ultimatum**: the capital city of **Tirana** must be immediately annexed by Italy. King Zog's refusal sealed the country's fate.

The invasion began violently on **April 7, 1939**, with Italian warships **bombarding the Albanian coast** before ground troops attempted to land. The initial assault was tragically hampered when the rough Albanian waters **drowned many of the Italian paratroopers**.

Despite this, the Albanian resistance proved **ineffective**. Seeing the defense collapse, **King Zog and Queen Geraldine**, along with their infant son, Crown Prince Leka, immediately **fled the country for London via Greece**. The crown was formally, though reluctantly, accepted by **King Victor Emmanuel III of Italy**.

Germany Invades Albania

The political landscape in Albania fractured in **1943** with the overthrow of **Mussolini** and Italy's subsequent surrender. Albanian defenders quickly subdued the former occupiers. The **Communists** seized control of the country's major cities, with the exception of **Vlorë**, which remained a stronghold of the rival nationalist group, **Balli Kombëtar**.

Complicating matters, **British agents** operating in Albania provided the fragmented resistance with misleading information about the Allies' planned invasion of the Balkans, urging unity.

This pressure led to a tense, necessary collaboration between the Communist and Balli Kombëtar leaders. However, they fatally failed to agree on the post-war fate of **Kosovo**. Their profound **political and ideological differences** rapidly boiled over, igniting a devastating internal war that swept across Albania.

In **September 1943**, following Italy's collapse, Germany moved swiftly, invading Albania by dropping paratroopers directly into the capital, **Tirana**. This decisive move instantly foiled the Albanian forces' defense attempts. As German ground forces rapidly overwhelmed the city, they drove the Albanian fighters into the surrounding hills. This crisis proved fatal to Albanian unity: numerous units of the nationalist **Balli Kombëtar** chose to **collaborate with the Germans against their Communist rivals**, a betrayal marked by the placement of several Balli Kombëtar leaders in high-ranking positions within the German command structure.

Immediately following the occupation, the Germans moved to stabilize the country by quickly **negotiating and settling Albania's administration**. Under German sponsorship, a new **Committee** was formed and recognized by the Reich.

A key ally, the Kosovo-Albanian **Xhafer Deva**, was quickly installed as the Minister of the Interior for Prizren in Kosovo. Deva went on to found the **Nazi-aligned League of Prizren**, which declared a **holy war (Jihad)** against perceived enemies—specifically, **Slavs, Jews, and Gypsies**—as a mandate to **ethnically cleanse Albania**.

Following Italy's surrender, the German forces' arrival brought an immediate and brutal change: the **extermination of all Jews** in Albania began. This genocide extended to all Jewish populations in the Albanian-occupied territories of **Yugoslavia**. The Jewish

settlers in **western Macedonia**, previously unharmed by the Italians, were now the **primary target**. German units quickly swept through the region, sending groups of Jews to concentration camps where they were systematically **murdered**.

As **German forces** swept across Albania, they faced scattered resistance from guerrilla movements. However, the advancing invaders' overwhelming military **might quickly crushed these sporadic hostilities**. The Germans systematically overpowered the rebels, particularly in remote areas, thereby **eliminating significant opposition**. This strategic reduction in fighting allowed them to seize and occupy major towns and cities, including **Tirana**, with relative ease.

In the thinly populated towns, local resistance movements quickly formed to defend their communities. They were often forced to protect themselves from **abusive SS soldiers** whose primary assignment was to **patrol and closely watch** the movements of anyone suspected of aiding the resistance.

Resistance Movements Arise

In **1930**, Communist organizer **Ali Kelmendi** was dispatched to Albania with the goal of forming a Communist Party. His efforts faced immediate hurdles: there was **no established working class** to provide a base of support. Marxism appealed only to a small and fragmented group: discontented, mostly **Tosk intellectuals** educated in the West, along with landless peasants, miners, and others opposed to Albania's outdated social and economic systems. Paris served as a hub for this movement until the city's fall to the Nazis in **1940**.

A strange paradox emerged during the Nazi occupation: most **Jews within Albania proper were successfully hidden and**

saved, while Jewish populations in the **Kosovo region** were tragically deported and murdered.

The Albanian resistance movement began modestly with small **cetas** (guerrilla units) in **1940**, but by **1942**, it had grown into a formidable force. The movement was bolstered by the arrival of Italian deserters: small groups of soldiers who abandoned the Fascist army and **joined the Albanian partisans**.

