



**Christopher G. Nuttall**

# Second Chance

**(A Novel of Time Travel)**

# Second Chance

(A Novel of Time Travel)  
Christopher G. Nuttall

Text © 2012 [Christopher G. Nuttall](#), CC BY-NC-ND  
Cover CC0 by [Free Ebook Foundation](#) using a Public Domain Image from [NYPL](#)

## Cover Blurp

*“Why? We’re not at war with Germany.”*

*“With all due respect, sir, Nazi Germany is at war with us.”*

After a night of terror, Britain wakes up to discover that the entire nation has been thrown back in time, to 1940...and the Germans are at the door. As they struggle to react to the new environment, it occurs to some people that there is an opportunity here – to reverse the verdict of history and create a world where Britain is the only superpower.

Forced into a war they won once before, the British struggle to understand what has happened, as the ripples of the sudden change in the future spread across the world. Under threat from Hitler, Mussolini, Japan...and a surprise member of the Axis of Evil, can Britain survive long enough to reshape the world?

## **Author's Note**

Due to the difficulties of predicting the exact capabilities of the UK's defence establishment from day to day, following a whole series of unwise political decisions, this book attempts to give the British armed forces a balanced capability, between the optimistic and the pessimistic possibilities. Certain future projects, the Eurofighter and the Type-45 destroyer, have been included, others, the future carrier, haven't been included as their capabilities are unknown at this time.

My apologies for any confusion.

**CGN**

Chapter One: Transition  
**Chapter One**  
**Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ)**  
**London, UK**  
**6<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

It all happened very suddenly at midnight; one moment everything was normal, the next all of the satellite communications had cut off. Seconds passed while computer programs strove to discern the cause of the fault within the software, and then they alerted their masters. Even as the emergency signals were being sent to the monitoring stations, other emergency programs activated; several aircraft and ships had *vanished* from the displays. All of the satellite-based communications were down; the landlines outside the UK were gone as well.

Captain Stirling, the duty officer, hit the alarm button in a panic, before calming and turning to the computers. Working fast, he activated the emergency back-ups; the landlines that countless satellite technicians had sworn would never be needed. The computers made the calls through the dedicated broadband Internet system, noting as they did that many non-UK sites seemed to be down or not responding. Modems clicked and hummed as they rebuilt the defence establishment from scratch; many operators were trying to call PJHQ as well.

“Report,” an imperious voice demanded.

Stirling turned to see General Cunningham, the Chief of Joint Operations and PJHQ’s current commanding officer. The bluff general was a veteran of Iraq, Iran and several small wars the British public knew nothing about, but he looked shaken; Stirling had never seen him shaken. The entire global chart, the interactive display of the locations of British forces across the world, was blinking red. All contact had been lost.

“Sir, all satellite communications appear to be down,” Stirling said, saluting. An email from RAF Fylingdales appeared on his screen. “Sir, the satellites appear to be *gone*!”

Cunningham gaped. Only America and Russia had developed anti-satellite weapons and only in small quantities. “Have they been destroyed somehow?” He asked. “Are we at war?”

“The threat board is clear,” Stirling said, knowing how inadequate an answer it was. “Sir, Fylingdales cannot see any incoming attack.” He gazed down at his screen for a long moment. “In fact, we seem to have lost a number of French aircraft, and our own. Some of the eastern RAF radar stations, part of the UKADGE, were tracking French jet liners; the midnight flights. They’re not there any more.”

“So what’s happened?” Cunningham asked, almost pleadingly. The operations room was beginning to fill up as the duty staff arrived, summoned by a flurry of calls to the local barracks and living quarters. Other staff, those who lived inside the city itself, would be making their way in even now.

“I do not know,” Stirling said, hating the admittance. “We’ve lost all communication from outside forces; forces outside the UK. It’s like we’re suddenly alone in the world.”

Cunningham paused. Stirling didn't envy him his decision. If he overacted, such as ordering missiles fired at Russia, he would be court-martialled, assuming that there was anyone alive to do the duty. If he didn't act, he would be crucified, even if he'd been right.

"Has the Prime Minister been informed?" He asked finally. "Was Number 10 informed?"

"Yes, sir," Stirling assured him. "They're on the list of first-line contacts. He should be being woken now."

Cunningham made a visible decision. "Contact the RAF bases," he ordered. "I want all three bases to scramble the duty aircraft, and then RAF Waddington is to scramble one of the AWACS and place the others on launch-readiness. If this is a mistake of some kind...well, we'll call it a training exercise."

"Yes, sir," Stirling said. "Sir, there's no aerial traffic...except a contact heading in from North France." He gazed at the screen. "Neatishead called in the contact, two minutes ago. It's heading over the channel now, looks like it'll cross over the land over Suffolk."

"Contact RAF Coningsby and vector one of the Eurofighter in to investigate, armed," Cunningham ordered. "Then contact the principles; I want a meeting in the situation room in one hour."

"Yes, sir," Stirling said. "RAF Coningsby confirms; Charlie-one will be launched in two minutes."

## **Over Suffolk United Kingdom**

Flying Officer Victor Abernathy relaxed slightly, but only slightly, as his aircraft nosed its way into the sky. Behind him, RAF Coningsby was brightly lit; crewmen working hastily to prepare the aircraft of 633 Squadron for launch, arming them with the missiles that were kept carefully away from the aircraft during peacetime. The Eurofighter, the joint-project aircraft that had finally entered service only two years ago, buckled slightly as it encountered turbulence, and then settled as Abernathy aimed it on an interception course for the unknown aircraft.

*What the hell had happened?* Ten minutes ago, just before midnight, the four pilots on Quick Reaction Alert in the ready room had been watching Sky One, which had cut off precisely at midnight. Before there had been much protest, the alarms had sounded and they'd raced for their planes.

"Charlie-one, heading for target," he said, over the radio. "Charlie-two, are you there?"

"Do you even have to ask?" Flying Officer Sheila Dunbar asked. Even the extremely strict base commandant couldn't keep her irrepressible nature down; in the air and on the ground, she was an incitement to riot. "I'm watching your back."

"Stay away from me," Abernathy said, only half in jest. Ever since a terrorist plane had exploded far too close to one of the old Tornado aircraft, the RAF had been careful about

approaching too closely to an unidentified aircraft. Abernathy stared at his onboard radar; the target was still coming in, crossing over land as the Eurofighter streaked closer.

“Ground control, I confirm target acquisition, rules of engagement alpha delta three,” he said formally. Under alpha delta three, he was permitted to fire first if it was his considered opinion that the target was a threat to his plane or to civilian life. “I confirm target speed at 200mph; I confirm target height as...dropping.”

“I bet it’s a civil aircraft, some rich bugger,” Dunbar commented; from her position five miles behind Abernathy. “Out for kicks and we’re about to scare hell out of him.”

Abernathy ignored her, even though he was suspecting the same thing. That the target was lowering its height, and heading towards the brightly lit town of Bury St Edmunds, argued for a more sinister purpose. The complete loss of the satellites suggested that it was involved somehow, that it meant Britain harm.

“I’m going in for a look,” he said. “Cover me.”

Darkness swept over the Eurofighter as he closed in on the mystery target. The lights on the ground illuminated the sky; they could *see* the strange aircraft. He closed in from behind, staring; the target didn’t reassemble any aircraft with which he was familiar.

It was large, bigger than a Eurofighter, with a bigger wingspan. Two *propeller* engines, one on each wing, propelled it through the air. He closed in, and the intruder, apparently aware of him, adjusted it’s own course. It headed down sharply, trying to lose him.

“Unidentified aircraft, you are ordered to identify yourself and prepare to be escorted to a military airfield,” he said, into the radio. Legally, ever since a private aircraft had nearly destroyed Edinburgh Castle, all aircraft were required to monitor the emergency frequency. Unfortunately, so did the media; several scoops had been discovered that way.

There was no reply. “I’m going in for a close pass,” he said. He scowled; blasting past at just below the speed of sound was the airborne equivalent of *hey, stupid*. It could be dangerous, even to a relatively small fighter jet. Several nations, China and Russia among them, refused to recognise it as a tactic, calling it aerial terrorism.

“Understood,” Dunbar said. “I’m taking position behind you.”

Abernathy listened with half an ear, concentrating on his position. His heads-up display was becoming sharper as an AWACS launched and linked into the growing defence network, supplying tactical information to any airborne fighters. He waited, preparing, and then...

“Moving in,” he said, and kicked in the afterburners. The Eurofighters screamed forward, trailing a line of fire, and *screeched* over the top of the strange plane. As he left the unknown plane behind, he was suddenly aware of a trail of fire sparking out towards him; the unknown plane was *shooting* at him!

“Ground control, target has opened fire on me,” he snapped. “Clearing to engage.”

“Understood, Charlie-one,” the controller said. “You are cleared to engage.”



The strange aircraft seemed to have flipped lower, trying to turn and run back over the sea. It was *ludicrously* slow; what manner of terrorists would try to *evade* a fighter jet in a propeller-driven aircraft? Abernathy carefully lined up the shot and fired a burst from his cannon directly into the left wing and its engines. Trailing a line of fire, the unknown aircraft fell towards the ground, several parachutes appearing from it as it fell. It slammed into the ground, exploding in a burst of fire.

“Ground control, the crew bailed out,” Abernathy said. “At least three parachutes, heading down towards the ground.”

“Where else would they go towards?” Dunbar asked dryly. A note of concern entered her voice. “Victor, are you alright?”

“No damage,” Abernathy reassured her. “We can remain on station above the crash site, or we can return home.”

“Come on home,” the controller said. “We have the crash site marked and local police are moving in.”

“Excellent,” Abernathy said. “We’ll be home in ten minutes.”

Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ)  
**London, UK**

“The Prime Minister is in the bunker underneath Whitehall,” Stirling reported, as the Principles took their positions around the table. Cunningham nodded. “We have landline links to every base in the UK proper, but nothing yet from outside the UK. The Navy has got contact with almost all of its ships, but several vessels were stationed on the other side of the world and we have no contact with them.”

Cunningham nodded grimly. “Anything from anywhere else?”

“Only a handful of strange signals, very low frequency, from Europe and America,” Stirling said. “As yet, we don’t know what they are.”

“I see,” Cunningham said. “Any news on the interception?”

Stirling gulped. He’d hoped to avoid that topic; the wreckage of the unknown plane had suggested horrible things about their predicament. “Sir, I think that had better wait for the briefing,” he said, knowing that Cunningham would want the news at once. The General opened his mouth, but caught the eye of the First Sea Lord and left Stirling alone, for the moment.

“I think we can call this meeting to order,” the First Sea Lord said. “We have datalinks with Whitehall and Hack Green.” He looked around, every inch the superb naval commander that he was. “Seal the doors.”

The doors closed and locked; two Marines were posted outside. “General Cunningham?”

“Captain Steve Stirling has compiled the main brief,” Cunningham said. For a long absurd moment, Stirling felt like a small boy called before the headmaster. The Defence Crisis Management Committee, the highest non-Government council in Britain, was designed to allow the service chiefs to agree on their recommendations. Collective responsibility, otherwise known as sharing the blame.

“Ah, thank you, sir,” Stirling said. Amazingly, the entire room paid attention to him; the sheer scale of the crisis outweighed the traditional feeling that junior officers should be seen, but not heard. “At midnight, two hours ago, we lost all outside communications with our embassies, our forces overseas and the rest of the world. I’ve checked around, but as far as I can tell this situation is total; not only satellites, but radio, communication cables, mobile phones, everything.

“RAF Fylingdales reports that all satellites and the American space shuttle that was also in orbit has disappeared,” he continued, knowing that it was hardly the most shocking piece of information he would be giving them. “There is no wreckage, no EMP-damaged satellites, but just empty space. It’s as if they never existed at all.”

He allowed the room a moment to absorb the implications. “There is almost nothing coming from the continent,” he said. “The French air defence network seems to be down. The civil air traffic control – down. There are a handful of aircraft, all slow and old, moving over France. Indeed, several of our aircraft have vanished; they were over Ireland and France when they vanished.”

“Dear God,” the First Sea Lord said. “What about the interception?”

“Ten minutes after the satellites suddenly shut down, an unidentified contact appeared – I mean appeared from out of nowhere – near the east coasts, and proceeded to head towards Cambridge. Two Eurofighters were scrambled from RAF Coningsby and vectored in towards the target, which seemed unaware of them until the jets entered visual range. At that point, still without communicating, it attempted to evade, and then fired on the jets, which fired back.”

He took a breath. If it hadn’t been for the hastily-transmitted photographs from the army detachment that had secured the crash site, *he* would never have believed the report. He just *knew* that the assembled chiefs wouldn’t believe it; he didn’t want to think about what Prime Minister Howard Smith would say.

“An army detachment was flown in via helicopters from Aldershot,” he said. “They secured the crash site, finding two bodies; both human.”

“Captain?” General Cunningham said. “Spit it out, man!”

“Sir, the aircraft was marked with Nazi markings from the Second World War,” Stirling said, and braced himself for a blast of high-ranking scepticism. They stared at him. “The bodies were examined and their effects studied; they lack some of the medical advancements that were made compulsory in Europe in 2010. For example, they were not vaccinated against bird flu or the Jihad virus.

“At my request, Captain Fenton took some of the effects of the crew to Cambridge and asked the opinion of the dean of Nazi Studies, someone who has done work for us in the past,” he said. “Sir Torrance, the author of *The Nazi Enigma*, was more than willing to help and examined the artefacts. With the exception of their age, they seem to be around a year old, they are genuine and survived a careful testing process. In effect, we have two dead bodies, from out of time. There are also a number of objects; a pay book, some German coins, a bible, also in German and two *Luger* pistols.

“Sirs, if it’s a practical joke, it’s one of terrifying scope,” he concluded. “So far, the police have been unable to locate the other crewmen; they must be terrified out of their minds.”

“Fuck them,” the RAF Chief of the Air Staff – Allen Chapman - muttered. “So, did it fall through time?”

Stirling took a second long breath. “Sir, I very much hope that I am wrong, but it looks as if we fell back in time.”

“Nonsense,” the Press Secretary said. “Nations do not fall back in time.”

There was a bustle of conversation. Stirling tried to sink into his seat, but Chapman stopped him. “Captain, is there any way to test this hypothesis?”

Stirling silently blessed the novels he’d read. Without them, it would have been harder to adapt to the new reality. “I can think of two ways offhand,” he said. “The first one is simple; we send a recon Tornado with fighter escort over France and see what we see. If this is all just a horrible nightmare, the French will intercept it and turn them back. If not, then we’ll know for certain.

“The second is to call the observatories and ask them to check on star positions,” Stirling said. “If they’re the same, then we might be where we think we are.”

“Thank you, Captain,” Cunningham said. “A recon flight, then; any dissenters?”

There were none. “I’ll see to it at once,” Chapman said. “The planes will be armed, just in case they meet Nazi *Messerschmitt* fighters.”

“Better brief them carefully,” Cunningham said. “I’ll call Number Ten and get the Prime Minister’s approval. Captain, you are assigned to this until further notice; call Captain Jackson and order him to take over your routine duties.”

“Yes, sir,” Stirling said. “One other matter; should we not call up the reserves?”

“Why?” The Press Secretary asked. “We’re not at war with Germany.”

“With all due respect, sir,” Stirling said, “Nazi Germany is at war with us.”

\*\*\*

The meeting broke up and the various members headed back to their offices; Cunningham to see the Prime Minister, Chapman to organise a recon flight at first light, and Stirling to coordinate the...investigation. The General had promised all the support that he could scrape

up, but in the middle of the confusion it would unlikely that there would be much support for hours yet. Dispatchers were working on calling in staff who were on leave; the army was being placed on alert – although no one would say for what – and the reserves were receiving preliminary warnings of a call-up.

*Bloody miracle that the press haven't caught on yet*, Stirling thought, as the blank screen of CNN taunted him with its static. UNABLE TO LOCATE SIGNAL, it read, and he shivered. Whatever had happened, he was certain, was anything, but natural. *They'll be blaming it on alien space bats next.*

Carefully, he picked up the telephone and placed a call. Jodrell Bank was no longer the foremost observatory it had been, but it was still one of the centres of British astronomy. The phone rang for several minutes, so he placed it on call-back and started to look up the other observatories. The phone rang again; someone had finally picked up at Jodrell Bank.

“Good morning,” he said, wondering if he'd woken the night watchman. “I'm from the crisis response team. Can I speak to the Director?”

“Speaking,” the voice said. “This is Doctor Abram.” The voice was strained. “Crisis? Do you have any idea what seems to have happened?”

“Only hints,” Stirling said, deciding not to mention the shot-down plane. “Doctor, are the stars all right?”

“No,” Doctor Abram snapped. “We were running a long-term comparison on radio sources in the sky, then there's a massive burst of interference, and everything goes haywire, and then the stars are all out of place!”

*Dear God*, Stirling thought coldly. “Doctor, according to the stars, *when* are we?”

“I'm not quite certain,” Doctor Abram said. “I think we're roughly seventy-to-eighty years in the past. I've got people trying to pin it down to a precise date, but you know how it is...”

“Certainly,” Stirling said. “Doctor, could I ask you to keep it to yourself for the moment? I assure you that you will receive full credit for the discovery.”

