

Out of the Night

I was determined to sever all further connections with the Gestapo. But Hitler's perilous position in Germany compelled me to execute my plan with the utmost caution. Without first consulting the Westphalians, I let the Gestapo regular couriers wait vainly for my appearance at our regular rendezvous. A week passed. Schreckenberg's messengers, unable to contact me in Copenhagen, returned to Hamburg empty-handed.

Schreckenberg, not hearing from the agent, Oscar, nor from me, dispatched a night letter to a cover address in Copenhagen, with which the advice of Jensen. I had supplied the Gestapo for use in emergencies. Unknown to the Gestapo, these letters went through Jensen's hands before they were given to me. Richard Jensen was disturbed. The Gestapo wanted to know who I had met and my regular couriers. It also wanted to know what had happened to Oscar.

I scribbled a hasty-looking note to the effect that I was on my way to the Soviet Union to attend a military school—aware of the Gestapo's keen interest in the field. This note I sent to Petrovskiy, the Communist liaison agent in Riga, with instructions to mail it to Schreckenberg's cover address in Hamburg. This gave the appearance of having been mailed en route to Moscow. The Gestapo did not expect me to write reports from Russia, and would understand my silence in the future.

On a morning in October I was called to a conference with Wollweber and Kussinen in a restaurant near the Thorvaldsen Museum. They entered me with my work for the Committee inside Hitler's Secret Police. Bruckmeyer told me that I had burned my bridges, that I was through with that assignment.

"I have told the Gestapo that I was to Russia," I explained. "As far as they are concerned, I have vanished."

Kussinen smiled enigmatically. "Well," he suggested, "after a few days you will write to the Gestapo that you have returned from Moscow and are now back in Copenhagen."

The next instant I stood in open market against two of the most powerful figures in the Soviet Service and the Committee, both of whom had met me in 1937 before we were thoroughly interlocked.

"Give me four men from Comrade Avastin's Apparat," he said, "my wife and child out of Germany," I demanded. "It has been done before, it can be done for me."

Wollweber remarked that I sought to use the Westphalians as a means for the solution of my private difficulties. "Private difficulties?" I snarled into Wollweber's face. "The thousands of comrades in the Nazi concentration camps would like to hear that! The ones who had their heads chopped off, the ones who were hanged, cut to pieces, beaten to death. The ones who died in the Party! They all would like to hear that—the attitude of Comrade Wollweber, their leader, their comrade, safe ground on a salary of \$600 a month."

I had made powerful enemies. From that day on I became in the eyes of Kussinen and Wollweber and their legion of henchmen a Bolshevik in whom they no longer could place absolute trust. It was no secret in our ranks that Stalin's quiet method of eliminating by intrigue, calumny and cold murder—his trials and subterfuge who still retained a spirit of independence had been adopted also by his leading gunnitioners throughout the Soviet network. Only those who succeeded in finding "wreckers" and "Trotskyite" replies among their closest friends could be sure of saving their jobs and budgets and lives.

I did not have to wait long to see Petra Petersen's apartment, where I had been isolated as if I were a chessman, came Richard Jensen's son, Martin, with orders from the Westphalians.

"Go to the Soviet Council to get your sailing papers for Russia," I decided to give battle. The chance for a counter-thrust came when I heard from Petra Petersen that an important emissary of the Soviet Government had come by plane from Paris to Copenhagen to discuss with Jensen the chartering of Scandinavian vessels to carry war supplies to the Soviet Union. This emissary was Leo Hakko, one of the founders of the Leningrad Trotsky in the initial stages of the Revolution.

I told Hakko that I had met Wollweber, and that I suspected Wollweber of having arranged for my trip to the Soviet Union for the purpose of getting me out of the way.

"This Wollweber," Leo Hakko said slowly. "What is his background? Can you tell me of his possible affairs? Or little opportunities mistakes in his past? Mambury in Moscow is his good friend, and to a lesser degree Comrade Molotov. He will not deal with Dimitroff. Could it be that Wollweber is a secret friend of the Gestapo?"

"I know the names of nineteen comrades who were practically rendered by Wollweber to the Gestapo," I said. "More than ten of them have been executed."