When Italy officially **capitulated in 1943**, the situation for Italian soldiers in Albania turned dire. A massive number surrendered, not to the partisans, but to the advancing **German army**. As punishment, the Germans disarmed them and immediately dispatched them to **concentration camps** or forced them into **labor service** within Albania to support the German war machine.

The **Albanian Communist Party** was founded in Tirana in **1941** by **Enver Hoxha** and his small, eleven-member Central Committee. Early on, the party struggled with low numbers and minimal public support. Its fortunes changed when the Party positioned itself as the leader of the national cause, issuing a powerful call to young people to **liberate Albania from Italy**.

This recruitment drive swelled its numbers dramatically. In **1942**, the Party successfully organized the **National Liberation Movement (LNC)**, which became the umbrella organization for numerous resistance factions, even incorporating groups that were ideologically **opposed to Communism**.

A nationalist resistance group appeared in **October 1942** to oppose the Italian occupation. Led by **Ali Këlcyra and Mit'hat Frashëri**, this Western-aligned movement became known as the **Balli Kombëtar (National Front)**. This was an explicitly **anti-communist** front that drew its support from a wide base, notably **peasants and large landowners**. The organization championed

social and economic reform while actively promoting the Italian concept of **Greater Albania** and rejecting any return to power by **King Zog**.

Jora and Qamil secured passage on a passenger ship and finally departed for Albania, traversing the **Adriatic Sea**. Like all German-occupied territories, the **Albanian Adriatic Sea Port** enforced strict immigration inspection and identification for every passenger.

The **German Immigration Officer** began his interrogation:

Officer: "Are you two traveling as husband and wife?"

Jora: "No."

Officer: "Then whose child are you carrying, madam?"

Qamil (stepping in quickly): "Her husband died en route to Italy. He was a **commissioned officer in the German Air Force**."

Officer: "How did he die?"

Jora (her voice steadyng): "He was shot by a resistance fighter on the train."

Officer (to Jora): "And you, are you also Air Force?"

Jora: "We were both in active service before his death."

Officer (turning to Qamil, reviewing his papers): "And you are **Captain Qamil Leka, German Military Command from Vichy, France**. You've traveled a great distance, too. How did you two, from different service units, come to be traveling together?"

Qamil: "We are close friends. We are on furlough, returning to our heritage land, Albania."

"Albania," the officer insinuated with a dry laugh, "is truly a pleasant country—an ethnically '**ideal**' place to reside, especially for minorities like Jews, Roma, and Slavs. The Italians claim it's a haven of hospitality for investors and businessmen, and, of course, a **convenient place to hide the hunted**."

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As the train began to **rattle its way** toward **Vlorë**, the stalkers settled in, maintaining a watchful gaze on the far end of the coach. Qamil tried to formulate a plan to cross into the next car, but their positions made it clear the stalkers **had already sealed that escape route**.

Instead, he slipped into the **washroom** directly behind their location. Once inside, he began a quick, nervous survey of the small space, looking for any hatch or way to discreetly reach the **next coach over**.

Qamil (whispering fiercely): "There's no way out unless we **eliminate them by force.**"

Jora (her voice low and strained): "No, not here. That'll land us in much deeper trouble. We have to **wait until we reach the city.**"

Qamil: "They won't back off until they have us cornered. It's simple: **we get them first, or they will get us.**"

Jora (exasperated): "Just relax! I can't sprint like I used to. Remember, **I'm not exactly not pregnant!**"

Qamil (defeated): "Okay. We watch. We wait."

The train hissed to a halt in a **populous area of the city**, where a throng of people immediately began to flood the vicinity.

Passengers scrambled to retrieve their belongings from the coaches. Exploiting the sudden **chaos of the mob**, Qamil and Jora tried to sneak out of the train without being noticed by the stalkers.

Qamil (urgent whisper): "Hurry, Jora! We have to lose them in this crowd."

Jora (straining to keep pace): "I'm moving as fast as I can, but where are we going?"

Qamil (hissing): "Just keep moving and blend with the mob. Keep your head down. They're right there, looking—not far, just wandering and searching."

Driven forward by the chaotic crowd, Qamil and Jora abruptly found themselves exposed on an **uninhabited, narrow, and shady avenue**. With no one to hide behind, they were forced to walk briskly.