“I'll try, young man,” Doctor Abram said. “Should I call you if anything changes?”

“Yes, please,” Stirling said, and gave his number. “Thank you for your time.”

\*\*\*

The dawn broke and five aircraft; one Tornado, three Eurofighters and one tanker, headed away over France. There had been no change – CNN and the other American stations remained resolutely off the air – and the British press had been starting to ask questions. Some of the Internet – the fragments of the Internet that had survived the...*whatever* – was buzzing with speculation, some of it quite accurate. UFOs were blamed, as well as gods, devils and creatures from some other dimension.

“We have to make a statement,” the Prime Minister said, over the video link. “We have to tell them something, the sooner the better. There's already been rioting in Brixton.”

“And its only five o’clock,” Cunningham said. He didn’t like the Prime Minister and it showed. “Prime Minister, we have to wait until we know for certain what’s happening.”

The Prime Minister sighed. “Parliament has already been asking for an emergency debate,” he said. “I can put it off for a day, perhaps two days, but not much longer. My own MPs will desert me.”

Stirling coughed as the video from the Tornado jet started to come though onto the screen. It had required considerable ingenuity to have it broadcast without the secure satellites, but who in this time could even hear the signal? He scowled; it was clear; Paris was no longer the metropolis that he remembered from a school trip. The room fell silent as the Tornado identified German vehicles, German fighter aircraft and a row of German bombers.

“Freeze frame,” Cunningham said, in a voice like death itself. Stirling did so, running it back slightly to capture the view of the aircraft. The silence lengthened; on the screen was the Eiffel Tower, the greatest construction in France...with a red swastika floating from the top, drifting in the breeze.

## Chapter Two: Crash-Landing

Over North France

**6<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

Captain Sidney Jackson peered out of the cockpit of the massive 747 and peered down upon the bright lights of France. The airliner, the last flight of the day – technically yesterday – was heading for Bordeaux, and Jackson was bored. There was nothing to do; nothing, but answer French messages and wait.

“Everything alright back there?” He asked, as the stewardess came back into the cockpit. He felt the shape of his pistol reflexively; after half-a-dozen hijackings the CAA had started insisting on their pilots being armed. “What are they like?”

“Nothing particularly special,” Syeda Begum said. She passed him his cup of coffee; he passed control to his co-pilot and sipped it gratefully. “We’ve got half a dozen businessmen, one army guy from God knows where, a handful of schoolchildren, and a highbrow academic.”

“Someone you should be chatting up,” Jackson said wryly. Her skin darkened; her desires to become more than a simple stewardess were the subject of much gossip. “What’s he like?”

“Very nice, but he has his wife with him,” she said. “A classic mixed-race marriage.”

“Really?” Jackson asked. “Sounds like your sort of person. Anything that looks remotely dangerous?”

“There’s a guy in second class who keeps looking at me when he thinks I’m not looking, does that count?” Syeda asked. “I can’t decide if he’s a sick pervert who finds me attractive, or a racist, or what.”

“Could be both,” Jackson suggested. “A racist who finds you attractive. How many movies have been made on that subject?” His radio buzzed. “Excuse me?”

He listened carefully. “Pardon?” He said finally. “This is Flight 719; please repeat.”

Silence. “I can’t hear anything,” he muttered. “It was strange; it sounded like a mayday call.” He lifted the radio. “Paris control, this is Flight 719; I need to report a possible distress call, two minutes ago.”

He scowled. “They’ve put me on hold,” he said. He shivered; the voice had been oddly familiar. “There’s no other British Airlines flight out here, is there?”

“Not until the morning,” his co-pilot, Fred Diarchal, said. “We’re the last.”

“How odd,” Jackson said. “Syeda; you’d better go back to tucking the little babies in. I’m going to keep a listening watch.”

“Yes, Captain,” Syeda said. “Good luck with the distress call.”

Jackson glared at her. “Don’t even joke about it,” he said. It was then that the shaking began.

\*\*\*

The seat was cramped, the food bland and tasteless – and if the champagne had been real Jim Oliver would have eaten his hat. Still, for all the uncomfortable of the flight, it did have some advantages; it was not a regular flight for the underworld. The association – or gang of crooks to the unenlightened and the law enforcement people – that he worked for understood the dance between law enforcer and law breaker as well as anyone, and better than most.

Oliver smiled. The use of his laptop computer was forbidden on the flight itself, but there were many other ways to amuse himself. One way was thinking about the datachip he held within his small collection, one packed with games that were legal and high-tech computer information, which was anything, but. Packed within the thousands of lines of complex computer code were secrets that would be worth millions to the right people; commercial secrets that the French or German industries would pay through the nose for, if they were within France for them to grasp.

He smiled to himself, covertly, a hidden little smile, and winked at one of the stewardesses. She stalked off, having classified him as a *male chauvinist pig*, and he smiled again. It was *safe* to have a classification; let her see him as a pig and she would miss what lay beneath. His book, a tome on the recent war in Iraq, lay open in front of him and he began to read.

*We come, not to conquer, but to liberate*, he read, and then the shaking began.

\*\*\*

Professor Adrian Horton sat back in the comfortable seat and gently stroked the cheek of his beautiful wife Jasmine. Her pale skin contrasted, as always, with his dark skin; she was the light to his darkness, as he was fond of remarking. Their children, Stuart and Emma, slept beside them, lost in dreams.

*It was worth it*, he thought, and sighed. Years spent arguing with the Dean, asking for permission to research in the French archives. Years of arguing with the French custodians, who believed that the free flow of knowledge should halt just because France was going through one of its periodic episodes of anti-Anglo feelings. *Days* spent convincing Jasmine that she could look after the children while he studied; all worth it in the end.

He smiled to himself, privately, and reread the letter. It was simple and to the point; it granted him access to the locked files of the 1945-50 war crimes trials, many of which had been sealed or restricted after DeGaulle’s second term in office. He could spend *hours* there, maybe even years....

He dismissed the thought with a chuckle, feeling Jasmine move against him in her sleep. There was no way that *she* would let him remain within a dusty cell for weeks, when the beaches were so close and the water so warm. Carefully, covertly, like he had done when they were both courting, he gently slipped his hand inside her blouse. She sighed in her sleep, pushing against him, as he stroked her breasts. It was then that the shaking began.

\*\*\*

The first sign was a screeching noise coming from the headphones; all the radio channels had gone haywire at once, projecting a torrent of raw static directly into their heads. Jackson yanked his headphones off and threw them away, rubbing his ears in pain. Beside him, Diarchal was bleeding; blood fell from his ruptured eardrums.

“Call a medic,” Jackson snapped at Syeda, as a wave of light slashed in at them from the cockpit windows. The night sky was suddenly lit with all the colours of the rainbow, sleeting in against the aircraft and powering *through* it; screams echoed from the cabin. The aircraft shook violently, and shook again, and Jackson tried desperately to take back control. The aircraft swung from side to side, moving as if a giant was shaking it deliberately, and nothing he could do could change it.

“Mayday, mayday,” he snapped into the radio. The torrent of static abated slightly, then redoubled; he heard his own voice echoing through the airways. It taunted him; *mayday*, *mayday*, and he cursed. His swearwords vanished into the ether and re-echoed back through the radio. A shiver ran through him; he’d just sent the distress call they’d heard earlier.

Syeda was preying in Arabic, her words clearly Arabic; some schools were even offering Arabic lessons in a gutless act of political correctness. “Shut up before you panic them,” Jackson shouted at her, and saw her face crumple. The plane shook again, a wall of light moving towards it, and Jackson had only seconds to realise that the sheet of multicoloured energy meant certain death and it reached the plane and...

And they broke though into darkness. High above them, the stars glowed brightly; the altimeter reported that they had lost height. Jackson wasn’t surprised; he’d expected to slam into the ground. To have lost *just* some height seemed like a miracle.

“We have lost some of our engines,” Diarchal said grimly. His ears were still bleeding; his voice was louder than necessary. “We have to divert.”

“I know,” Jackson said, and flipped the emergency switch. The signal began pulsing; the automated transmission warning of an aircraft in distress. He scowled and opened the intercom; he had to tell the passengers something.

“Can I have your attention please?” He asked, keeping his voice as normal as he could. “We have encountered an unusual combination of St Elmo’s fire and high pressure turbulence.” He wasn’t sure if he believed himself, but it sounded good. “In the process, we have taken some minor damage and will be diverting to land at another airport. Please keep your seatbelts fastened and keep your children calm.”

He closed the intercom, feeling his pistol with a sigh of relief. “Anything from Paris or Nantes?”

“Nothing,” Diarchal said. The co-pilot spoke again into the radio; there was no reply. “Systems failure?”

“Possibly,” Jackson said, thinking fast. He took the stick and moved it slightly; the 747 aircraft moved like a wounded whale. He met Diarchal’s eyes and they shared a grim thought; they might have to land on the ground without aid. The death toll could be considerable.



“Hey, where are the lights?” Syeda asked. Jackson stared out of the cockpit and gasped; the lights of France had vanished. Here and there, from place to place, there was a pinprick, but the main lights had vanished. They shared another look; this was turning into a disaster.

“Do a full systems check,” Jackson said, wishing that the aerospace companies had managed to complete the promised VTOL airliner. Landing a 747 on a motorway would be...tricky. He scowled; in fact it would be bloody dangerous. “Find out where the hell we are?”

“Captain...Sidney, everything outside the plane is down,” Diarchal said, horror in his voice. Jackson passed him control and glanced at the flight computer; GPS, emergency beacons, the French, British, German, Spanish airports seemed to be completely off the air. There was no contact at all with ground control; no signals from them at all.

“What the fuck happened?” Jackson asked. The plane shuddered again; one of the engines was starting to flicker in and out of use. “I think we’re going to have to put her down and hope.”

“We should be over farmland,” Diarchal said. Jackson tried not to think about the potential for disaster in modern-day French farmlands. “We have no choice.”

“We’ll lose our licences for this,” Jackson said. He picked up the intercom, hesitated, and then spoke in the firmest tone he could muster. “If I could have your attention please,” he said, “the problems have grown severe enough to warrant an emergency landing in a field. I assure you that we can manage such a landing; it will, however, require some cooperation from you.”

He took a breath. “I want everyone strapped in and secured,” he said. “Hold hands, pray, but it is vitally important that you do not panic or distract us. Once the aircraft is down, the emergency exits will open, and you must make your way away from the plane with as much care as you can muster.”

He closed the intercom. “Syeda, give them five minutes to buckle in, then go check on them,” he ordered. “Then go buckle in yourself, understand?”

Syeda nodded. “Good luck,” she said.

\*\*\*

SS-*Standartenfuhrer* Herman Roth was bored. Despite his high rank, he hadn’t seen any service in the recent campaign, when the glorious *Wehrmacht* had *crushed* the French and proved the *Fuhrer* right about the French. Roth sniffed; the French innkeeper who’d – unwillingly – put his men up for the night had been careful to send his daughter away for the night. Some of the lower-ranking SS men had objected to this, but Roth had overridden them, asking who would want to lower himself to *court* a French peasant girl?

He looked down at the board again and sighed inwardly; calling on all the diplomacy he possessed to avoid showing his frustration, and moved his knight forward. The almost pathetically grateful innkeeper had been more than willing to play chess with him, but his skills would have been better employed on the battlefield. Roth wasn’t certain if he should mark the man down as a possible recruit – he’d gleaned that he’d once been a member of

certain right-wing groups – or as a possible resistance leader. The man wasn't playing consistently; showing flickers of a greater skill on the board, and then tossing away his advantages. It was so subtle that Roth half-suspected that he was imaging it.

"Excuse me," the innkeeper said, and got up to put some more wood on the fire. Five of the fifteen-man squad lounged by the fire, playing cards; the others slept the sleep of the just in their rooms. The technical experts, the technicians who would evaluate the developments in French tank design in the factories near the armistice line, were also sleeping. *They* had had a busy day.

*The French have no fight in them, so the Fuhrer said*, Roth thought. Here were twenty-five men, the cream of the SS and technical experts who were quite important, and the innkeeper had made no attempt to poison them or shoot them or anything. He leaned back over the chessboard...and then the entire inn began to shake.

"What the hell was that?" He shouted, as...*something* passed overhead; the wake of its passage shaking the inn. It seemed to him as if it were at treetop height; he snatched up his Mauser rifle and ran outside; the entire village was awake. He stared in disbelief; a monstrous aircraft was moving through the air, heading down into the fields past the village. As he watched, the aircraft landed on the ground, glowing with light and fire.

*No, not fire*, he realised, although he couldn't believe his own eyes. *Those are electrical lights*.

"*Herr Standartenfuhrer?*" Roth glanced around to see one of the technical experts. "It is a British bomber," the man said with calm confidence. Roth wasn't so sure; the British, unlike the French, were stubborn; their bombing raids had been as effective as the *Luffwaffe's* own. Mere pinpricks, to be sure, but it showed the sheer determination that an Aryan race could call upon, should it need to fight.

And the British would not be so foolish as to send a bomber over the French mainland so brightly lit, he knew, and shook his head. The motion brought him back to himself and he started to bark orders; sending one of the men to call for reinforcements, while he led the squad forward. He cursed; he'd been deceived by the sheer *size* of the thing; it was further away than it looked.

"There are *people* there," his deputy, *Untersturmfuehrer* Johan Schmidt, gasped.

"You were expecting men from Mars?" Roth asked. "Like in the *Ami* trash?"

"This might have come from Mars," Schmidt said, awe in his voice. Roth had to agree with him; up close, the monstrous aircraft seemed like a dream. It wasn't shaped like any bomber he'd seen, and he'd been privileged to guard some of the secret research facilities during the years before Hitler had revealed the German air force to the world, and *how* had it flown without propellers?

The crew were even stranger. They milled about, without any sense of discipline, and they were complaining loudly. Their complaints seemed trivial; if the aircraft had been forced to land, then they were lucky to be alive. Their babbling voices spoke in English; they were English then.

“They must be from their empire,” he said to Schmidt, who nodded. There were strange people; dark-skinned men, covered women, whites and blacks and even some Chinese. He felt a shudder of revulsion; no wonder the Aryan blood of the British was running thin, with all these people mixed in with them. A black man held a white woman and two brown children, and he felt loathing rising within his heart.

“Excuse me,” a man, clearly the Captain, said. His uniform seemed vaguely British, but unfamiliar; his accent strange and unknown. “I wish to report a crash landing.”

Roth closed his eyes, trying to remember the English lessons he’d had hammered into him at school. “I see that,” he said carefully. His accent caused the Captain’s eyes to widen, but he seemed to dismiss something, a thought from his mind. “Captain, what are you?”

“I am the Captain of British Airlines Flight 747,” the Captain said, and he recognised the tone of the British within his words. He stepped back and for the first time the Captain saw his uniform clearly. “Who are you? *What* are you?”

Roth reeled. Did the British know nothing about the SS rank structure? Was he looking for an equal? “I am SS-*Standartenfuhrer* Herman Roth,” he said. “Can I have your name, rank and serial number?”

The Captain stared at him. Roth saw horror and fear in his eyes. “I am Captain Sidney Jackson, British Airlines,” he said. “Ah...*Herr standing fuehrer*, can you tell me what year it is?”

Roth felt Schmidt stiffen behind him at the implied insult; he held up a hand to forestall any response. The pronunciation had been dreadful, but he suspected that it stemmed from unfamiliarity, rather than a desire to insult. The question, however, was *stupid* – and then it hit him that it might not be as stupid as it sounded.

“It’s 1940,” he said. “July 1940.”

“Dear God,” the Captain said. Roth saw the agony behind his eyes; the time traveller – for he was now convinced that that was what he was dealing with – seemed *terrified* of him. “I...”

Slowly, far too slowly to be a genuine combat trooper – even an Italian one – the Captain grabbed for a weapon at his belt. Before he could even begin to draw it, Schmidt pistol-whipped him, knocking him to the ground. As the crowd of...*passengers* began to protest, the SS men levelled their rifles at them. Silence fell, broken only by children weeping silently.

*Scum*, Roth thought disdainfully. “*Quiet*,” he thundered. He concentrated, wishing that he spoke better English. Did any of the technical experts speak English? He couldn’t remember. He wanted to speak gently, but he knew that his English wasn’t good enough for the task.

“You are all my prisoners,” he said carefully. “A state of war exists between your country and mine. If you cooperate, answer our questions and be helpful, you will be traded or returned to your homelands.” Several of the men looked as if they wanted to protest; had

they grasped that they had travelled in time? “If you do not cooperate, I cannot swear to how you will be treated.”

He motioned to two separate corners of the field. “All the men are to go to this corner,” he said carefully, enunciating each word. “All the females are to go to *that* corner. Children are to go with their mothers.”

“No,” a man said. Roth *looked* at him; he was long-bearded and wore a strange white robe with a matching skullcap. His ill-trimmed beard imposed no discipline at all; Roth kept his face impassive by force of will. “I will not be separated from my woman.”

He waved a hand at a woman whose face was covered behind a black shawl. Roth shrugged and nodded to Schmidt, who lifted his rifle and shot the man neatly between the eyes. His body collapsed onto the ground, a neat hole drilled through his head.