"Kharasch," Ernst Wollweber said, "I don't want a report that comes from the heart. The comrades in Moscow distinguish between diplomatic reports and honest reports. Remember that Wollweber is a bandit. He drinks. He spends much money with women. In international questions he is a brain trust. Write in detail and sign your name. Retain in copy. I shall take the original to Moscow."

"Very well," I wrote the report. Leo Hakko took it with him to Moscow. I did not know then that he too was destined to vanish like so many others, in Stalin's Great Purge after the Spanish adventure had ended in dismal defeat.

Two evenings passed. During the time I sat neither Wollweber nor any other member of the Western Secretariat. I was alone. I had here another report it comes from Holland. Here you are definitely accused of shady transactions with counter-revolutionary wolves as the renegade Hans Krause, with the so-called Fascist Edzo Fimmen, with Franco spies, with a long gallery of other political and military traitors. I felt as if someone had hit me on the head with a hammer.

"Comrade Krause is a renegade," I said sullenly. "He went to Spain to demonstrate that the rumors against him were false. He was wounded at the front. I considered it my duty to..."

"Excuse," Wollweber burst in. "True Bolsheviks have never grubbed around for excuses. They admit their mistakes and let the Party decide."

All right, I demanded a hearing before the Control Commission. "This is the Control Commission," Jensen said. "You will have time to talk later."

There was a long silence. Jensen drew a cigarette patterned after the fluff of a book. Wollweber smoked. The guards sat immobile, but tensely aware. I wondered what would happen if I simply stood up and walked out of Jensen's apartment. I could think of no place to go.

At six o'clock Avastin arrived roughly clad as always, in a stiff brown suit of Russian manufacture. He flashed a smile of recognition at me. With Avastin I meant nothing. He could smile at a man one minute, and kill him the next. Accompanying Avastin was a man, a stenographer, a handsome athletic blonde and the wife of Martin Jensen.

You may now speak in your defense, Wollweber announced. We give you half an hour. I spoke of the stormy years of my past, of my participation in the revolution and my work for the Committee in America, in Hawaii, in Belgium and Holland and France, Switzerland and Norway, in Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Russia, in Singapore and Shanghai and England. I spoke of the jails and prisons, of the Nazi horror camps, where I had suffered and endured to fight for the Party for the revolution, for seven years. Before I had said half of what I had intended to say, the time was up. Even in this situation I was too discomfited to break the silence of those who had my superiors. Inge, Martin Jensen's wife, had stenographed what I had said. Had I imagined a stone wall, I should have found myself a round stubborn ball. I defended myself—should have attacked. I, however, my head, proclaimed myself guilty, and cringed for mercy.

The Western Secretariat. No one in the room believed his accusations. Least of all did he believe them himself. His object was to make me crawl in self-abasement. He was not sure that I would crawl. Had he been sure, he would have chosen a larger audience.

Wollweber rose, and with a curt nod toward Avastin and his wife, left the room. I never saw him again. Richard Jensen offered me a bottle of beer. Avastin gave me a signal to go to his helpers. They, on their own, and stepped up to me. One I did not know. The other was Ignace Scharnetzki, a native of Poland, a stocky man with a round stubborn face.

"You come with us now," he said. "Where to?"

"Never mind!" Avastin intervened. "We have been friends," he said. "What I tell you is the truth. You will live in a country place. Until your case has been decided, you are relieved of all your duties."

"I am a prisoner?"

"You come with us now," Scharnetzki repeated softly. It was morning. I followed the GPU men's orders without resistance. I marched down the stairs and entered a motor car. On my left sat Scharnetzki. On my right was a lanky Dane. Both had their pistols drawn. Martin Jensen drove. The car leaped forward. Large numbers of young men had been riding to work on their bicycles. Traffic grew thicker as the car neared the city limits. I felt like a man in a trance. I felt a cage and closed my eyes.

When I opened my eyes, I saw a stretch of open sea to the left. We were speeding south.

(Continued Monday)

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Defense Bond Quiz

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SUPERMAN

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It's the Poet in Him

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Share Croppers

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Gasoline Alley

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Red Ryder

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