"Quick! They're right behind us!" Qamil exclaimed.

"Yes, I know I need to hurry, but I'm struggling," Jora complained, her breath ragged. "It's getting heavier..."

A sharp voice cut the air: "**Halt!**"

Qamil instantly drew his pistol. Seeing his move to fire, one of the SS soldiers raised his submachine gun and **fired a burst**, narrowly missing the two. Qamil paused, took careful aim, and returned fire. One SS soldier crumpled to the ground as they continued their desperate run, though Jora was now visibly struggling, barely able to lift her left leg to step away.

Clutching Jora, they stumbled past a line of old concrete flats. The sound of gunfire had spooked the neighborhood; frightened residents slammed their doors and windows shut. However, one resident, hearing the gunshots, risked a quick look through his

door. Qamil, struggling to lift the exhausted Jora, saw the man peeking out.

"**Come on in, quick!**" the man hissed.

"Thank you, thank you for letting us in," Qamil gasped.

"They'll sweep this whole area where you disappeared," the resident explained, pulling them inside. "I'll make sure they won't find you here."

Moments later, the **Waffen SS and the Gestapo** began their search. They pounded restlessly on doors and windows, threatening to raid every dwelling. Any resident who failed to open up had their door violently kicked in. The troops tore through every corner, room, ceiling, and hiding space beneath the floors. Frustrated by their failure, the searchers eventually left the apartments behind, but only after reducing the homes to a **messy, ransacked ruin**.

"We can't thank you enough. You saved us," Jora whispered.

"We heard the shots. We knew the SS or Gestapo had run into trouble with the partisans," the man responded, his expression grim. "These incidents are daily reality—the price of war. We've learned to live with it, from the Italians to the Germans, who are now cruelly persecuting all the **minority groups**."

He nodded toward their clothes. "Your uniforms mark you as German military, but your actions mark you as **allies of the oppressed**."

"That's precisely right," Qamil affirmed. "We've risked everything to get here, all the way from occupied **Czechoslovakia** to our home country."

"We know minorities face brutal persecution elsewhere," the man continued, "but it wasn't as severe here. The Italians treated us reasonably; they even gave the **Jews humane treatment**, viewing

them as valuable representatives of Italian economic interests abroad. But when the **Germans took over**, the real horror began. Now, the **Jews, Slavs, Roma, and Gypsies are being deported and exterminated.**"

He offered his hand. "By the way, my name is **Ahmed**, and this is my wife, **Fatima**. We are **Muslims**. We live by our code of **Besa**—a solemn pledge where saving a single life is considered the same as saving all of humanity. We are simply upholding a Quranic principle."

"We are **Albanian Jews by heritage**; our family has lived in this land for generations. We made the desperate choice to return because we truly believed we could still survive here. By living among our own people, we hoped to find a new beginning."

"We knew the Italians treated our community humanely, so we decided to risk it, believing the Germans might follow suit—or at least, wouldn't be as brutal as in places like **Auschwitz or Jasenovac in Croatia**. We were tragically wrong."

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Once the immediate danger subsided, **Qamil altered his appearance**, shedding his military disguise for that of an ordinary civilian. He began cautiously exploring the area, assessing their chances for survival and seeking outside resistance contacts.

Qamil soon learned that while fascist occupiers were attempting to **arrest and deport Jews**, the local inhabitants—primarily **Muslims and Catholics**—were mounting a profound moral resistance. They actively **refused to surrender the Jews**, choosing instead to shelter them and help them survive. Many were hidden safely in the **mountains**, out of sight of German patrols. Furthermore, members of the Albanian government were quietly providing Jewish families with **false or forged documents** to ensure their safety.

This concerted effort turned Albania into a remarkable **Jewish refuge**. Its humane treatment and hospitality stood in stark contrast to the rest of Eastern Europe, where concern for Jewish populations was tragically minimal.

Between **1938 and 1945**, the Albanian population, predominantly **Muslim** with a significant **Orthodox Catholic** minority, maintained a remarkable degree of interreligious tolerance. This unique environment made Albania a vital refuge during the Second World War; the local inhabitants treated most arriving Jews with great care.

Crucially, **Albanian Muslims** upheld the *Besa* code—a traditional, solemn pledge of hospitality—by actively sheltering Jews in their homes, in remote villages and mountains, and even arranging transport for them to the Adriatic ports to flee to Italy. Some Jews chose instead to join the burgeoning resistance movements across the country.