“You will separate,” Roth ordered. Shaken, the sexes separated themselves. The children protested – and the suddenly widowed woman screamed – but they complied. One by one, starting with the men, the SS soldiers secured their hands behind their backs, leaving only the young children unbound.

“Go back to get the experts,” Roth said, as some of the SS worked to empty the pockets of their captives. Some was familiar; money, even with an unfamiliar face most of the time. A banknote with Winston Churchill’s face on provoked a rare grin. Other items made no sense at all; strange silver discs in machines that were attached to headphones.

“*Jawohl, Herr Standartenfuhrer*,” Schmidt said. Roth knew that it was dangerous, but he couldn’t resist; he climbed up the strange ladder into the massive aircraft, shaking his head in awe. In a daze, he wandered through the aircraft, staring at the evidence of riches beyond comprehension, until his foot kicked a book on the floor. Curiously, he picked it up.

“*The Iraq War*, by Murray and Scales,” he read. He opened the book and flipped through a handful of pages; the war the book talked about made no sense at all. Who was Saddam? Why had he been allowed to torment the great powers of his era for so long? Where were the Nazi victories he was certain would happen? The British seemed to be almost...lapdogs to the United States of America – where had *that* come from? The book spoke in cold clinical terms about a war that had smashed a medium-sized country in less than three weeks; the sheer power of the weapons described was horrifying, in a general way. He flipped through the pages faster and faster; the book mentioned Hitler only in passing, to say only that he had ‘influenced’ some nonsense called ‘Arab Nationalism.’

*We lose the war*; he realised, and then shook his head. Closing the book, he headed back out of the aircraft and ordered that it be searched from top to bottom for more books, for more weapons, for anything that might be useful. *Lose the war?* He thought coldly, with a passion he’d never known before. Lose the war, when the alternative was godless Soviet communism or American capitalism? *Not on my watch!*

### Chapter Three: Britain in the Sea of Time

Downing Street  
London, UK  
6<sup>th</sup> July 1940

When he thought about it, which, to give him credit, wasn't that often, Prime Minister Howard Smith knew that he would never be cut out to be a great Prime Minister. Great Prime Ministers had character, and force of personality, and a party behind them. As Margaret Thatcher had proven, force of personality could only get one so far, and as Tony Blair had proven, a party could only push one so far. Smith, very much aware of his position as a compromise candidate in the elections of 2014, knew that he would never archive the degree of fame and notoriety that those two had earned.

*They* would have made use of the opportunity that seemed to have been presented to him; *he* was simply terrified. He'd grown up in a world where all evil seemed to have been defeated, even the War on Terror had been growing to an end with the death of many of the evil masterminds. To know that he was very close to *Hitler*, or *Stalin*, or even *Roosevelt*; great men who'd shaped the world around them, chilled him.

Behind him, the men and women of the Cabinet took their places; a handful of military men at the rear of the room. The CJO, General Cunningham, had a place at the table, along with his civilian supervisor, the Secretary of State for Defence. Smith didn't turn; staring out of the window at the empty sky. So far, the Press hadn't been willing to run the risk of being laughed at by being the first to break the news, but he knew that the Internet had some *very* accurate speculation.

*Someone must be leaking*, he thought, and then the door was closed with more force than strictly necessary; the squad of armed guards taking their positions outside the room. The Home Secretary, the man he liked and hated in equal measure – and one of the people forced upon him by the Great Compromise after the 2014 elections – had insisted on securing the building, and preparing for war.

There was a cough behind him. He *knew* that it had come from Sir Charles Hanover's throat; the Home Secretary had made no secret of his contempt for the Prime Minister. A little less displayed radicalism, a little more acceptability to the backbenchers, and he might well have become Prime Minister. Sighing, Prime Minister Howard Smith turned around and took his seat at the end of the table, chairing the meeting.

"Good morning," he said, knowing how pitifully inadequate it sounded. "If the reports are correct" – he noticed that a young army officer seemed...annoyed by the comment – "we face a crisis of unparalleled proportions. It is safe to say, I think, that whatever we decide here and now will have very far-reaching consequences."

"The reports are correct," General Cunningham said. "I can buy an aircraft crewed by men who have somehow slipped though the immunisation programs, but not the changes in the stars, France and Germany."

He sounded like a man who needed a stiff drink. Howard understood the feeling; he shared it. "So...*when* are we?"

Cunningham looked up at the young army officer, who saluted smartly. “The details – interception of German radio, the stars and the passbooks that the dead flyers carried – suggest very strongly that we have travelled back *exactly* seventy-five years; 2015 to 1940. I have taken the liberty of asking Professor Sir Torrance to compile a short briefing note on events on that day and the coming few days.”

Howard nodded. The officer unfurled a small sheet of paper. “July 6<sup>th</sup> 1940,” he read. “The carrier *Ark Royal*, attached to Force H, under Vice-Admiral Somerville, will be attacking the damaged French battlecruiser *Dunkerque* at Oran. Tomorrow, the Italians will attack the bases in Malta and Egypt; in three days there will be a short battle between Force H and an Italian battle fleet.” He took a breath. “In ten days, Hitler will outline the plan to invade England; Operation Sealion.”

There was dead silence. “Well, dash it all,” John McLachlan, the Foreign Secretary, said. “We *know* that he never came over the channel, don’t we?”

“Unfortunately, we cannot rely on that,” Hanover said smoothly. His perfectly-modulated tones drifted over the table. “With all due respect, Prime Minister, we must prepare at once for a possible invasion.” There was a flurry of comment; Hanover held up a hand and it died down. Smith felt a flicker of pure envy. “*We* are not the Britain of 1940; compared to them we are very unprepared for an invasion. Tell me, General Chapman, do we have the ability to sustain a long war with the Nazis?”

The RAF Chief of the Air Staff coughed nervously. “We can detect and respond to any incoming attack almost as soon as it is launched,” he said. “One on one, a Eurofighter, a Tornado or a Hawk is more than a match for any German aircraft of this era. The problem, however, is a very different quantitative difference; quite frankly, with the tempo of full-scale war, we will run through our stocks of modern missiles and precision weapons quite quickly, which will leave us with cannons alone – and cut our advantages in half.”

“On the ground, the situation is not much better,” Cunningham said. “At your command, I’ve already issued orders for troops to move towards the most likely invasion sites, should there be *an* invasion in this timeline.”

“There will be,” Hanover said confidently. “Gentlemen, this nation represents an awesome amount of power to someone like Hitler. If the Germans have any idea what’s happened, then they will come for us before we can build an army and take the war to them. Individually, our troops will be far better equipped and trained than even the *Waffen-SS*, but once we run out of modern equipment...”

Cunningham scowled. “Some of the units were in Iraq,” he said. “Fortunately, we did a draw-down in 2011 and we have most of the army in Britain, but we will require time to prepare to repel an invasion, let alone continue the war.”

“Why should we continue the war?” Margaret Darter, Minister without Portfolio, asked. “We are not at war with Hitler?”

“There have already been clashes between our fighters and German...*Messa-whatever*,” Chapman said. “They will have seen SAR helicopters; they will have seen the Eurofighters. They know we’re here.”

Smith felt an icy hand clutch at his heart. “Do you think that they might have gotten some of our technology as well?”

“It’s not impossible,” Hanover said. “You...army officer, can you offer us a guarantee?”

Smith felt a flicker of admiration at the still look on the officer’s face. “I’m afraid not, Prime Minister,” he said, addressing Smith directly. “As far as we can tell, the entire event, whatever it was, swept up everything from around five miles from the coast, and some other things. The oil rigs seem to have arrived with us, as did most of the navy, but the American carrier group that was due here in four days doesn’t seem to have come with us. Some aircraft seem to have appeared at the edge of the...event, but this wasn’t understood until after they had all gone.”

“So they will consider us a resource,” Hanover said, addressing Darter. “Quite apart from that, do we not have treaties with France and the other European counties?”

Smith smiled; Hanover was one of the more vocal Eurosceptics. “You would propose a second war to liberate them?”

“Prime Minister, if we do not fight them now, then they will come for us,” Hanover said. “These are the bogeymen of Europe; we have a moral duty to fight them.” He scowled. “However, there are other problems.”

“We have to start building a stronger army,” he said grimly. “We also have to begin rationing fuel; all the fuel we have will be needed for the army, then...”

“We have to ration food,” Smith said. “How much do we get from other countries?”

“My department is working on a study,” Hanover said. “However, it is vital to get the Defence of the Realm powers into action. We have to prevent panic, and we have to ensure that everyone has enough food to eat, or there will be riots.”

“There already have been riots,” Smith said. He felt bone-weary. “What do we tell the people?”

“The truth,” Darter said. “Let them decide on what to do.”

*Flower child*, Smith thought, wryly aware that this was one place that Hanover and himself would be in perfect agreement. Darter’s ‘peace and love’ credentials were perfect; her position an attempt to dilute Hanover’s.

“Sir, we could use our nukes to end the war in an afternoon,” Cunningham said. “Sir...”

Smith rounded on him. “I will not use nukes for *anything*,” he snapped, feeling a deep revulsion spreading through his body. “Is there any other business?”

His tone would suffer no opposition. Even Hanover remained quiet; a minor miracle. The army officer coughed once. "Sir, we should be trying to make contact with the British forces in this time; Force H, the force in Egypt, Gibraltar, and India."

Smith blinked. "We don't have bases in India," he said.

"We do here, sir," Cunningham said, recovering his poise. Smith felt a certain guilty pleasure. "Sir, we're going to need their support – and they could use ours."

"Have that young man of yours do the research," Smith ordered. "Then we'll see about putting ourselves in communication with our...ancestors."

"Captain Stirling, sir," Cunningham said. "Prime Minister, we have to fight a world war, without the forces that won the war before."

"We'll see," Smith said. "Meeting adjourned. We will reconvene in five hours."

He left the meeting room, exchanging comments with some of the staff, and headed to his office. It wasn't until he reached his office that he began to shake; *I can't handle this!* The scale of the disaster was vaster than anything else he'd ever had to face; than *Britain* had had to face. It was a situation that demanded a great man – and Smith knew that he was nothing of the sort.

Grimly, he looked up at the drinks cabinet, shook his head, and picked up the telephone. The secured link wasn't working well – the loss of the satellites that had carried the first signals had removed the untappable laser link – but there were still the landlines. He dialed a number from memory, waiting for it to answer. There was hardly any delay.

"Madam Speaker?" He asked, just to confirm that it was indeed the Speaker of the House of Commons. "Please would you see to it that Parliament is reconvened for an urgent debate tomorrow," he said. He listened. "No, we've not had a nuclear war, or an alien invasion; it's something else."

\*\*\*

For some reason, Sir Charles Hanover and John McLachlan were the last people to remain in the meeting room. Silently, they stared at each other like cats, waiting for one of them to speak aloud. Tension rose and fell on the air – and they waited.

Hanover weakened first. "This is an opportunity," he said calmly, and waited for McLachlan's response. "Possibly the most...exciting opportunity in the history of Britain."

McLachlan smiled behind steepled fingers. "You seem to know a lot about this," he said. "I don't suppose that you know how it happened?"

"I wish," Hanover said. "With power like that, who knows what we could do? However, we have to take advantage of this; we know all of the mistakes of the next fifty years, and we can change them."

McLachlan nodded to himself. His eyes were very bright. "We have an advantage then," he said. "You propose to handle it...how?"



“Between us, we possess enough political power to force our policy forward,” Hanover said. “We have the problems; beating off a possible German invasion, defeating the Axis powers and establishing a new empire with our technology.”

“I seem to remember how that song ended last time,” McLachlan said. “It became a funeral dirge.”

“Maybe your son would have something to say about some extra imperialism,” Hanover said, and watched McLachlan flinch. “We can do that, here and now, and use the resources for ourselves.”

“Putting aside my son’s religious...fantasies,” McLachlan said, “we do not have the resources or the will to re-conquer India.”

Hanover shook his head. “Not India,” he said. “We can bring the dominions into a pact; Australia, South Africa, Canada...perhaps even Ireland.” He hesitated. “That might be a problem; de Valera is their Prime Minister at the moment. I don’t know how he’ll react to a super-advanced Britain when he was scared of us infringing their neutrality.” He hesitated. “Coming to think of it, we could just move the 1940 forces out of Northern Ireland and let him have the blasted place; no point in repeating *that* mistake if we can avoid it.

“But we have two problems,” he continued. “We have to intern all foreign troops and citizens within the country, and that includes the American troops. By now, they must have realised what’s happened – and we don’t want them going home until we have relations with the new-old America. We *really* don’t want any German or French ambassadors going home; they could tell the Germans far too much about us.”

“I’ll put it forward at the meeting this evening,” McLachlan said. “Between you and me, we can get Howard to put it into effect.”

“We also ought to consider conscription of the unemployed,” Hanover said. “We need an army, and the DORA acts do cover it.”

“The economy is going to crash,” McLachlan said suddenly. “We’ll have to have some intervention at once, you know.”

“I know,” Hanover said. “I know.”

\*\*\*

“This is Kristy Stewart, reporting to you from Whitehall, where the gates of Number Ten Downing Street remain firmly closed,” the BBC reporter said. Stewart focused on looking just above the camera, reading her lines from memory. She was one of the most popular reporters for the BBC and it showed.

“There has been no word from the government on the sudden loss of all contact with any other nation on the Earth,” she continued. “Churches, synagogues and mosques have all been packed with worshippers, praying for deliverance from...something. Despite rumours of aerial battles above the Channel, the government has remained tight-lipped on the subject, but

sources within the military have hinted at a major preparation for war. Reservists have been called to the colours; tank depots have been opened and military bases have been sealed.”

She waited as the camera panned across the governmental district. “Cars have been arriving from all over Britain; military men, churchmen and even several ambassadors. What’s happening? The Government won’t tell us.” She paused as a message came in through her earphones. “The Prime Minister has just announced that a special session of the Houses of Parliament – a joint session – will be held tomorrow, where a full explanation will be presented. Until then...back to you Bob.”

The red light on the camera blinked off and she sighed in relief. It was quite warm, even for London, and the air was clear. She glanced around as her assistant passed her a cup of coffee; there were reporters from all the major papers, and most of the BBC programs. There were even a handful of American reporters from the American channels, all nervously talking together. Without contact with CNN or Fox, they had nothing to report; all flights outside the UK had been cancelled until further notice.

“Dear God,” she said aloud. “What the hell has happened here?”

### **Atlantic Ocean**

**Approx 50km from UK**

**6<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

Captain Townley stood on his bridge and worried. His ship, the monstrous *Queen Elizabeth II*, was faster than any ship or u-boat belonging to the Germans or their Italian allies, and the Admiralty had decreed that she could sail without a convoy, transporting units of the Canadian Army from Canada to England. He shivered; so close to England *seemed* safe, but he knew that it hadn’t been long since the *Royal Oak* had been sunk by a German submarine at Scarpa Flow.

His crew wasn’t all he wanted it to be either. Many men who held commissions in the Royal Navy had been conscripted; others had been drawn from the *Queen Mary*. He knew how dangerous an attack from the air could be; had the ship not been targeted by the Germans while it was on the Clyde, even if they hadn’t had the chance to put their threats into action? All it would take was one lucky German skipper – and the *Queen Elizabeth II* would go down like a stone.

“Captain,” the first mate called. “Aircraft!”

The Captain’s blood ran cold. He’d heard that France had fallen while the ship had been in America, the powerful French army simply brushed aside, and he knew that the Germans would have bases in France now. They *might* have been escorting British aircraft, but he knew how unlikely that was. He stepped out of the bridge and looked up at the sky; two aircraft flashed by overhead.

“What *are* they?” He breathed. They were *huge*; they seemed to move like lightning, and he couldn’t see any propellers at all. They *screamed* through the air, swooping down to flash past the *Queen Elizabeth II*; completely disdainful of the two tiny anti-aircraft guns the ship possessed.

\*\*\*

Flying Officer Mick Eccleston hadn't believed the tales from two of his fellow pilots, let alone the rumours, until the CO had called the pilots in for a briefing. Some of them had still refused to believe, suspecting that they were being subjected to a psychological test of some kind, until the Prime Minister had called them himself. Even then, some of them had doubted; Eccleston, whose father had fought the Nazis before escaping at Dunkirk and serving in North Africa, had believed.

*And when the clashes began with the SAR aircraft, then we knew*, he thought, as the Eurofighter flashed over the clear Atlantic. It looked as welcoming as ever – not very, in his view. Eccleston had had to parachute into the water for his RAF training and he'd *hated* the experience. He'd since decided he would almost prefer to risk an explosive crash-landing than go swimming again; and the Germans broke the rules. Clashes between their *primitive* aircraft and Eurofighters were becoming common where the SAR teams searched for missing ships; the Germans ignored the laws of war relating to SAR teams.

"Ground Control, this is Baker-One," he said. "Am approaching contact, stand by."

He took the Eurofighter down, sensing more than checking that his wingman had taken his aircraft up high to avoid German weapons. The Eurofighter slipped down across the waves, approaching the massive ocean liner; one check revealed the British flag flapping from its stern. It wasn't native to *his* time; seeing it made it all *real* in a way that reports could never manage.

"Ground control, this is Baker-One," he said. "Command, it's a native liner; I think it's the *Queen Elizabeth II*." He swung the aircraft around the liner, grimly aware of the crewmen running over the decks of the ship, until he saw the name painted on the rear of the ship. "Confirmed; it's the *Queen Elizabeth II*."

"Understood, Baker-One," the controller on the AWACS said. "Resume patrol; HMS *Lancaster* has been dispatched to intercept."

"Understood, Control," Eccleston said. With a final look at the strange antiquated ship, he turned his aircraft towards the sun and resumed his long patrol.

\*\*\*

"Ship *Ho*," the watcher cried, and Captain Townley lifted his binoculars to his eyes. Far in the distance, a ship could be seen; a small unfamiliar white ship that bore a British flag. It seemed remarkably small for its power; it moved through the water with the greatest of ease.

Captain Townley scowled. He'd served in the navy himself and he'd never seen a ship like that. It reminded him of one of the corvettes, except the corvettes were *dangerous* to their crew in a way that this one seemed to laugh at. It moved through the water, heading directly for the *Queen Elizabeth II*, and Captain Townley stared at it as it matched the course of the liner with ease.

"Heave to," a man shouted from the ship. Captain Townley gave the orders absently, trusting in his crew as he watched the new ship. They'd spoken English, which suggested that they were not Germans, and yet...he could make out the name of the ship; HMS *Lancaster*.

*But HMS Lancaster was an armoured cruiser of 1902 and it was paid off in 1919, he thought, as the strange ship launched a boat. There is no HMS Lancaster.*

And then the crew of the strange ship came onboard and Captain Townley's world changed forever.

## Chapter Four: Prisoners of War

Over English Channel

6<sup>th</sup> July 1940

It was a clear blue day, perfect flying weather. It was at times like these that Adolf Galland, *Gruppenkommandeur* of the JG-23 flying group, allowed himself to imagine that he was having a peaceful flight in peace time, rather than flying towards England. The *Messerschmitt* Bf 109 seemed to be humming, as if a flight of angels was escorting it, rather than three of JG-23's other pilots. Galland smiled, feeling his moustache ticking him; the plane was one of the greatest planes in the world, a fair match for the British Hurricane.

He grinned. The British hadn't been as ready for the war as the Germans had, but they'd fought well, although their leaders had been *donkeys*. He remembered providing air cover to the bridges over the Meuse; the British had left them alone until *after* they'd moved up anti-aircraft guns. He'd flown raids over Britain before, but this one was different. The *Luftwaffe* was bubbling with rumours about strange aircraft being sighted over France, ones flying higher and faster than any known aircraft, and his mission was to investigate. If the British had produced a new fighter, the war might be...prolonged.

Out of the corner of his eye he saw a glint of light and he turned his aircraft heading towards it. Slowly, oh so slowly, a shape took form; a strange boxy aircraft moving along very slowly. He'd seen pictures of similar objects, but nothing so...bright. It was painted a bright yellow colour and seemed to be trying to evade the German aircraft. As it turned away from them, he saw the British flag on the rear of the aircraft.

*What the hell is that?* He asked himself, unaware that he was seeing his first helicopter. He'd seem some plans for experimental aircraft; had the British somehow tested, built and deployed a completely new class of aircraft without them catching on? Shaking his head, he pulled his aircraft level with the strange British aircraft, and when he was certain that he had the crew's attention, he fired a burst of tracer past their nose.

*Follow me*, he indicated with his hands. There was a pause, it seemed as if the British would comply, and then a streak of light *screamed* across the sky and struck Heinz. An explosion flickered for moments – and then a *Messerschmitt* Bf 109 was *gone*! There wasn't even any debris!

*Enemy aircraft*, Galland's mind screamed, and he forced his plane into a steep dive. The water rushed up at him and he pulled up seconds before he would have slammed into the Channel, swooping away as fast as the plane could go. He felt a tingle between his shoulder blades and he swung the plane sharply to the left, narrowly avoiding a burst of tracer fire.

He was dimly aware of the first aircraft beating a retreat, but he ignored it; his eyes had finally spotted the attacking aircraft. He stared at it; it seemed to be *playing* with his wingmen, twisting neatly after them. A second aircraft blasted past his aircraft, so close that he could *feel* the turbulence, and then he saw one of his wingmen angle his plane *just* right, firing a long burst directly at the enemy craft. It leapt ahead, trailing smoke, and vanished into the distance. There was a pause, and then the second craft fired; a monstrous torrent of flame that *disintegrated* the *Messerschmitt*.

Shaking, knowing that he had to get the information back to General Kesselring, Galland tore his plane away from the battle and fled, knowing that he could be knocked out of the sky at will. One of the strange planes followed him for a while, keeping pace with ease, and then departed. The sight of a French airfield had never been so welcome; the news that he'd been the only survivor of the flight terrifying.

Sitting in the flight hat, drinking a bottle of terrible French wine 'liberated' from the local village, Galland tried to put his experience into words. The Fuhrer needed to hear about what had happened – for when the strange craft came over France, Galland knew that unless the Germans adapted their tactics, they would be defeated with ease.

German Army Base

**Nr Calais**

**6<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

The more SS-*Standartenfuhrer* Herman Roth read of the strange collection of books from the future, the more puzzled he became. Mentally, he cursed the unknown owner of the books; the Iraq War, no matter how important it might have been in 2015, was hardly relevant to *his* problems. There were details galore of strange and terrible weapon systems – *Conflict Iraq* was very helpful in that regard – but tantalisingly little on the subject of the current war.

*It was one of the great injustices of history that Stalin, unlike Hitler, never overreached himself*, he read, and scowled. What mistakes would the Fuhrer make in the future that might still be? Clearly, the arrival of the time travellers had changed things, but were they for the better? Had learning about powerful weapons systems – what was a British-dominated nation like Iraq doing with tanks that seemed to exceed the capabilities of Panzer IIIs? – really helped them?

*Of course*, he thought. The technical experts had already started to examine the aircraft, which was now stripped of anything that could be moved. The strange luggage of the passengers had been examined; far too many of the technical gadgets made no sense to Roth, let alone the technical experts.

“Jan,” he called, and waited for the guard to enter the room. “Jan, go down to the cells and bring me one of the prisoners.”

“Jawohl,” Jan said. The limping SS guard wasn't fit for active duty and resented it. Roth returned to the books and waited; it took Jan ten minutes to return, with a young blonde lady. Roth remembered her; she had been the woman who'd been holding the subhuman African.

“Good morning,” he said, in careful English. He'd sent for an SS translator, but the *dummkopt* hadn't arrived. “I would like you to answer a few of my questions.”

“Go to hell,” the woman spat at him. Jan lifted his club to strike her; Roth caught his eye and shook his head at him. “I demand that you take us at once to the British embassy.”

“Lady,” Roth said carefully, “you are no longer in the year...ah, 2015. This is 1940; your nation and mine are at war.”

“And for some stupid nutzoid racial theory you have separated me from my husband, you...”

Words seemed to fail her. Roth smiled dryly; she had spirit. As an SS officer's wife, she might have gone far. "Yes, we have," he said. "Mrs...ah?"

"Horton, Jasmine Horton," the woman – Jasmine – said.

"Mrs Horton, you, your husband and your mixed-race children are completely in my power," he said conversationally. "For the mere crime of mingling your blood with one of the inferior races, you could spend the rest of your life in a rest home; your family, of course, would spend the rest of *their* lives in a camp." Her look of pure rage should, by rights, have blasted him into dust and ashes. "If you cooperate with me...well, I am a *Standartenfuhrer* and I can and will protect you and your family."

He held up a hand to forestall a second outburst. "I would like you to explain, carefully, to me and my men what each of the strange devices in the plane does and where it comes from," he said. "If you do that, you will be reunited with your family, understand?"

Bright tears shone in her eyes. "Yes," she said softly. "Let's get on with it, shall we?"

Roth bowed politely. "Come with me," he said, and led her through a maze of corridors into a big room. The luggage was spread out all over the floor, broken into different categories; clothes, books, toys and electronic devices. Roth pointed to a strange device, studded with numbered buttons. "What is that?"

The woman smiled through her tears, clearly enjoying his confusion. "That's a mobile phone," she said. "It was made in Britain." She picked it up and pressed a button on the front; the small screen led up with an eerie green glow. "No signal," she said, and then frowned. "There *was* a signal, for a moment."

One of the technical experts backed a question in German. Roth translated; "are they useless here?"

"Without the transmission network, of course," she said. "It must have been a fluke." She glanced down at the phone again. "Yes, must have been a fluke."

"A mobile phone," Roth said. "How does it work?"

Jasmine shook her head. "I have no idea," she said. She glared at him. "Next?"

"This thing," Roth said, pointing to a black box on a second table. There were dozens of them, carrying strange Japanese-sounding names. Some of them had been opened, revealing more buttons and larger screens.

"That's a laptop computer," Jasmine said. She reached out and pushed a button; the screen came to life, showing a single word. PASSWORD? "Well, that's torn it," she said.

Roth wasn't in the mood for humour; watching the scientists start to activate the other devices was depressing. "Explain," he ordered curtly, and wondered if he would understand the explanation.

“The computer requires a password to work,” Jasmine said. She chuckled. “You understand the concept?”

Roth, in one smooth motion, slapped her hard on the buttocks. “You will cooperate,” he said sharply. “What is a laptop and why does it need a password?”

“It’s a device to store information,” Jasmine said. Her eyes had started to tear again. “You turn it on, input the information, and set the password. Without the password, the computer won’t work properly.”

“Who has the password?” Roth demanded. “One of the other prisoners?”

“Yes,” Jasmine snapped, all composure gone. “Now let me see my husband.”

Roth summoned Jan and gave him orders that the family was to be reunited. One aircraft from Britain had turned up – and a number of strange explosions near the coast had suggested that other aircraft had also arrived, but crashed far harder than the one he’d captured – and other strange aircraft had been sighted near Britain, apparently operating from the island nation. General Albert Kesselring had ordered him to find out as much as he could from the prisoners, without damaging them too much in the process.

Sighing, Roth went back to his office. The war had seemed so simple and certain only last night. Had it really been less than a day?

\*\*\*

The SS – and Jim Oliver was now certain that they were the real thing – hadn’t been as bad as he’d feared, once he’d recovered from the shock. Their confusion at the various gadgets, ranging from wristwatches to mobile phones, had done much to restore his confidence, even stripped to his underwear. The other male passengers, apart from the flight crew, had all been shoved into the same large room. Many of them were now trying to catch up on some sleep; others were playing with a chess set that the guards had allowed them to keep.

He smiled to himself. The cell was securely locked, and there were guards outside, but he was certain that the Germans couldn’t build electronic bugs like his own nation could. There was *opportunity* here; opportunity that *he* could take advantage of. He didn’t think that the Germans would be able to use the laptops – unless they managed to run a current from whatever electricity lines they had without blowing it up – and the technical data he’d brought would be useless to them, but he could still be helpful. And besides, he wanted out of the prison cell – and sitting around wasn’t going to help, was it?

Standing up, he tapped at the door, and waited for the SS guard to open it. The guard wasn’t the SS guard of TV movies; he seemed fairly ordinary. Oliver was almost disappointed. Even though he knew it was stupid, he’d half-expected a group of jackbooted men shouting ‘*Sieg heil, Sieg heil!*’

“Take me to your leader,” he said, in flawless German. “I have vital information for him.”

\*\*\*

“General, I cannot even begin to explain just how advanced some of the devices here are,” Roth said. General Kesselring seemed to expect immediate breakthroughs. “Sir, we don’t



even understand the components; one of the phones was smashed and the technicians can't understand *anything* about it."

The phone – a normal German field telephone – seemed to vibrate with the General's annoyance. "*Herr Standartenfuhrer*, we seem to be dealing with planes out of my nightmares," Kesselring proclaimed. "*Where* are they coming from?"

"You read my preliminary report," Roth said. "All the evidence suggests that they came from the future..."

"*Nonsense*," Kesselring sneered. "Have you lost your mind?"

"*Mein General*, I may be having flights of fancy, but in that case my fantasises have become reality," Roth said carefully. "I cannot give you any other explanation."

Kesselring put the phone down without bothering to reply. "Bah," Roth said aloud, and put his own phone down more gently. He stared at the books, lying on the table, knowing that he should be reading them again, or sending them to the tank designers. Knowing that something was possible was half the battle, but without Kesselring's support it might be difficult to convince the Fuhrer. Without Hitler's support, any possibility of using the new knowledge, as fragmentary as it was...

"*Herr Standartenfuhrer*," *Untersturmfuehrer* Johan Schmidt said. "One of the prisoners would like to see you."

Roth raised an eyebrow. He was tired and depressed, but perhaps the prisoner might prove to be the key to cheering him up. "Show him in, *Untersturmfuehrer*," he ordered. Schmidt stepped back and waved in a man; Roth studied him with interest. He seemed to be in control of himself, with an air of general competence and an instantly-forgettable face. *Spy*, Roth thought coldly, and wondered why he'd thought that.

"It is a pleasure to meet you, *Herr Standartenfuhrer*," the man said. He held out a hand; Roth shook it carefully. "I am Jim Oliver."

The name was so...ordinary that Roth dismissed it at once as a *nom de plume*. "SS-*Standartenfuhrer* Herman Roth," he said. "I understand that you wanted to see me?"

The man didn't seem intimidated by the title. "I work for a group in Britain," he said, and broke off, staring at the books. "My books," he said.

Roth was amused to hear the note of warmth in his voice. "*Your* books?" He asked. "Tell me, how much do you know about history?"

"So you know that we've fallen back in time," Oliver said. "I had wondered. I know quite a bit; it's something of an amateur interest of mine."

"From your books, I have gleaned the fact that Germany lost the war," Roth said bluntly. "Tell me, how did that happen?"

Oliver laughed. “You’re an SS man and you ask me that?” He said. “You need a real historian for the specifics, but I can give you the generalities.” He took a breath, counting on his fingers. “You launch an aerial attack on Britain, that fails, then you send General Rommel to North Africa, which lasts until America enters the war.”

“America entered the war?” Roth asked in alarm. The *Fuhrer* had dismissed America as a nation of weaklings; could he be wrong?

“Yes, after Japan bombed Pearl Harbour, they fight you as well,” Oliver said. “But the real killer was the invasion of Russia; they – you – headed into a vast country without the power to subdue it. Despite fighting against both you and Stalin, the Russian people managed to evict you by force of numbers – and finally managed to crush you in an epic battle for Berlin.”

Roth felt numb horror spreading through his heart. He’d expected bad news, but this...? It was terrifying, shocking, horrifying...how could the *Russians* and *Americans* triumph over the *Volk*?

“In the meantime, the Americans crush the Japanese and occupy their home islands,” Oliver continued, remorselessly. “By 1945, they have mastered atomic weaponry, and use two atomic bombs on two cities. The world then settles down for forty-odd years of Russian-soviet rivalry, and then the Americans *win* the Cold War, and even the War on Terror.”

“I see,” Roth said finally. “Tell me – what do you want?”

The question seemed to amuse Oliver. “Quite frankly, I want to work for you, in exchange for certain monies.”

“Money,” Roth said coldly. “Anything else?”

Oliver smiled. “Ah, *Standartenfuhrer*, what do you think happens to Britain in history – the original history?”

“You are confident that history has...changed?” Roth asked. “This could be a freak incident.”

“If something like this had happened, I would have heard about it,” Oliver said. “Tell me, what do you think that the price of victory is for Britain?”

“I have no idea,” Roth said. “Tell me.”

“We lose the empire, we lose our independence to the French, thanks to our cocksucking politicians, and we are a laughing stock,” Oliver said. “If you manage to forge a peace with Britain now and invade Russia with a better chance at victory, you might just be more...accommodating than the American allies.”

“The *Fuhrer* has offered to forge a just and lasting peace,” Roth asked. “Now, perhaps you can help us to understand some of the devices that you brought.”

\*\*\*

Oliver concealed a smile at the bemused expressions of the German technicians. The modern-day laptop was far beyond their ability to understand; he lined the laptops up and started to activate one of them, looking for one without a password. He could have used his own, but he was unwilling to expose the password too soon.

“This is a small portable computing device,” he explained, as the screen cleared to reveal the familiar WINDOWS logo. “You can use it for many different purposes.”

Digging through the small collection of books, he found a users manual and passed it over to the two technicians who were taking a plug to pieces to discover how it worked. Through trial and error, they were learning how to use it; the manual even provided the correct degree of current. Ignoring them, he picked up his mobile phone from the small pile of phones and turned it on, checking that the wireless link with his laptop was still working. There would only be enough stored power for a few hours use at full power, but there would be enough for what he wanted. Almost as an afterthought, he checked the connection with Britain, and he blinked. There *was* a signal; very weak, but it was there.

*Dear god*, he thought, *the entire island must have come through the time warp*. His mind reeled at the thought; it seemed incomprehensible. If he hadn’t read a lot of science-fiction, he might have been unable to even grasp the concept.