However, the fate of Jews changed drastically just across the border in **Albanian-dominated Kosovo**. There, the Jewish community was **harshly persecuted and arrested** to be handed over to the Nazis, resulting in numerous executions.

In the aftermath of the war, **Yad Vashem**, Israel's Holocaust Memorial, honored several **Croatian Catholics**, including clergy, nuns, and a priest, who were murdered for their courageous efforts to rescue Jews from execution.

This heroism stands in stark contrast to events in **May 1944**, when the German collaborator **Xhafer Deva** began recruiting Kosovo-Albanians. These recruits formed the **21st Waffen SS Division**, cynically named the **SS Skanderbeg Division** in honor of the Albanian national hero, Gjergj Kastrioti Skanderbeg.

Tragically, these Kosovo-Albanians **tarnished the division's name** by committing atrocities against the local Serbian population, including ruthless **murder, rape, and looting**. This was immediately followed by a wanton campaign of raiding Jewish homes in **Pristina**, where they arrested both local and foreign Jews and handed them over to the Germans for execution. As Allied victory approached in the Balkans, the collaborationist division's leader, **Deva**, and his men attempted to obtain weapons from the defeated German forces. Their goal was to immediately implement a "**final solution**" against the **Slavic inhabitants of Kosovo**. This impending genocide was successfully **blocked by the decisive action of the Yugoslavian Partisans**.

Italy's capitulation to the Allies in **September 1943** had immediate, tangible results: **all concentration camps in Albania were demolished**. Consequently, the property and belongings of the freed Jewish prisoners were safely handed over to various organizations, institutions, and private individuals for safekeeping.

However, Albania quickly fell to the Germans. The German occupation force was initially strong, but by the close of **1943**, many **Wehrmacht recruits began deserting** their posts and

joining the Albanian Partisan units. The number of German defectors accelerated significantly during the German Summer Offensive in **1944**, growing steadily as the German military began its withdrawal from Albania.

Two months into their refuge, Jora safely gave birth to a baby boy, whom she named **Erzen, Jr.**, in honor of his fallen father. For their comfort, Qamil and Jora were housed in a vacant room at the back of Ahmed and Fatima's home. Qamil managed to secure work from the remaining Italian presence to earn money for their upkeep.

Out of gratitude for the couple's extraordinary hospitality and generosity, Qamil and Jora offered to pay them, an offer that was firmly refused.

"This help is not for payment," Fatima gently insisted. "It is our **willingness to help and understand you** during a time of such great need, and it is how we fulfill the sacred code of **Besa**."

"**Liberation is imminent**; soon, everyone will be able to start a new beginning," Ahmed added, his voice firm with conviction. "We just need to wait for that moment."

"You truly are wonderful people," Jora said, tears welling up. "May God bless all of us."

"Yes," Qamil declared, a sense of triumph in his voice. "**Liberty is at the threshold!** Once again, this nation will be free."

He quickly shared the crucial update: "According to the latest announcement, the **Partisans are now advancing on Tirana**, and the German forces have suffered heavy losses."

"The victory of the Communist Partisans is imminent!" Jora exclaimed, her face lighting up with relief. "The Germans will soon be driven out of Albania, and we will all finally enjoy the freedom we have been longing for."

The liberation of Albania was a hard-won victory. After nearly a month of intense fighting, the capital, **Tirana**, was freed in November 1944. The **National Liberation Army (NLF)**, led by the Communist partisan **Enver Hoxha**, achieved total victory on **November 29, 1944**, completely driving out first the Italian, and then the German occupation forces. The NLF's regular fighting force, which comprised over **6,000 members**, played a critical role in the final battles against the Fascists.

The influence of the Albanian Partisans extended regionally. Not only did they liberate **Kosovo**, but they were also instrumental in supporting **Josip Broz Tito**'s Communist forces in freeing parts of **Montenegro** and southern **Bosnia and Herzegovina**. This simultaneous effort occurred as the German military was retreating from Greece into Yugoslavia and the Soviet Army was advancing.

Chapter 14

Vichy, France

When the Allied invasion was imminent, the German forces were put on alert in all parts of France, particularly in the seacoast of the German-fortified Normandy wall or the Atlantic wall. Thus, the trial for Sander Bogdini did not push through, but rather, the military tribunal, upon recommendation and persistence of Bogdini's lawyer of his innocence and lack of factual basis insinuated to the German High Command in Vichy, France that he be released as his services were urgently and mostly needed during the Reich's pending invasion by the Allied forces in France.