“Mr Oliver,” a voice said. He turned to see the *Standartenfuhrer*; the tall and disciplined Nazi. “I have been in touch with Berlin; they have demanded my presence and that of yourself, along with the gadgets.” The *Standartenfuhrer*’s gaze focused on the phone that Oliver was still clutching. “What are you doing with that?”

Oliver fought hard to conceal his reaction. “I think I have something important to tell you,” he said, and began.

## Chapter Five: Declaration of War

RAF Feltwell  
United Kingdom  
7<sup>th</sup> July 1940

Absolute panic had hit RAF Feltwell, one of a handful of American bases in the United Kingdom, when contact was suddenly lost with America, the orbiting space shuttle and the space station, and the carrier battle group that was supposed to be taking part in an exercise. Colonel George Palter, badly frightened, had complied without argument to the British request to link Feltwell into the British defence network, while carrying out his own investigation. Twenty-seven hours later, attempts to raise Washington had failed – but Feltwell was receiving some radio transmissions from Europe.

The radio transmissions only deepened Palter's puzzlement and growing alarm. To hear Radio Berlin was not unusual, but to hear someone called William Joyce expounding on the miracle of Hitler's Germany was more than a little unusual. They'd heard President Bush compared to Hitler once, but they'd never heard of Joyce, let alone of the names of some French and German politicians. A quick web search, hunting through an extremely damaged Internet, revealed that William Joyce enjoyed the sobriquet of 'Lord Haw-Haw,' but it had also revealed that he had been hanged by an unforgiving British court after World War Two ended.

Feltwell had been crippled by the sudden loss of the satellites. Frantic calls to the American embassy in London revealed only that the British were at war – and some of the provisions of the Status of Forces Act might be invoked. Palter duly arranged for the base to receive the British liaison team, all the while hoping that they could have some answers. American radar stations had tracked British aircraft and...*other* aircraft skirmishing over the North Sea and the Channel; Palter had been reduced to wondering if the UFOs conspiracy theorists charged Feltwell with tracking had *really* arrived.

Radarman Brown, however, had dismissed *that* theory. All the unknown aircraft seemed to be badly outmatched by the British air defence forces; so badly outmatched that it was hard to see what the problem was. Calls to the British Ministry of Defence had produced nothing; the embassy didn't know what was happening. In desperation, he'd been reading Internet chat rooms, and the speculations were so crazy that he'd given up in disgust.

"Sir, the British liaison team has arrived," the gate guard reported. "Shall I let them in?"

"It's their island," Palter said, remembering the...incident three years ago. The friendship between Britain and America had almost been shattered forever because of his idiot predecessor. "Invite them in."

He left his office and headed towards the carpool, heading towards the engines. He blinked as he rounded the corner; the British had bought a whole *fleet* of coaches and a military escort.

"They don't have the Queen with them, do they?" He asked aloud, as the commander of the British force headed towards him. The British officer wore the badge of a major; his neatly trimmed black moustache hung under his nose like a second badge of office.

“I’m afraid not,” the British officer said. To Palter, he seemed ill at ease, as if he had some particularly disdainful task to accomplish. “I’m Major Denis Bloodnok, 3<sup>rd</sup> infantry.” He hesitated. “Colonel, I must ask you to parade your men.”

Palter lifted an eyebrow. “Why?” He asked. “Might I remind you that...”

“I’m looking for a criminal,” Bloodnok said. “Colonel, please...”

“You find your own,” Palter said. “It took me years to get this lot.”

The British officer snorted, a smile flicking from under his moustache. “Colonel, this is an unprecedented situation, and I am trying to handle it as much tact and diplomacy as possible. Colonel, under the Status of Forces Act, as revised, I must formally inform you that I am obliged to intern you and your men pending their disposition.”

He waved a hand at the trucks. Palter dimly realised that he’d brought an entire regiment with him. “If necessary, I have been ordered to use force,” Bloodnok said.

Palter stared at him. “It’s the Russians, isn’t it,” he said. “They’ve finally developed an ABM shield and they’ve demanded that you surrender us to them.”

Bloodnok’s nose twitched. “Believe me, Colonel, I half-wish that that was the case. Your men are in no danger of being handed over to...unfriendly powers; we’ll brief you when you reach the camp.” He smiled ruefully. “I swear to you upon the honour of the regiment that you will all be well-treated.”

“I wish to lodge a formal protest with my government,” Palter said. “In addition, I have to ensure the safety of some vital parts of the infrastructure...”

“They will be safe,” Bloodnok said. “As for your government, I imagine that you have had the same success as we have had in contacting them; none whatsoever.”

Palter felt a cold chill passing through him. “Major, what’s happened?”

“It’s something of a long story,” Bloodnok said. “Now...parade your men.”

“Under protest,” Palter said reluctantly, and turned to bellow orders. Grimly, the staff of the communications station lined up and boarded the buses; resistance would have been futile in any case. Palter’s mind worked furiously, trying to figure out what had happened; had Britain and the United States gone to war?

**Transit Camp**  
**Plymouth, United Kingdom**  
**7<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

“I apologise for the delay,” the man said. If it hadn’t been for the colour of his skin, Captain Townley would have taken him for a cockney. As it was, his accent contrasted oddly with his skin colour; had he been shipped in from India? He didn’t understand what was happening at all; as soon as the *Queen Elizabeth* had reached Plymouth, the crew and

passengers had been escorted to a camp, seeing a very different Britain as they passed through a small village.

“That’s quite all right,” Captain Townley said, resolving to treat the man as an equal until he understood what was going on. His first thought, that Germany had invaded, seemed to be inaccurate; the handful of people who’d helped them to settle into the camp were all British, or subjects of the British Empire. It was only his concern for his ship that kept him from outright panic.

“Captain, I’m not quite certain how to explain this,” the man said. “Are you familiar with the concept of time travel?”

Townley hesitated. He’d read HG Wells on the subject; *The Time Machine*. “I understand the concept,” he said.

“As far as we understand it, all of Britain – our Britain – went back in time to 1940,” the man said. “Your ship was only the first ship to meet us; we’ve also picked up a number of fishing vessels and a handful of other merchant ships. Captain, I’m sorry, but the Britain you knew has gone forever.”

Captain Townley stared at him; the little Indian man with the British voice. “What happened?” He asked finally, trying for a commanding tone. It came out as a whimper. “My wife...my children...”

“Gone,” the man said, and he sighed. “We have already started looking for future relatives of yourself, but it’s not easy. Captain, you and your crew are out of time; this is or was 2015.”

“So, what happens?” Townley asked. He tried hard to keep his voice level. “What happened to it all?”

“That’s a long story,” the man said. He passed across a small collection of books; the first one, the *History of the Liners*, had a coloured picture of *his* ship on the front. Townley didn’t recognise the picture at all. “I won’t lie to you; it is going to be hard. You will have to adapt to a whole new world, one very different to your own.”

Townley stared into his dark eyes for a long moment, and then picked up one of the books; *Britain 1939-1999*. “I’d better get started then,” he said, with a joviality he didn’t feel. “Can I talk to the others of my crew?”

**House of Commons**  
**London, United Kingdom**  
**7<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

Hanover took his seat on the Governmental benches, sharing a smile with McLachlan, and relaxed, seemingly unaware of the buzz of conversation. Projecting an image of unconcern, he crossed his legs and lay backwards, allowing himself to relax. He’d spent hours writing the speech that Smith was about to deliver, and he knew that it was good, if not perfect. Still, when had there ever been a problem like time travelling before?

The news hadn't – quite – broken, but only because of the reluctance of the major newspapers and television channels to commit themselves to a definite statement. By now, pictures of the downed German aircraft in Suffolk and the newly-arrived *Queen Elizabeth* had been posted widely on the internet, and some of the speculation was growing closer and closer to the truth. The Speaker had even hinted at possibly forcing the Government to come to the House – and only the support of the Leader of the Opposition, Kenneth Barton, had prevented such a disaster. Steps had to be taken, and without the day's grace the government's task would have been hopeless.

His pager buzzed and he glanced down at the message without comment. The American technicians at RAF Feltwell had been taken into internment; the German ambassador and his staff – along with a handful of German citizens – had been taken into custody as well. Hanover didn't think that the German Ambassador would have declared for Hitler, but he didn't see how the British could have taken the chance that he might have. More practically, they wanted – *he* wanted – to keep as tight a grip on future knowledge as possible.

The massive room, refurbished since the 'botched' terror attack of 2011 – 'botched' meaning that the MPs had gotten lucky – was growing noisier. The MPs were filling the room, taking their places on the benches and waiting. Hanover allowed himself a moment to glance around; MPs from the Conservatives, the several scattered Labour parties, the Liberal Democrats, the Greens – and the British National Party. Hanover scowled; he'd half-wanted to have them interned as well, on general principles. After the riots of 2011, the new leader of the BNP had managed to have ten MPs elected; even though they were his supporters, Hanover tried to have as little to do with them as possible.

*Bastards would have to have such good discipline*, Hanover thought, wishing that the Conservatives had such good party discipline. Howard Smith came into the room, followed by his friend Margaret Darter – Hanover had expended a great deal of effort trying to obtain proof that they were lovers – and took his place in the front bench. Hanover concealed a smile; Smith looked tired and worn.

\*\*\*

"The room will now come to order," Madam Speaker said, banging her gavel. "All rise for the Prime Minister."

Smith stood up and nodded once to the room, trying to smile at the assembled ranks of MPs as they sat down. He didn't manage it; the speech he'd helped write was burning through his mind. He wished that he'd been abroad, that he'd been smart enough not to accept the nomination for Prime Minister, rather than face the MPs with such news.

*I should have agreed to hold off information release for a week*, he thought, and shook his head. If it could ever be proved that he'd covered it up, or acted against the interests of Britain, the MPs would force through a vote of no confidence. The confusion that had followed the restructuring of the European Union – *I guess that's something I don't have to worry about again* – had left Parliament dangerously intolerant of weakness or perceived treachery.

"Madam Speaker, Members of the House, I wish I came before you with better news," he said. It wasn't the sheer brilliance of Churchill's speeches, but what could one say to a nation out of time? Even the greatest prime minister would have had problems. "A truly

remarkable event has happened, one that gives us both great opportunity and forces us to face considerable problems requiring immediate action.”

It sounded weak, he knew. He would have preferred to announce a war with America than a trip through time. “When we lost communication with the outside world, we began to attempt to discover what had happened, and then we realised that the world outside was radically different from what we remembered.”

Silence. They knew what was coming. “We have been transported back in time,” he said flatly, and the House let out a collective breath. “It is now July 7<sup>th</sup>, 1940. Across the channel, Hitler holds Europe in his grasp, and he is preparing to launch an assault at us. Historically, that never happened – but *that might not stay true*! We may face an invasion at any moment, for our technical base represents an awesome prize to Hitler, allowing him to dominate the world.”

He waved a shaky hand at the display. The colour picture of Paris, with the German flag over the Eiffel Tower, appeared. In quick succession, other pictures, of Germany, of Belgium, of the *Queen Elizabeth*, appeared in front of them, finishing with the picture of the crashed German reconnaissance plane.

“We are at war,” he said flatly. “Even if we tried, it is impossible to compromise with the sheer unadulterated evil that Hitler represents; we have to mount a major military effort to save ourselves, let alone defeat him for good. We also have to handle major social disruption; for better or worse, we have to act as if we were alone in the world. There will no longer be any electronics from Japan, movies from America, oil from the Middle East...or food from Africa.”

There was a nervous shuffling through the assembled ranks. “With the concurrence of the Leader of the Opposition, I have decided to invoke the Defence of the Realm Acts, as revised in 2010. The House will be invited to scrutinise all decisions, as per the standard procedure, but we do not have much time. *Already*, the Germans are learning about our weaknesses; we have been skirmishing with German aircraft over the Channel. It won’t be long before Hitler launches the Battle of Britain; and *we* have to handle it.

“I invite you all to consider this an opportunity,” he concluded. “I do not know how we got here, I do not know if we can ever return, but this is an opportunity to correct the mistakes of the past seventy years. Towards this extent, I wish to announce the formation of a War cabinet; Kenneth Barton has agreed to take a place within the cabinet.” He looked around the room. “I have the greatest of faith in the British people,” he said. “If we stand together, we can survive this test and become stronger than ever.”

\*\*\*

Hanover smiled to himself. The message had been just right; the assumption of semi-dictatorial DORA powers, combined with hints of personal weakness and the formation of a collective government. Collective government; the blame was spread so thin that no one noticed.

He sighed; it was his turn to speak. Standing up, he unfurled his notes and began to speak. He spoke of firm practicalities, technical data instead of dreams; a speech of a type rarely heard in Parliament. The television cameras would broadcast his speech to the world, and he



would look the practical man of the administration. After all, *Smith* was clearly unsuited for the role of Prime Minister in a wartime state.

“We have three urgent problems that need to be handled quickly,” he said, after the preliminaries. “First, we have to prepare for a possible invasion. Second, we have to prepare to handle a massive food shortage. Third, and finally, we have to cushion the damage that will happen to the economy. I propose three basic courses of action to handle the problems.

“First, the Army is already deploying – absent a few units otherwise engaged – to the east coast, near Dover. That region will be placed under martial law; all local government, police services and other emergency services will be under the command of the duly-appointed commander, General Ascot. In addition – and in order to avoid a collapse of the welfare state – we will be conscripting unemployed young men of military age.” He scowled. “Quite frankly, we simply cannot begin to pay the dole until we have a better grasp of our financial situation, and a dose of the military life would be good for them.

“Second, we will have to cut back on all forms of excess food use,” he continued, awaiting the protests. They didn’t come; he smiled grimly. There would be unity against the storm, until the shortages began to really bite. “The local councils will collect supplies of food, which will be distributed in food kitchens. We *have* to ensure that people receive their fair share, and all people who received benefits will receive some food in place of the benefits.

“Finally, we expect some trembling in the economy, particularly in businesses which were founded in the United States and other nations,” he concluded. “All we can really say is don’t panic; we will be placing orders for military equipment very soon, and we can expect that the rest of the 1940 world will be very interested in placing orders for non-military material of their own. For the moment, we have declared a freeze in stock market trading and changes in employment; we will re-open it once we manage to stabilise the situation.”

He spoke on and on, clarifying the situation in simple terms, and knew that they were eating out of his palm. Strong leadership was what they needed...and if they saw him as the architect, so much the better.

**Permanent Joint Headquarters**  
**London, United Kingdom**  
**7<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

The politicians were debating endlessly over whether or not they should declare war on Nazi Germany, but Stirling didn’t have time to worry about them. He kept one ear half-cocked on the radio, while examining the pictures from reconnaissance aircraft and working his way through tomes on history, in particular the Second World War.

He scowled. The Prime Minister had ordered that he take part in the newly forming Oversight Committee – a group of history and military researchers that would advise the War Cabinet – and General Cunningham had been more than happy to comply. He’d shown commendable initiative, the general had said, which didn’t conceal the fact that – for the moment – he *was* the Oversight Committee. Now that the Prime Minister had revealed just what had happened to Britain, it would become easier to recruit new members, but for the moment he wasn’t even sure just how much authority he had.

He sniggered to himself; if he'd done something wrong, the politicians would be quite happy to tell him – after the fact. For the moment, he worked through historical records of the German positions in France, learning that one writer had believed that the Germans could throw nearly 10'000 men across the channel in one leap. Carefully, he made a note about the possible – and planned – landing sites, and read on; there was a great deal of possible blackmail information.

The secured line rang. He picked it up. “Stirling speaking,” he said.

“Ah, Captain,” the RAF recon expert said. “I’m sending you some FLASH traffic. It’s important that you look at it at once.”

“Yes, sir,” Stirling said. He disconnected the phone from its wall socket and walked back over to his computer, opening the secured file. Decrypting it – a useless precaution against the primitive German computers – took minutes, but he waited. “Son of a bitch,” he exclaimed, and then remembered that he was still on the line.

“That was my response,” the expert said. “Sir, what the hell do we do about that?”

“I’m going to kick it upstairs,” Stirling said, looking down again at the picture. “This changes *everything*.”

## Chapter Six: Preemptive Strike

Ten Downing Street  
London, United Kingdom  
7<sup>th</sup> July 1940

The picture was damning in its simplicity. A French field, near a village of a type that Hanover had believed to be extinct, with an aircraft in the centre. The aircraft was instantly recognisable as a Boeing 747; clearly crashed on the ground. German personnel swarmed over it; the images suggested that the village had been cleared of all of its inhabitants. The Germans were stripping the aircraft, removing everything that could be moved, including its engines and wings.

“Well, that’s torn it,” Smith said. The Prime Minister shivered. “Now they have one of our aircraft, they will duplicate it and use it against us.”

The Chief of the Air Staff shook his head. Hanover marvelled at the respect in his voice. *He* felt no respect. “With respect, Prime Minister, even a relatively simple aircraft like a Boeing is well beyond what Germany can build at the moment. The Germans have good technicians and an innovative group of researchers, but they won’t be able to duplicate it. It *will* provide them with valuable clues, and perhaps save them from a few false paths, but they won’t be building them for a very long time.”

Hanover shook his head. “We have to destroy it,” he said. “It’s a source of possible technology for the Germans; the engines alone could give them ideas. They’re nothing like ready for us; Strike Command could destroy it within an hour.”

Smith nodded slowly. Hanover knew what he was thinking; the House of Commons was still arguing over the proposed declaration of war. If the British struck first, they would be charged with *starting* the war.

“Did any of the crew or passengers survive?” Smith asked. Hanover blinked; it was a surprisingly relevant question. “If so, they might be in German hands.”

Hanover nodded. “If a number of German pilots can evade the police, then it’s quite possible that they might be able to escape the Germans, but I very much doubt it.” He cursed softly. “In that case, the Germans will have people who can explain some of the technology – people who might know some history.”

Chapman lifted a hand and rubbed it over his face. “Won’t they keep quiet?” He asked. “Everyone knows how evil Hitler and his little wizards were.”

“We have ways of making you talk,” Hanover said, affecting a bad German accent. “They’ll make them talk, one way or the other. Coming to think of it, we’d better find out who was on that flight.”

“So we have to plan a rescue mission as well,” Smith said. “Do we have any idea where they might have been taken?”

“Not yet,” Chapman said. “Sir, we need to move at once; we have to destroy the plane before they can draw any more from it.”

“I understood,” Smith snapped, his face showing the stress he was under. “Very well; by order of the War Cabinet, you are to destroy that plane.”

“And the surrounding German tents,” Hanover added. “If they have scientists studying it, that’s where they’ll be.”

“Disgusting,” Smith muttered. “Please give the pilots a personal good luck message from me.”

“Yes, sir,” Chapman said, leaving the room to call Strike Command.

“Now, what about the public?” Hanover asked, feeling the glow of victory. “How are they taking it?”

“Surprisingly little panic so far,” the Press Secretary said. “Of course, it’s only been a few hours since the announcement, so...” He chuckled. “The only problem has been a number of unemployed women demanding the right to serve in the army. Their MPs are asking questions.”

“And to think we’re trying to debate a declaration of war,” Hanover said. “And the Press?”

“Someone is trying to sue the *Daily Mail* for claiming that he was a crackpot,” the Press Secretary said. “He worked it out very quickly; the newspaper didn’t believe it, but reported it with a ‘noo-nah’ by-line. So far, they’re still thinking about the issues at hand.”

“That won’t last,” Hanover said. He spared a look at Smith, who seemed to have ignored how he’d taken charge. “We have to be ready.”

**RAF Coningsby**  
**Lincolnshire, United Kingdom**  
**7<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

The RAF fighter pilots, who’d seen the German aircraft at close range – and had even been hit by German bullets – held no scepticism about the Prime Minister’s speech. Two Eurofighters and one Harrier had been hit by cannon fire, from primitive aircraft, and they’d shot down twelve German aircraft. They believed; their only question was when they would be unleashed upon the German forces.

“All right, people, listen up,” the base commandant, Robert Harvey, said. “We have a mission and it’s going to be tricky.”

Flying Officer Victor Abernathy and the other assembled pilots; four Eurofighter fast-jet pilots and two Tornado GR2 pilots, relaxed as he tapped the map with his pointer. The map of France bore no resemblance to any they’d used before; possible locations of German bases were marked in – and there were a lot of them. One location, just south of Nantes, had been marked in red.

“Reconnaissance flights have located a crashed Boeing 747, located here,” he said, tapping the map at the precise location. “The Germans, unfortunately, have located the crash and are stripping it of its material; our mission is to destroy it – and the German tents around it.” He glared at them from his thick mouth, a result of a drunken bout five years ago. “I tried to get permission to destroy the village that the Germans have taken over, but it was refused.

“Regardless, a cruise missile attack has been ruled out for various reasons, so you’re it,” he continued. “Yes, what is it?”

Flying Officer Sheila Dunbar had raised her hand. “Sir, with all due respect, why *have* the cruise missiles been ruled out?”

Harvey scowled at her. Abernathy knew that he wasn’t fond of her for many different reasons. “As I understand it, the cruise missiles are being reserved for strikes against German infrastructure,” he said. “Now, pay attention.

“You will observe that the Germans have moved some mobile anti-aircraft guns around the aircraft,” he continued. “We don’t expect these to pose a problem; unless they score a golden BB, they won’t even be able to see you, let alone touch you. However, all due care will be observed. Harold, you will engage the target, using low-level Paveway III bombs, and blast it into little pieces. Christopher, you will remain out of range of the German weapons; you will only engage if Harold fails.”

He looked across at the Eurofighter pilots. “Your mission is to escort the two Tornados,” he said. “You will engage any German aircraft that attempt to interfere, but keep an eye on your ammunition. Missiles are only to be used if necessary, understand?”

“Yes, sir,” Abernathy said.

“Good,” Harvey said. “Good luck, ladies and gentlemen.”

German Army Base  
**Nr Calais**  
**7<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

Sullen and dispirited, the vast majority of the passengers on the ill-fated flight were herded into the main hall. SS-*Standartenfuhrer* Herman Roth watched as they took seats in front of the podium, escorted by hard-faced SS guards. He watched dispassionately as some of the prisoners, male and female, exchanged hugs; married couples and some partners meeting again. Two of the men, Roth had been shocked to discover, were homosexuals; what *had* happened to Britain?

“*Achtung*,” he snapped, and switched to English. “I trust that you are all convinced of the reality of your current situation,” he said. “I cannot afford more time to convince you; you are prisoners of the German *Reich*.” He stared around the room. “Under the orders of *Führer und Reichskanzler* Adolf Hitler, as passed through *Reichsführer-SS* Heinrich Himmler, you are prisoners of war. What happens to you is up to me; the *Reichsführer-SS* has seen fit to entrust me with coordinating a response to you.”

*Particularly if Oliver is correct to claim that all of Britain has come through time*, he thought coldly. “You have two options; you will be assigned – together with your families, should you have them – to assisting us to understand the technology you have brought us. If you cooperate, we will treat you well; we won’t even treat some of you as the subhuman vermin you are.

“If you do not cooperate, we will find a way to force you to do so,” he said. “It will not be pleasant.” He waved a hand at sheets of paper that had been placed on a table. “Take them and write a full description of what you did in Britain; your job, any particular skills, anything you think might be helpful.” He bared his teeth. “You are writing for your lives here.”

Changing tack again, he continued. “I won’t lie to you,” he said, putting as much respect into the words as possible. “I cannot guarantee that you will ever be returned to Britain, even the Britain of this era, assuming that it exists. If you help us, we will treat you as well as we can. If not...well, I won’t answer for the work of those senior to me. Himmler himself is here; *he* has a very short way of dealing with opposition.”

\*\*\*

Jim Oliver had once watched a movie called *The Heart of Evil*, featuring John Robinson as the evil super-nazi Heinrich Himmler. The actor had been tall and evil, a dark-haired image of perfect Aryan manhood. Every word had been delivered with a calm deliberation that had chilled the blood of the watching audience; Robinson had been perfect for the role, everyone said so.

In the flesh, he hadn’t known who he was looking at until Himmler introduced himself. The *Reichsführer-SS* was a short dumpy man, with golden spectacles and slender pale hands, hardly the picture of Aryan manhood. He seemed more of a schoolteacher or kindly old clergyman, squinting owlshly at Oliver, than the face of evil.

“I understand that you wish to assist us,” Himmler said. His German *sounded* odd; had Himmler had a speech defect? He couldn’t remember. “Tell me, what can you offer us?”

Oliver forced himself to remain calm. “I understand the basic principles of the technology that has fallen into your hands,” he said. He waved a hand at one of the two laptops, now drawing power from a German power generator. He was ruefully impressed; the German technicians had only burnt out two laptops before getting it right. “I also know enough about history to help you avoid mistakes.”

“One of your fellow passengers, the mulatto, is a genuine historian,” Himmler said. “I read your claims to my old friend Herman; I’m afraid I don’t believe it.”

For a moment, the veil parted and Oliver saw Himmler’s true nature, peeking out; a mind that would quite happily sacrifice the entire world for its desires. He shivered; suddenly chilled to the bone.

“Why not, *Herr Reichsführer-SS*?” He asked, as calmly as he could, knowing that Himmler knew that he knew that Himmler knew that...

The mask returned; Himmler was once again a kindly clergyman. “People do not offer to *help* a power that your computer files consider to be evil,” he said, almost kindly. Oliver cursed the unknown person who’d brought the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* CD-Rom with them. “Such a person as you made yourself out to be would not risk losing a victory, even if it left Britain in terrible problems, merely on the off-chance that *our* victory would bring improvement. Indeed, if I read your files correctly, the people who wrote them would be horrified at the thought of us winning, would they not?”

Oliver shuddered. “I imagine that you are correct, *Herr Reichsführer*,” he said. “Have you shown the files to the *Führer*?”

“I have sent him copies of some of the files,” Himmler said, as calmly as ever. The possibility of Hitler shooting the messenger didn’t seem to have occurred to him. “So, Mr Oliver, what do you really want?”

Oliver threw his chips on the table. “Money,” he said. “I represent a group of...interests in Britain that want to make money, preferably without sharing any of it with the British government...”

“Criminals,” Himmler said. Oliver shrugged. “And your criminals would be willing to help us?”

“For the right price?” Oliver asked. “Of course they would.”

“Excellent,” Himmler said. He opened his bag and brought out a transcript. “This message was intercepted from Britain and was deemed to be of importance. Tell me, what does it mean?”

Oliver skimmed down the page. “It seems to be a speech made before Parliament,” he said. He smiled. “It seems as if I was correct and all of Britain has fallen back in time.”

“I confess I am uncertain what to make of it,” Himmler said. “You will enlighten me; who is the current Prime Minister and what does he represent? What is the current status of Jewish influence? What about the Freemasons? Who is the Monarch; will he support us like the last one was supposed to?”

“The current Prime Minister is Howard Smith,” Oliver said. “He’s Conservative, but apparently a compromise candidate.” He grinned. “If you have an evening spare, I’ll give you a full rundown. There is hardly any Jewish influence within Parliament; most Jews went to Israel...”

“That *abominable* state,” Himmler burst out. The unpleasantness was back. “The State of Israel will *never* come into existence!”

Oliver shrugged, trying to appear unconcerned. “As far as I know, there are no Freemasons within the Parliament. The King is King Charles, who has been sidelined by almost all politicians and is generally expected to be removed, along with the rest of his family, should the Lib Dems ever gain power.”

“He will support us then?” Himmler asked. “We could make his role genuine.”

“I doubt it,” Oliver said. He sighed. “It seems from the speech as if you are to go to war with the future England.”

“With the information you have brought us, how can we lose?” Himmler asked. “You will be taken to proper quarters; I will have food and a woman brought to you if you want.” He waved a hand at the laptop. “You will outline a plan for contacting your allies in Britain, for which we will pay you handsomely.”

“It will be a pleasure working with you, *Herr Reichsführer*,” Oliver said. Himmler shook hands and left, trailing fear in his wake. Heedless of possible watchers, Oliver slumped to the floor.

\*\*\*

There were few people whom Heinrich Himmler considered friends. Some people, Goring, for example, were rivals within the complex power struggles of Hitler’s court. Other people, most of his subordinates for example, were clearly inferior to him; who could the *Reichsführer* be friends with from them? It was bad for discipline. Still, as far as he could, he was friendly with Roth, who’d worked with him on the Night of Long Knives. Roth hadn’t enjoyed that time; even *Reichsführer* Himmler had grown sick of the killing.

“So, tell me,” Himmler said, “do you believe that they are genuine.”

“Yes, *Herr Reichsführer*,” Roth said. Whatever their relationship, Himmler would not stand for less than the proper respect. “Now that we are picking up radio broadcasts from Britain, we really have no other choice, but to believe them.”

“The *Fuhrer* will not be pleased,” Himmler said. “Unfortunately, we have no choice, but to convince him. The files; how helpful can they be?”

Roth smiled. The *Reichsführer* had fallen in love with the small computers they’d captured. “We’ve barely begun to scratch the surface,” he said. “Unfortunately, while they are helpful in many ways – Galland believes that the aircraft companies could learn from them – many of the files seem designed for children. Long on generalities, short on the specifics we need.”

“And we cannot build more,” Himmler mused. “Not for a long time anyway. Can they be repaired?”

“I don’t think so,” Roth said. “From the list of occupations, there are no...*computer* specialists. Even if there were any, Oliver believes that without the parts, they *cannot* be repaired anyway.”

Himmler nodded absently. “This upsets our destiny, but it is a way of pointing us towards our true destiny,” he said. “We have to learn as much as we can from them, whatever the cost.”

“One of the prisoners is a historian,” Roth said carefully, deciding not to mention his skin colour for the moment. “If we were to ask him to write a blunt report...”



“For my eyes only,” Himmler snapped. Roth nodded; a report that placed blame on Hitler on down would not be well-received. “Ask him to start work at once; offer whatever you see fit, time with his wife, time with a French prostitute, anything.”

“*Jawohl, Herr Reichsführer*,” Roth said. “I shall see to it at once.”

\*\*\*

As darkness fell over France, Professor Adrian Horton lay awake, holding his wife in his arms. They’d been too scared for too long; they’d held each other like children, rather than make love in front of their children. The Nazis – he was *convinced* that it was all real – held his life in their hands, and he was all-too-aware of what the Nazis thought of black men, to say nothing of the white women who married them.

He felt a tear trickle down his cheek; Jasmine shifted in her sleep as it landed on her hair. The...assignment read like a lunatic exam question, with his life and that of his children as the prize. He was under no illusions as to how the Nazis would react to a truthful answer, even though the smooth-talking Roth had promised that the truth, no matter how personally embarrassing it was, would not be punished. Still, he’d *never* heard of Roth, which meant that Himmler, or someone else, could overrule him.

*The Question: Describe the causes and consequences of German defeat. Explain why the Germans were defeated. Suggest ways in which the defeat could be averted. Suggest ways in which the captured technology could be used to aid in that. Time period; one week. Grade; your life...*

*I’m sorry*, he thought, knowing that his decision would be regarded as treason, if he ever managed to return home. Jasmine hadn’t asked him to do anything; he was grateful for that. But, for his children’s sake, there was only one possible answer. Professor Horton mentally composed the answer, until he fell into a fitful sleep.

## **Over Nantes**

### **France**

**7<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

The Messerschmitt Bf 109 had no idea that the Eurofighter was present until a burst of cannon fire tore it apart. The Germans were deploying massive air patrols over France, but they’d failed to adapt their tactics. Dunbar whooped as she blew a second Messerschmitt into flaming debris, the other German fighters scattering away from the British planes. Sudden bursts of black smoke revealed the presence of German anti-aircraft fire, and the Eurofighters went into evasive action.

“Hit the afterburners,” Abernathy ordered, and the Eurofighters leapt forward, jumping to mach two and outrunning the scattered German planes with ease. The Tornados, so high that the German guns would have to be *very* lucky to even get close to them, followed the Eurofighters, disdaining combat.

“Right behind you, handsome,” Dunbar cheered, as the green fields of France passed underneath them. They were moving so quickly that they’d outraced the warnings that they were coming, but if the Germans managed to force them to engage at close range, they would lose most of their advantages.

“Cut the chatter,” Abernathy snapped, and regretted it. Whatever her attitude towards her male colleagues, Dunbar was a great pilot and the best wingman he’d ever had. “This is important!”

“Ah, you want to do it without talking,” Dunbar said, not a bit crushed. “I confirm that there are no enemy fighters orbiting the crash site.”

“Confirmed,” Abernathy agreed. It was odd; *he* would have placed a squadron on constant patrol. “Fox-One, it’s all yours.”

“Understood,” the voice of the Tornado pilot said. “Launching air-to-ground bombs now.”

\*\*\*

*Untersturmfuehrer* Johan Schmidt paced angrily outside the tent, pausing only to pick up his personal weapon and pack of cheap cigarettes. The strange plane which exercised so much fascination for his commanding officer was still there, still taunting the German scientists who were trying to understand it, and Schmidt spat angrily, before lighting his cigarette and taking a breath.

Seconds later, *something* screamed across the sky, and he flung himself to the ground on instinct. A small dot raced by, high overhead, with three more dots nearby. He stared at them, his ears hurting from the steadily growing racket, and then he realised that it was coming from *behind* him. He rolled over, in time to see a monstrous plane *screaming* by, so low that he could almost touch it. Slowly, mockingly, a bomb fell from the plane – or from where the plane had been – and slammed into the wreckage.

The thunderous blast picked him up and tossed him across a field and into a hedge. Schmidt screamed as his leg shattered on the ground, blood pouring from countless small cuts, and he fell to the ground, keeping his senses by force of will alone. Darkness blurred the edges of his vision, before he focused on the flames. The entire camp, including the crashed aircraft and the scientists, had been devastated.

*Mein Gott*, he thought, as he finally blacked out. There was nothing left of the plane at all, just burning wreckage. *What the hell did they hit us with?*

## Chapter Seven: The Green and Pleasant Land

Gibraltar Naval Base

**Gibraltar**

**8<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

Neither the Italians nor the French had quite mastered the art of bombing, Vice-Admiral Somerville considered, although at least in the French case there was some reason to expect them to be reluctant to damage the military that was their only hope for freedom from Hitler. Still, he supposed that they had every right to be a little annoyed about part of their fleet being destroyed, even though the danger of it falling into German hands was too great.