Bogdini was delighted by the keen decision of the tribunal on his case, which was obscured by the rise in the issue of the Allied invasion of France. However, his release was only temporary, and he had to be escorted on duty by the tribunal's designated military police. Bogdini was recalled to Berlin Headquarters to resume his duty for the Reich.

Meantime, Joseph Darnand, a de facto leader of Milice and organizer of a collaborationist militia, supported Marshall Petain in Vichy, France, and offered his assistance against the resistance movement in France. His political career was far off to the right, in which he tried to join the French Resistance on different occasions but failed. After his failed attempts to join the resistance, he turned to the Nazi, by which he was rapidly accepted and given an SS rank of Lieutenant by Hitler when he personally took an oath of allegiance. Hence, Milice members, whom he led, were also the

target of the resistance fighters; however, their members were refused to be armed by the Vichy and Wehrmacht.

Allies land in Normandy.

When Normandy was invaded by the Allies, Darnand fled to Germany in 1944 and joined Petain's puppet government, and was promoted. However, when the Allies were advancing, Darnand tried to flee to Italy but was captured by the British soldiers on June 25, 1945. He was brought back to France, where he faced trial and was sentenced to die by firing squad on October 10, 1945, at Fort Chatillon.

In France's rural areas, the Maquis or resistance forces, which consisted of groups of armed men and women, provided intelligence information and had been instrumental in leading escape routes to Allied soldiers and flyers trapped behind enemy lines. They were men and women who came from all levels of France's society, which included students, aristocrats, priests, and citizens consisting of liberals, communists, and anarchists.

Paramilitary constituents of the Resistance who landed in Normandy and Provence, France, organized an operational unit known as the French Forces, constituting a thousand fighters, and grew rapidly to a tremendous size in 1944. Charles de Gaulle acknowledged the formation of the French Forces as regions began to be liberated by the Allied soldiers. Meanwhile, General Marie Pierre Koenig attempted to unify the French resistance efforts against the German forces and was confirmed by General Dwight Eisenhower as the commander of the latter.

In August 1944, organized French Forces penetrated towns and villages and seized bridges while passing on intelligence information about German units in penetrated areas, which made

the Allied forces rapidly march into France. Likewise, in Brittany, French forces helped the pursuit of the Loire and Paris to the Seine by blocking the railroad and highway movements, snapping the telecommunication lines of the enemy.

Fall of Berlin

The Soviet Union launched its Strategic Offensive Operation starting in January 1945 and created two Soviet fronts attacking Berlin from the east and south, while the German forces were overrun in their position to the north of Berlin. Likewise, the first defensive positions were launched at the outskirts of Berlin. German army General G. Heinrich anticipated the Red Army thrust to the north of Berlin as he pronounced, “The Reds have made it to the Oder river and encircled the city. This is a bad indication for the Reich.”

In April 1945, in the Belorussian Front, Marshall Georgy Zukov led the Red Army’s first offensive in the city of Berlin as he commanded his men with all their might, “Commence firing!” Simultaneously, in the Ukrainian Front, Marshal I. Konev pushed from the south through the last columns of the army group. The Germans had suffered heavy casualties and inadequate support.

“General Wielding, we have depleted equipment, and our men are badly equipped. Many of our Wehrmacht and SS divisions have disintegrated, and within a few days the Reds will be marching through the city.” The Adjutant desperately reported.

“This is it! The Third Reich has come to an end!” The General pronounced.

Meantime, at the Führer’s bunker, an atmosphere of anxiety was depressing as the Führer’s officers were reluctant to discuss any

possibility of unconditional surrender while they knew that the end of Hitler's Reich had come.

" We've come to the point that everyone has to leave. " Hitler sighed.

Later, he shut the door, and a gunshot was heard. When they opened the door, the sight of the bleeding head of the Führer sprawled on his table and the dead body of Eva Braun on the sofa, who allegedly ingested cyanide, appeared before them. One SS guard who was with the Führer before he took his life said that their bodies would be burned so that no one would do what they did to Mussolini, after they killed was hanged upside down in public.

Skirmishes continued while the Allies were advancing to the north-west, while the Red Army on the south-west of Berlin, as the near capitulation of the German forces was at hand.

" We would rather move westward and push against the Allies and surrender than be pushed towards the Red Army." One SS Officer hissed.

Later, Berlin was besieged by the Soviet Army, and ultimately, the German forces surrendered. General Zuhkov was acknowledged as a hero in the battle of Berlin; Thus, Stalin was happy with the outcome and hasty campaign against the Germans in the battle of Berlin, although it had caused him a thousand dead Red soldiers. Likewise, the besieged Germany was divided and shared among the Allies, with their respective zones of occupation.

On the other hand, before the fall of Berlin, Sander Bogdini was contemplating an ideal path to execute his duty for the German flag. With him were his Military Police escorts designated to oversee him and petty officers on their way to the dock.

" The submarine is ready for voyage, Commander." A Nazi sailor announced.

" It is now my mandate to know in which way we're sailing. The Führer and his Aides are now taking refuge in his bunker. We're expecting a horrendous swarm of invading forces on the coast of Normandy, " Bogdini said.

" Which way shall we take?" an officer asked.

" It's a long way home from both directions by water. We will face a tough encounter in the English Channel with England before we reach the Bay of Biscay." He said.

" But, Sir, we are surrounded if we take that route. Why not take the North Sea? That may give us a gateway to a lesser risk." An officer added.

" There are no more safe routes now. The Allies have taken control of the seas as an Atlantic invasion is anticipated." Bogdini said.

"What do we do now?" an Officer asked.

"There's nothing we can do but to take the risks from all directions," Bogdini replied.

Along the English Channel, the submarine went up to the surface, and once sirens began to alarm, Spitfires swooped down and strafed them with blazing bullets. Sea battles turned the sea into a deep grave of sunken ships with their dead, while blazing flying machines plunged into the depths of junk.

" It would be uncomfortable seeing you gentlemen on your feet all the days of your lives without doing anything and dying without repelling any enemy attacks. " Bogdini exclaimed.

" It's our duty to obey the tribunal's order," replied one of the MPs

" It doesn't make any sense at all. This is war, and you have to do something to fight for your country, yourself, and family, and for your fellowmen!" Bogdini continued.

" Take your weapons and shoot the approaching enemy. " He added.

It was a showdown of battleships in the midst of the English Channel. Bogdini's battleship maneuvered when a battleship began to fire at them. Once a torpedo was set, it was off to go. Then, it turned out to be a ship wrecked as billows of dark smoke hovered above it, and then another torpedo was released to bring it down. Later, the wreckage and all the rest went down into the seabed to its eternal rest.

" Let's get down," Bogdini ordered.

" Commander, radio message from Berlin." A radio man said.

" Go ahead, Berlin," Bogdini asked.

" Commander, you are hereby ordered to return to Berlin as soon as possible for an urgent mission," a radio man asked.

Bogdini finally made his way back to **Berlin**, leaving the chaotic war zone behind—specifically, the intense naval battle raging between **Nazi** and **British** forces. At the Berlin Headquarters, he was immediately met by **senior Nazi officers**. They had clearly been anticipating his arrival, but their focus was elsewhere: they were all frantically stuffing vital documents into their briefcases.

"Moving out somewhere?" he asked, observing their hasty preparations.

"Exactly, as you can see, everyone's in a rush before it's too late," the **Senior Officer** confirmed, his voice clipped. "**Bogdini**, the convoy is ready at the port."

The main group of evacuees began moving toward the port, but Bogdini hurried ahead to coordinate the final arrangements. A

submarine was already open and prepared for the leading **Nazi officers** to board.

"Sir, did you see that?" Bogdini's **Adjutant** whispered, quickly glancing at a specific couple among the entourage.

"Who was it?" Bogdini asked.

Here are a few ways to rewrite and improve that passage, focusing on clarity, tension, and better flow:

"It looked like the **Führer and his wife**, but I can't be sure since they turned away so quickly," the **Adjutant** clarified, his voice still low.

"I didn't notice. It's misty, and everyone has their hood up," **Bogdini** murmured, his attention already shifting back to the operation. He turned to the evacuees, his face set in a polite, professional expression.

"Welcome aboard, gentlemen," Bogdini said with a pleasant smile.

"Where to, Commander?" one of the officers asked as they filed past.

"As ordered, we will proceed to **Argentina**," he replied.

"Then, let's proceed."