*We would have understood*, Somerville thought numbly, as the results of the ineffectual bombing raids were cleared up. The Rock was as strong as it had been before, with its tough rocky caves protecting its population and its military stores. His force, Force H, had had to be spared from the defence of Britain; three battleships, one battlecruiser, one carrier and a number of smaller ships waited in the shadow of the Rock. He looked upon the monstrous ships - *Hood*, *Resolution*, *Valiant*, *Ark Royal* and two cruisers – and shuddered. Two days ago, the cable link with England had simply and inexplicably failed, and the radio transmissions made no sense at all.

He'd discussed the matter with Admiral Cunningham, who commanded the Mediterranean Fleet, but they hadn't been able to come to any conclusion. He'd ordered a destroyer dispatched to England, and ordered the fleet prepared to return to England if necessary. Visions of a German invasion danced through his mind; Germans having slipped fifth columnists into England, throwing open the gates to Hitler. But how could they have shut down the cable?

"Admiral," a voice called from behind him. Somerville turned to see a young Gibraltar rating, too young to shave, running up to him. The rating saluted and passed him a sheet of paper; it was a message directly from the Admiralty in London, using the proper codes.

*Admiral Somerville, hold position in the Mediterranean. Some unusual naval units are being dispatched and will rendezvous with you in two days. Be alert for German attacks; they have attacked Britain through the air and have been beaten off with heavy losses. Acknowledge.*

There was something about the message that felt odd. It was as if whoever was sending the signal wasn't fully aware of the code phases; in fact, as if they hadn't had any training in signals at all. Hesitating, Somerville made his decision; he would obey the orders, while asking Admiral Cunningham to prepare the eastern fleet. With *Warspite*, *Malaya* and *Ramillies*, they would be covered long enough to meet the '*unusual naval units*,' whatever they were.

**Nr Dublin**

**Ireland**

**8<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

Ambassador Ruairi Heekin watched grimly as the aerodrome came into view, the British helicopter skimming over the land. Ireland awaited him; a land of green hills and terrifying

familiarly. It hit him suddenly that he would never see his family again; his parents had been born in 1950. He'd worked hard for the post of Ambassador to Britain – Ireland's friend and enemy, often at the same time – and his reward had been to lose it all forever.

A tear appeared in his eyes. Fiona, his wife, had been expecting their second child when he'd been posted to Britain. She had insisted on returning to Ireland for the birth and he'd promised to go visit her, next week and seventy-five years in the future.

"I'm sorry for your loss," Hanover said. Heekin nodded as politely as he could; Hanover had been one of the supporters of blockading Ireland – even invading it – until terror suspects were handed over during the short-lived resurgence of terrorism during 2012. "You could always go meet your parents or grandparents."

"They wouldn't know me," Heekin said. "What could I tell them?"

"The truth," Hanover suggested. "Perhaps the bit about deploying the SAS to Ireland, to round up known terrorists."

"People who have not *yet* joined any terrorist group," Heekin said. He understood Hanover's point; the Britain of 2015 knew *everything* about their Irish opponents, taking the opportunity to round them up had been irresistible. "That is of questionable legality."

"Under DORA, suspects can be held without trial if necessary," Hanover said. "Of course, seeing we can do without a repeat of the Troubles, we can make him a fine offer."

As the helicopter came in for its final approach, Heekin fell silent. He knew who *he* was; the Prime Minister of Ireland, loved or hated by all. The man who'd walked a tightrope between two warring powers. The man who'd made Ireland a republic.

Taoiseach Eamon de Valera...

*He is that tall*, he thought, as the very familiar figure stepped forward. For a moment, he thought of grabbing the flight officer's sidearm. With one bullet, he could put things right. It was more than that man deserved. No, there was work to be done; he'd spent years cursing Ireland's long and troubled history, exploited by the EU to keep them compliant, to pass up the chance to change things.

De Valera stepped forward, holding out his hand to Heekin, who flinched inwardly. De Valera wasn't the first killer he'd shaken hands with, nor the first to be turned into a politician. He could see the bafflement in the Irish Prime Minister's face, how much did he know? Did he know that Britain had changed overnight? Did he hear the Prime Minister's speech before Parliament?

"You are not the ambassador I appointed to London," De Valera said, his voice softer, less accented, than Heekin had expected. "Who are you people?"

Hanover stepped forward brusquely and offered De Valera his hand. "Sir Charles Hanover, Home Secretary," he introduced himself. Heekin, still reeling from having been identified as the ambassador, ignored what he suspected had been intended as a deliberate insult.

De Valera tilted his head, leading them into a small comfortable house. “The British Home Secretary is Sir John Anderson,” he said. “Mr Hanover, what the hell has happened?”

\*\*\*

Hanover allowed Ambassador Heekin to begin the explanation, waiting for the Irishman to finish, before expounding on his own negotiations. He’d ordered the IRA to be swept up before they even knew that everything had changed, and he wanted to force De Valera into a proper agreement *before* the Irishman started to panic. De Valera wasn’t asking bad questions; mainly ones concerned with the future history and future Ireland. The man seemed to have decided to believe.

“I wish to get one matter out of the way first,” he said in careful Irish, once Heekin had finished a basic explanation of what had happened. “I wish to apologise, for Cromwell, for William of Orange, for the Easter Rising and various attempts to hold you down.”

He smiled at De Valera’s face; he hadn’t wanted to give any apology, but it had been necessary. His staff almost lost themselves, hearing an Englishman speak their native tongue, let alone apologise for *anything*. De Valera himself seemed to be having difficulty focusing on him; the man was going blind. The medical science of 2015 could cure his eyesight, but unless De Valera cooperated...

“In effect, as Taoiseach Brennan’s Ambassador has confirmed, we are stuck here and are about to engage in the war that our ancestors fought,” he said. “That gives us certain...opportunities, and certain problems. One of them, I’m afraid, is you.”

He waited for De Valera to begin to protest, and then cut him off. “Quite frankly, as I just said, we do feel that a lot of mistakes were made, on both sides. *We* have put them behind us and we hope that you will be able to do the same. We wish to make a deal with you...”

“Then why are you purging Ulster?” De Valera asked, interrupting him in turn. “You have swept up thousands of innocents...”

“Most of whom were IRA people, or *would* be IRA people,” Hanover said. “The offer is simple; we will offer you a complete and united Ireland, which is what you wanted, is it not?” He smiled at De Valera’s reaction. “We know *everything* about you; we have all the benefits of hindsight. We don’t want Erie and we don’t want Northern Ireland; Ulster in your lexicon. You can have it, free and clear, on certain conditions. We will also allow any citizens of the 2015 Ireland who happen to have been in Britain to move back to Ireland, should you want them. We will respect your neutrality in the war, although we will expect you to be neutral in fact, as well as in name.

“After the war, we will accept Ireland into the new organisation we hope to build out of the remains of the British Empire,” he continued. He heard the intake of breath on the Irish side; they hadn’t yet become contaminated by video cameras that made any utterance from a politician eternally recorded. “In exchange, we want some things from you.”

He sensed De Valera nerving himself up to refuse, knowing that it might well mean his death. “We want you to send us all the beef, fish and other foodstuffs that you can spare,” he said. “We want you to give the Protestants...say, two counties and autonomy, but still as part of Ireland. We would *like* you not to have an immediate civil war over the issue, particularly

since we will be repatriating all the...contemporary English personnel, but – quite frankly – that’s up to you. We won’t interfere.”

De Valera stared owlishly at him. “Is that all?” He asked. He sounded disbelieving. “All you want?”

“Yes,” Hanover said, knowing that De Valera was playing for time. He made it easy for him. “I imagine that you would like to discuss this with Ambassador Heekin, so if you don’t mind I’ll return to the helicopter and call home to report.”

\*\*\*

Heekin felt sick. *It’s my turn now*, he thought grimly. He was facing a man long dead, a man hated or loved by Irishmen. He knew what he was about to do; he understood the irony of his position. At his request, De Valera ordered the room completely cleared; it was just the two of them. The great man of history and the man from the future.

“Taoiseach, I know,” he said. “I know everything. I know the only thing you achieved during Easter week was not being shot by your own men. I know; you lost the run of yourself in 1922. I know you stabbed Collins in the back over the treaty. I know you regret it. I know about your fine wee secretary, who kept you company in the USA. I know you’ll never go there, because once you step off the plane - I mean boat - the yanks will have you for embezzlement.”

He twisted the knife, hating himself and hating Hanover. “I know your son is about to develop a method for making contraceptives work,” he said. “That will go down well with His Grace, I expect. I know about your cousins in Cuba; what did their mother do for a living?

“One word from me to the Irish...residents in Britain and everyone from Cork to Donegal hears about it,” he said. “I know what you want. I know; you don’t want any part of the war and I know you don’t want a Million Protestants in Ireland. I know that you’re going blind and they can cure that, over there, in Britain now. They can even help with the nerves that you’ve been so careful to keep a secret. They’ll make a farm in County Down richer than Park Avenue, all for just potatoes and bacon.

“I know the constitution you wrote better than you do,” he said, watching De Valera carefully. “I can get the required signatures and put everything to the people. I know where to find a judge who will swear a warrant out charging you for Collins murder. I know where to find the guards who will serve it, the remains of O’Duffy’s men.

“I know once the Mother church sees what the English have to offer; a chance to take the lead in the global church, they will dump you like a sack of potatoes. They’ll abandon you, they’ll burn you at the stake; they’ll denounce you as a wrecker. I know that you’re bankrupt, what just happened to your largest market, and to the money being sent back to Dublin, in postal orders and letters. I know...”

“Enough,” De Valera snapped. “What is the point of all this!”

“I know your place in history,” Heekin said. “It’s tarnished. I am offering your absolution, your penance, like any good priest. I am not asking you, I am telling you; you will sign the

treaty that the English brought with them. They mean you no harm, for *Ireland* is not their country; it's mine. Don't be afraid of the English Taoiseach De Valera, they can only kill you. I can destroy you."

Heekin allowed himself a moment to catch his breath. De Valera was breathing hard, trying to pretend that he was blackmailed every second day, but Heekin could see through the pretence. "Don't worry," he said, "you're going to be a hero. You're finally going to create the united Ireland you dreamed of, a richer nation that you ever could have imagined. The name Omagh means something to me, it will never to you.

"Now, sign, for Ireland!"

\*\*\*

Hanover allowed himself a smile as De Valera signed the treaty. It had been a gamble, relying on Ambassador Heekin, but how many men were ever given the chance to meddle in the history of their own country?

"Thank you, Mr President," he said, absently.

**BBC Studios**  
**London, United Kingdom**  
**8<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

A faint air of unreality had settled over the BBC and the other British news organisations. In one way, the...transition had helped the BBC; there were no longer any American channels beaming down to steal their viewers. On the other hand, the elaborate world service network of reporters had vanished. History programs – and episodes of *Doctor Who* – had become popular literally overnight; libraries were reporting record reservations for books on the Second World War.

"The Ministry of Defence confirmed today that the RAF struck a target in Occupied France," Kristy Stewart said, as the red light came on. The backdrop, computer generated, displayed a map of France as it had been – was – in 1940. "The official statement confirmed that at least one British Airlines aircraft came down in France, and was discovered by the Germans. The crew and passengers must be considered prisoners of the Nazis; and the MOD has appealed for relatives of the passengers to contact them at once, contact details on their websites.

"There have been another run of suicides," she said, as the backdrop changed to a house in Kensington. "A handful of American tourists, stranded well away from their families, committed suicide this morning. Their mother, described as a distressed person on therapy, apparently poisoned the entire family. Although the police are investigating, they believe that she was the sole agent and the case is not being treated as an unsolved murder enquiry.

"The handful of survivors of the holocaust and their relativities have been picketing the Houses of Parliament and demanding immediate action – up to and including the use of nuclear weapons – to end the holocaust before it has even fairly begun. Parliament remains in closed session, debating the legalities of a declaration of war, despite the fact that skirmishes have been occurring on a regular basis since transition.

The image shifted to a burned out street in Brixton. “The sudden freeze in all dole payments infuriated members of the poor and ethnic populations, who rioted against the government today. The Police, backed up by an army unit sent in under the invoked DORA act, crushed the rioters, who were arrested and jailed in temporary camps. While the Brixton MPs reportedly criticised the actions of the police, local community leaders applauded. A number of fundamentalist preachers of several different sects have been arrested and jailed.

“Although there have been some anti-conscription rumbles, the general mood on the street seems to be one of acceptance,” she said. “A large number of dolists have begun receiving basic army training at a training camp, and army spokesmen expect thousands more to begin in a week. For many of those young men, this will be their first taste of real discipline, to say nothing of good food and health care.”

The scene changed again; units of the royal navy were heading out to sea. “A Royal Navy task force, under Admiral Turtledove, has departed, apparently to make contact with contemporary British forces in the Mediterranean. This force, led by HMS Ark Royal, and including HMS Exeter, HMS Southampton, HMS Nottingham, HMS Portland and HMS St Albans, as well as several minesweeping and submarine vessels, will skirt German-held France and fascist Spain, before making contact at Gibraltar.”

She ran through the final item, a report on two of the crashed Germans being rounded up, before concluding with the weather report. As the theme tune for *Eastenders* – the plot writers hadn’t managed to alter the script to adapt to the new conditions yet – began to play, she turned to her producer, Baron Edmund.

“Sir,” she said, “I think that we should be taking more advantage of the situation.”

Edmund looked up at her. She’d often wondered if he was gay; he never seemed to react to her considerable charms. Most of the time, she enjoyed being treated as one of the guys, but when she wanted something, it was a pain.

“Like what?” He asked thoughtfully. “We don’t have a global network anymore, you know.”

Stewart nodded. “We have people alive today who died a long time before our industry was properly developed,” she said. “We could record their words for posterity.”

“Such as whom?” Edmund asked. “Who do you have in mind?”

Stewart grinned. “There are so many possibilities; Roosevelt, Truman, Wallace...Hitler, Stalin...”

“You want to interview *Hitler*? *Stalin*?” Edmund asked. “Are you *crazy*?”

“I’m sure that he will respect journalistic neutrality,” Stewart said.

“Well, I’m not,” Edmund snapped. “This isn’t a safe world; you don’t have the force of the military behind you, and the Foreign Office would never allow it!” He scowled. “For once I agree with them; Nazi Germany is not a safe place.”



“But you have friends, contacts, allies,” Stewart protested. “Boss, think of the ratings...”

“I’ll think about it,” Edmund said finally. Stewart grinned; she knew she’d won.

## Chapter Eight: *Felsennest*

*Felsennest*

Germany

9<sup>th</sup> July 1940

Roth took a breath as the car pulled up inside the compound, the SS troops surrounding *Felsennest* – the headquarters of Adolf Hitler – carrying out a careful check on his documents. The beautiful house, set within the woods of West Germany, had been Hitler's headquarters during the battles for France, and had been intended to serve as his base for the coming invasion of Britain.

Himmler himself had stepped out to meet him, saluting him with a brisk precision that seemed somewhat exaggerated. Roth saluted back smartly, then was surprised as Himmler extended a hand and shook it firmly.

"Reporting as ordered, *Herr Reichsführer*," Roth said. "I have the document prepared for us by the black professor."

"Excellent," Himmler said. "Come with me, and we'll discuss it inside."

Roth saluted again and followed Himmler into a small chalet set near the main house. The SS guards were everywhere; he understood that *Felsennest* would make a very clear target for the super-planes that the future British could deploy. The attack on the remains of the British aircraft had been a very clear demonstration of their power, and their ability to find objects on the ground.

"It did not please the *Führer* to lose the aircraft," Himmler remarked conversationally as he led the way into his office. An SS guard checked Roth's papers and took his sidearm, before leaving them alone together. "Indeed, he was quick to place blame on the *Luffwaffe*. Combined with the reports from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, our fat friend has been elevated to great heights while his subordinates do the real work. For the moment, control of all the future technology is firmly in our hands."

He smiled; Roth suddenly understood why Himmler looked so pleased. Only a handful of Germans had been mentioned in the electronic resource, at least they'd only found a handful, but all of them had been printed out and distributed around the *Reich*. Himmler had been shocked to learn that he would commit suicide, five years from today.

"Has the *Führer* seen the reports?" Roth asked. "If Galland is correct, we have to adapt ourselves as quickly as possible; we need to mobilise and prepare for a very different war."

"The *Führer* has seen many of the reports," Himmler said. The unspoken message was clear; there were some that the *Führer* had not seen. "We seem to have to use Jews to have any chance at all at making an atomic bomb. We will not discuss that matter – with *anyone*! It would only upset them."

"*Jawohl, Herr Reichsführer*," Roth said, refusing to smile at the joke. It could be so easily construed as disloyalty.

“You will take over the project to build an atomic bomb,” Himmler said. “The *Fuhrer* himself has ordered it. You will have complete authority to conscript all atomic scientists, including Jews and...Slavs, should there be any. Fortunately, the basic principles are outlined in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, along with those of rocketry. Your second task, just as important, is to ensure that any useful information is distributed to the correct people, from medical information to rocket scientists.”