With the **fall of Berlin** and the **Allied invasion**, **Sander Bogdini** vanished without a trace. The subsequent failure to produce **Hitler's** body infuriated **Stalin**, who was convinced the Nazi leader had successfully escaped to **Argentina**. This created a vacuum that conspiracy theories eagerly filled. Speculation exploded across newspapers and media, claiming Hitler was alive and well, sighted repeatedly in the remote regions of **Patagonia** and sometimes **Brazil**. Acting on these persistent rumors, dedicated media enthusiasts and undercover agents launched their own investigations, bothering locals for any shred of testimony that could prove the dictator's survival.

In those days, an **old man** living near the alleged hotel sighting claimed he had actually seen Hitler. He described the former dictator living in an **isolated area** and being carried by two personal aides because he was **too infirm to walk** on his own. Supporting this account, an **old woman** who had worked as a staff member at the hotel testified that the man seen was indeed **Hitler**. However, she and her coworkers had **refrained from discussing him** for fear of immediate termination.

Later, speculative **authors and historians** began circulating claims that **Hitler had died in 1965, not 1945**. This controversy deepened when a piece of **charred skull** with an apparent bullet hole was presented to a **Soviet forensic expert**. The expert determined the vestige belonged not to a man, but to a **female**. However, the physical evidence remained intensely debated. At the time, Hitler's personal **Dentist** was still alive and was able to examine the denture recovered from the charred body. The dentist **adamantly claimed the dental work was his own**.

With the **liberation of Albania** by Albanian Partisans, Qamil, Jora, and Erzen left Ahmed and Fatima's home to start fresh in **Tirana**. Qamil and Jora married, adding two sons and one daughter to their family. Both parents joined the **Albanian Armed Forces**, continuing their service to the nation.

Their children achieved notable success: Erzen forged a distinguished military career, eventually becoming a **Star General**. Qamil and Jora's sons became **medical practitioners**, and their daughter established herself as a **lawyer**. Qamil and Jora enjoyed a long and complete life, witnessing their children thrive. Following the fall of the **Ustashe regime**, the blocks and camps of **Jasenovac, Croatia**, were systematically dismantled. Amid this destruction was the house where **Samron Frasher**i had been

confined. Miraculously, before the building was completely razed, a collection of **critical notes** that Frasheri had secretly compiled were found tucked away beneath his bed—a silent testament to his time there.

The recovered notes were promptly **delivered to the authorities**, becoming critical **written testimony** against the Ustaše criminals. These individuals later faced trial, resulting in executions by **firing squad and hanging**.

Despite this push for justice, many high-ranking leaders of the **Independent State of Croatia (Ustaše)** managed to escape following the regime's collapse, finding refuge in countries like **Canada, Australia, and New Zealand**. However, not all escaped retribution. **Andrei Pavelik**, the former Ustaše leader, was eventually shot by his pursuer in **Argentina** and died from his injuries in 1957.

The German Roots

For many centuries, western Europe have been dominated by the German people and yet, many of them know a little of their true origin which they try to conceal until the end of the Hitler era.

Germans are a single family of people from different tribes, just like a modern-day Israelites are a people from scattered tribes worldwide. Germans mostly live in Germany and Austria.

Chatti is a Hebrew word for “ Hittite” which is mentioned in the Bible several times. One tribe of Hittites were called Canaanite Hittites who were fierce people and used to skirmish with the Israelites during the ancient times. They came from the roots of Ham- described with a darker skin. Another tribe was the co-called Chatti or Hatti. Hattis or Hittites were people with much lighter skin. The early writings of Roman historian, Tacitus attest

to the fact that German tribes arrived in Europe during the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D. One of these significant German tribes was the Chatti. The ancestors of the Chatti lived mostly in Asia Minor and were known to be Assyrian Chatti.

They were hostile people and constantly in conflict with the Roman Empire which the Romans later called them Germani meaning "hostile men" or sometimes labeled them "war men". However, there was no concrete proof whether the term Germani was ever used by the German people themselves, but Tacitus mentioned that Julius Caesar had four records in which one was quoted as saying, "Germani"

Germani as the Romans called them were characterized to be ferocious, war-like nature of a tribe. As historians affirmed, these early tribes migrated into Central Europe. A prevailing question was raised as to their true origin and according to Smith's Classical Dictionary, they were the Assyrians who migrated into Europe from the Caucasus and the countries around the Black and Caspian seas. (article, "Germania" p.361)

Sometime in 800 A.D., the Roman crowned-emperor, Charlemagne had a vision of a world-ruling empire during the Middle Ages which took hold for a thousand years and re-emerged again during the 1st and 2nd world wars.

According to his article in the Plain Truth, Dr. Hoeh wrote that the Germans had a unique mission in place of the Jews and that the German politicians know that their dream of a world empire can exist only if they maintain this claim of a world-mission.

It is marked in history that Germany started great wars the world has ever experienced; World Wars I and II and to enter another world war is to make the same horrible mistake in which Germany

and the world are just too civilized or enlightened to spark it all again.

Does Nazism Still Exist?

The history of the world demands that we act now with **unyielding resolve**. Our singular purpose is the wholesale destruction of German militarism and Nazism, securing a guarantee that the shadow of German aggression **will never again darken the world**.

We are acting to secure this guarantee through permanent, systemic change: we shall **disband every German Armed Force** without exception. We will shatter the German General Staff—the clandestine core that has, time and again, plotted the revival of German warmaking—**breaking it for all time**. We will seize or neutralize every piece of military hardware, and we will eliminate or place under stringent control every industry that could possibly be converted to military ends.

We do not seek to punish the people of Germany. We seek to free them. Only once the forces of Nazism and militarism are **absolutely and permanently extinguished** can the German people reclaim their dignity, build a respectable life, and rejoin the community of civilized nations as a force for peace, not war.

The Reuters report, referencing a declassified U.S. intelligence document from **May 1996**, describes an alleged meeting in **1944** where **Nazi leaders and top German industrialists** met to plan a post-war strategy. The goal of this scheme was to create an **international network** intended to sustain the Nazi cause and eventually restore Nazi power following their impending military defeat. This suggests a premeditated attempt to continue the Nazi

ideology and political aims through economic and covert means, regardless of the war's outcome."

Margaret Thatcher on German Character and Power DE

Former British Prime Minister **Margaret Thatcher** expressed a highly controversial view on German reunification and national identity during her speech in Colorado, USA, on **October 9, 1995**.

- **Critique of Reunification:** Thatcher explicitly stated that **German reunification was a big mistake** for which Europe was "now paying."
- **Concern over Power:** She described the newly unified Germany as "very powerful now," asserting that its "**national character is to Dominate.**"
- **National Character vs. Guilt:** Thatcher clarified her view in her book, *The Downing Street Years*, distinguishing between individual and national morality. She maintained that while individuals are morally accountable for their actions and she did "not believe in collective guilt," she did unequivocally "**believe in national character.**" This statement implies a deep, enduring skepticism regarding Germany's intentions and its historical drive for dominance, suggesting a fear that a unified, powerful Germany would revert to past behaviors.

This final segment of text reinforces the controversial and strongly skeptical view of Germany's character and reunification, primarily echoing the sentiments attributed to Margaret Thatcher.

Here is a breakdown of the core arguments presented in this closing statement:

This passage weaves together three distinct ideas to build a case against the unified Germany: individual responsibility, inherent human nature, and national character.

1. The Blame for Global Disaster

The speaker first establishes a universal philosophy, arguing that **people are responsible for their own actions**. However, they immediately pivot to claim that the true cause of impending "worldwide, cataclysmic disaster" is "**the inherent human nature within all mankind.**" This suggests a fatalistic view that large-scale conflict is inevitable due to flaws shared by all humans.

2. The German "Character to Dominate"

The speaker supports Margaret Thatcher's concept of a "**national character**," stating that nations are essentially "families grown large." This framework is then used to reinforce the claim that the "**German character... is to dominate**," citing "thousands of years of history" as proof. This is a powerful, deterministic claim that attributes Germany's past aggressive actions not to political structure or specific leaders, but to a permanent, inherent trait of the German people.

3. The Warning Against Anchoring Europe

The final, pivotal argument directly challenges the political rationale behind German reunification and integration into the European Union. The speaker delivers a dire warning, stating that the political leaders have miscalculated:

- **Miscalculation:** "You have not anchored Germany to Europe."
- **The Reality:** "You have anchored Europe to a newly dominate, unified Germany."

This rhetorical device suggests that instead of integration containing German power, the integration has actually placed the whole continent under its influence. The speaker concludes with a prophetic warning: "In the end,

my friends, you'll find it will **not work.**" This implies that German dominance will inevitably destabilize the continent or lead to undesirable political outcomes.

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