His eyes focused in on Roth with uncanny and unnerving speed. “Inform me; what have you done so far?”

“A handful of the prisoners, including the pilots of the aircraft, are being removed even as we speak to the aircraft development companies, both Professor Messerschmitt and Professor Heinkel were astounded to hear of the discovery, as was Udet. We can expect some breakthroughs. A handful of other prisoners, with the exception of Professor Horton and his family, have also been distributed to places where their knowledge can be used; a doctor, two nurses, a farmer and a political scientist, whatever that is.

“We recovered a printer and several of what Oliver calls ‘ink cartridges’ from the wreck, and we’ve been printing out as much as we can,” he said. “Fortunately, duplicating the ink – at least the black ink – was a simple matter; a French factory was able to produce as much as we might desire, although the quality has fallen sharply. Eventually, Oliver warns us that something will break and the laptops will become useless, but we’ve copied some of the files to the other laptops and we’ll start sending them around the *Reich*.”

Himmler smiled. “You seem to have become very used to using the technology,” he said. The gentle bonhomie was back. “Do you feel that you will master it?”

Roth grinned, allowing his enthusiasm to show. “*Herr Reichsführer*, a child could *use* the laptops; they are so simple. Once we duplicate some of the technology, we will be unbeatable...”

Himmler cut him off. “As you know, we intercepted a broadcast from Britain – and a new one from Ambassador Hempel, in Ireland,” he said. “*Herr* Hempel reports that a delegation from the new Britain visited Ireland, and they are apparently planning to continue the war. Some of their radio broadcasts are quite alarming; they seem to lump us, Hideki Tojo and Stalin together, despite the Japanese Prime Minister being Fumimaro Konoe.”

“They do seem to go through Prime Ministers at an astounding rate,” Roth observed. “*Herr Reichsführer*, have you informed the Japanese ambassador?”

“It is a shame that they recalled Hiroshi Oshima,” Himmler said. “I have had a brief discussion with the current ambassador, but he was sceptical.” He made a disgusted face. “We may have to pass him one of the laptops, and copies of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.”

“*Jawohl, Herr Reichsführer*,” Roth said, knowing that objections would be futile. “Might I enquire as to when I will be meeting with the *Fuhrer*?”

“Later today,” Himmler said. “Now, what did the esteemed Field Marshall have to say?”

Roth nodded to himself. General Kesselring had been ordered, directly from Berlin – which meant Hitler himself – to prepare a plan for countering the future Britain. Roth had, with some reluctance, given up most of the books on the future war in Iraq – and had even let him ask Oliver some questions.

“He said that the situation appeared more promising than it seemed at first glance,” he said. Himmler looked relieved. “While we are far weaker than we were, we might have some advantages, not least weight of numbers. Still, we really need more information – more precise data.”

Himmler nodded. “Do you have a plan to get the information, *Standartenfuhrer*?”

Roth winced internally at the far from subtle reminder of his low rank. “We need to make contact with Oliver’s associates,” he said. “They have to get us information – genuinely useful information – that will help us to adapt as quickly as we can. Oliver believes that they – the future British – will have problems of their own, but they can adapt to it. We have a window of opportunity to take what they have for the *Reich*, but a very short one.”

\*\*\*

“We have been shown our destiny, have we?” Adolf Hitler, *Fuhrer* of the Greater German *Reich*, pronounced. “We have been shown, not our destiny, but a possible future – *if* we lose our strength and will! We have been shown a glimpse of a possible future, where Europe groans under the slavery of the French and the Russians, of a future where all the virtues of the German *Volk* are crushed!

“Providence has shown us the way forward,” he thundered, his voice rising. “With our inflexible will, we will adapt to the future; the menace of godless soviet communism and the insidious menace of the Jews will be crushed instead!”

Jim Oliver didn’t dare look at his watch. The *Fuhrer* was speaking and had been speaking for nearly an hour, thundering about Jewish plots that had brought down the *Reich* – and completely ignoring the fact that it had been *him* who’d given the fatal orders; not to invade Britain, not to press the advantage in the North African campaign, to launch an ill-prepared invasion of Russia, to stand at Stalingrad...

“With the application of German will and power, we will crush this Jewish future,” he bellowed. “With our window into the future, we will prevail!”

His face shifted rapidly as he sat down. Beside him, a fat man clapped noisily, his medals rattling on his ample chest; Herman Goring, head of the *Luffwaffe*, and now one of the senior Party officials. Around the table, Kesselring, Raeder, Jodl, Manstein and a handful of people he didn’t recognise, listened carefully and raptly. He felt almost as if he had fallen into a snake pit; the *Wehrmacht* officers eyed the *Luffwaffe* officers as if they were at war with *them*, rather than the British and associated minor governments-in-exile. Absently, he wondered what had happened to DeGaulle; had he been on the 1940 Britain when it vanished?

Hitler poked with a single finger at the laptop. “Is there any *Jewish* science in this?” He demanded, fixing Oliver with his gaze. He shivered; Hitler’s stare wasn’t hostile, it was darkly compelling, inviting him to share in a glorious crusade into darkness. Himmler,

however, had carefully briefed him first; there were certain subjects that were never to be mentioned in front of Hitler.

“No, *Mein Fuhrer*,” Oliver said, hoping his voice was steady. “The basic systems were developed in America and...”

“And why were German technicians not involved?” Hitler interrupted.

Oliver coughed; Hitler seemed to have a gift for focusing on the...*uncomfortable* subjects. Still, he knew the slant on history that would most focus Hitler’s mind. “Germany lost the war, *Mein Fuhrer*,” he said, and the room seemed to fall even quieter. “By the time that German industry had recovered, the French had ensnared it in a web of bureaucracy that strangled German industry; it had become impossible to progress to match the Japanese, let alone the Americans.”

“See the fate that we can avert,” Hitler bellowed, returning to the room. Oliver felt as if the angel of death had passed over him. His voice hardened. “We *will* avert it, whatever the cost, whatever the burden.”

The room seemed hopeful; their *Fuhrer* had spoken. Oliver watched them carefully; some believed in Hitler, as if he was a Prophet of some dark god, others were only interested in their own power and positions. “Field Marshall?”

At Hitler’s command, Field Marshall General Kesselring stood up, moving to one side of a podium. An SS guard glared without seeming to glare at the *Wehrmacht* officer, before moving aside and unfurling the maps and plans. The coast of Britain was marked clearly; the range of British aircraft, old and new, were marked. The Germans knew so little; an interrogation of Captain Sidney Jackson had produced some details on the British defences, but hardly enough to plan a war on. Oliver scowled; the first German assault would get a bloody nose, and then they’d need him and his people more than ever.

“*Mein Fuhrer*,” Kesselring said. Goring looked insanely delighted to see the General; Oliver wished, not for the first time, that he’d studied the Nazis more than he had. Professor Horton might have been able to tell him, but he’d been left behind in France.

“The enemy is extremely powerful,” Kesselring said flatly. “He is armed with sophisticated missiles and precision weapons that are capable of targeting targets *anywhere* within the Third *Reich*. However, they are weak at sea and on the ground; their tanks may well be better than ours – it is logical to assume that they would be so – but they almost certainly don’t have as many of them as we do. In pure numbers, they are only a little stronger than us at sea, with few deployable ships. In effect, we cannot do more than launch air raids at them – although the threat of an invasion will concentrate their minds – and they cannot get at us, although they can bomb us quite severely.”

*With the exception of nuclear weapons*, Oliver thought, and shuddered. He didn’t expect that the weak Prime Minister the British had would drop the Bomb, but he was mortally certain that there would be some within the British establishment who would be more than happy to do just that. Atomics was another uncomfortable subject.

Kesselring smiled at his audience. "For all their power, they have vulnerabilities," he said. "One of their aircraft and pilots – and their weapons – takes far longer to build than one of ours. They will require massive imports of food and drink – and they don't have the navy to escort it. They have suddenly acquired an empire; will they act to defend it?"

He lifted up one sheet on the board and removed it. "We will launch bombing raids against them, trying to draw out the future RAF so it will be forced to fight on our terms," he said. "We will cancel the plans for the massive battleships and deploy as many submarines as we can against their shipping. Most of all, we will force them to fight on as many fronts as we can, draining their stockpile of modern weapons.

"The combined command therefore urges that we support as best as we can Mussolini's adventure in Egypt, with special attention being given to taking Malta and Gibraltar, therefore preventing any linkage between the old and new British. Advancing on the Middle East would also deprive them of their supplies of oil; they have to be thinking now about how to secure them for the future.

"We should also warn the Japanese that they have a window of opportunity to start snapping up British possessions in the Far East, threatening Australia."

He spoke on. "Invasion is probably not a realistic option," he said, "although, as I said, we should attempt to convince them that we have that in mind. At best, assuming that nothing goes wrong, we can put a maximum of 10'000 men on the shore – and that assumes that they let us do so. However, if they feel forced to watch us, they will not be able to aid the rest of the world."

Oliver sat back and listened. It was rare to meet a genuinely first-class mind. Of course, it missed out on some of the most important points, but it would buy Germany time. Time was what they needed most of all.

\*\*\*

"Do you have an opinion," Roth asked, after the meeting was finished. Hitler had praised Kesselring, Himmler and even Roth himself after Kesselring's presentation.

Oliver smiled. "It shows a grasp of strategic thinking that dwarfs mine," he said. "Only one thought; have people take pictures of dead children after the bombing raid and have them sent to the British reporters, many of whom will demand to come visit."

"Really," Roth said, a little doubtfully. He switched to English. "If you say so," he said. His English was improving. "Why would they want to?"

"Reporters have become a plague on the military since the Vietnam War," Oliver said. "Never mind where Vietnam is," he said, noticing Roth's puzzlement, "the fact is that they'll be looking for stories and if you treat them well, they will affect public opinion in your favour."

*Not bloody likely*, he thought. "Did Professor Horton help with drafting Kesselring's plan?"

Roth didn't answer directly. "We need information," he said. "Books; technical journals, even more of the silver discs."

“CDs,” Oliver said. “Information on history, and technical developments, I assume?”

“Indeed,” Roth said. “Tell me, is there any way we could slip you back into England?”

“You want me to collect the books?” Oliver asked. He scowled. “The only reasonable way is to offer to repatriate some of the passengers, such as the children, and return me with them.”

Roth lifted an eyebrow. “You think fast,” he said, approvingly. “And say that you all drew straws to see which of the adults would be returned?”

“Yep,” Oliver said. “We can’t return any other adults; they might well know that I agreed to work for you.” He grinned. “You’d be astonished at how many places I’ve smuggled stuff out of, mainly things people don’t want other people to have.”

“A smuggler as well, then,” Roth said. He sounded faintly disapproving. “How much do you think you could smuggle to us?”

“I’m still thinking about that,” Oliver said. “A submarine might be the best bet; they’re still using fishing boats, aren’t they?” Roth shrugged. “It makes sense,” Oliver said. “The fishing will be better than it has been for years. If a u-boat goes to a pre-arranged spot, say two weeks from my return, we can meet up and transfer stuff over.”

Roth nodded. “It seems a workable idea,” he said. “Tell me; what do you think they’ll do with Ireland?”

Oliver chuckled. “If I was them, I’d swear blind that they had nothing to do with it,” he said. “Ireland was something of a mixed blessing to Britain after the war.” He scowled. “You could raid the Orkneys, I suppose.”

Roth stared at him. “Britain’s largest naval base is in the Orkneys,” he snapped. “Have you lost your mind?”

“It’s not there any longer,” Oliver said. He paused. “Unless the...time slip, whatever it was, missed the Orkneys.”

“We’ll see if we can get a recon flight up,” Roth said. “We’ve bombed the place several times, and slipped a submarine in once.”

“Tell the pilot to stay as low as he can to evade radar detection,” Oliver said, who’d used that technique to smuggle certain substances into America. “A high-flying plane will be an easy target.”

Roth smiled weakly. “I’ll have to talk it over with the *Reichsführer*,” he said, “but it seems as if the main air battle will begin in two weeks. We’ll offer to return you and the children a day before the battle begins; the diversion should be helpful to you.”

Oliver nodded. Roth left, leaving Oliver to study the map. He smiled to himself; he’d left a great deal out of the explanation. He hadn’t mentioned that trying to bring down an AWACS

aircraft, like the American ones that had hunted him in Central America, would be a sure way to degrade the British air defences. After all, a world where the Nazis won would be a grim place indeed.

*I just have to get my money out of it and then I can go*, he thought, and smiled. The prostitute, Jeanette, whom he'd been introduced to in France had been brought with him, but he wasn't allowed to have her in his rooms at Hitler's base. Wondering if the Germans would be smart enough to pick new bases, places that the future British knew nothing about, he lay down on the bed and fell into a fitful sleep.



## Chapter Nine: Past Tense

### HMS *Ark Royal*

#### Gibraltar

11<sup>th</sup> July 1940

Force H was drawn up near the Rock, waiting for the meeting, although none of them knew precisely what to expect. Rumour, based on the information that the commanding officer of the 'unusual naval units' was going to land on the *Ark Royal*, expected that the units were new carriers, perhaps a secret project of some kind.

Vice-Admiral Somerville peered into the clear sky with his binoculars. The Italians had stepped up their ineffectual air attacks on Malta, under German pressure. A captured Italian airman, shot down by one of the Gladiator aircraft, had reported that the Germans were preparing for moving operations to the Mediterranean – and that they'd already moved some troops into Italy for moves against Malta. In the absence of directions from London, Somerville had asked General Wavell to spare some troops for the defence of Malta; losing the island would make interdicting the Italian supply lines even harder than they already were. Wavell had refused; the rumblings in Egypt, claiming that Britain had been successfully invaded by the Germans, required the presence of British troops to stiffen the wavering government. The Italians were moving up to the border, clearly intending an invasion.

*There!* He could see ships on the horizon; large ships and small ships. One of them was clearly an aircraft carrier, the others smaller; there didn't seem to be any battleships at all. He stared; even at the several miles distant he could see that they were very different; the carrier in particular seemed to be more...advanced than the *Ark Royal*, which was old and damaged by the encounter with French aircraft. The other ships seemed...frail; they moved through the water with a graceful competence.

"Submarine," a watchman shouted, as a dark shape moved through the water, heading away from them. German or Italian, it could hardly be intending hostility if it was surfacing, and then he could see the British flag on its conning tower.

"Dear god," he breathed. The French had produced a single 'submarine cruiser,' the *Surcouf*, but the new submarine dwarfed it. He could make out its name; HMS *Splendid*. "At least it's a British ship," he said.

"Admiral, look," Captain Holland said. Somerville ignored the breach in protocol and lifted his binoculars. The strange aircraft carrier was launching an aircraft, a strange craft shaped like a dragonfly. It hovered over the new carrier for a long moment – he wondered if something had gone wrong – and then it swooped away from its home ship, heading towards the *Ark Royal*.

"Good God," Somerville said, as the details became clearer. The craft closed in rapidly; it bore a British flag on its nose and weapons hanging from tiny struts. The crew of the British carrier stared at it as its shape floated casually over the flight deck and came to a hover in midair, before settling down onto the deck.

“Keep back,” a voice bellowed. It was oddly accented; almost American. “You must not go near the rotating blades!”

Now that the blades were slowing down, Somerville could *see* them; powerful blades whipping through the air and providing lift. He’d seen plans for something like the craft, now it was at rest, but there had been no hint that they were ready to fly. There were so many...oddities; what were the strange bombs it carried? How did it drop them? Most chilling of all was the name beneath the craft’s number; *HMS Ark Royal*.

\*\*\*

Admiral Harold Turtledove hated his dress uniform. It looked good, even with the additional European flag signifying his two years service with EUROFOR, with dark jacket, dark trousers and a peaked cap. Gold braid denoted his rank and service history, with little badges and his medals from Operation Telic, but the entire uniform was uncomfortable as anything; he would almost have preferred to meet the past naked.

*Cousin Harry would have loved to see this*, he thought, as the helicopter touched down neatly on the other *Ark Royal*’s deck; meeting his ship’s predecessor had been a shock. *This Ark Royal* was due to be sunk, he remembered; a submarine would finally make the oft-repeated claim of its sinking true. Somehow, he’d expected to see a black-and-white carrier; the brilliant grey hull with coloured aircraft seemed somehow unnatural. It had been one of the first purpose-built aircraft carriers; it could be adapted to support Harriers quite easily, if necessary.

“Time to go,” he said, and Captain Townley nodded. The contemporary captain had adapted surprisingly well to the future Britain, learning as much as he could in the two days he’d had before being asked to help explain the situation to Admiral Somerville. Not all of his crew had; there had already been several nasty incidents in Plymouth.

The crewman opened the hatch of the helicopter and he climbed out, ducking low under the helicopter blades. Silently, he blessed the still water; the deck felt a great deal less safe than his own ship’s deck. The faint air of unreality hung over the past – current – ship; the crew watched him warily. Wearing his own dress uniform, Captain Townley followed him, while his Marine escort and bodyguard hung back.

Admiral Somerville stepped forward. Turtledove recognised him from a picture he’d downloaded; he gave an impression of calm scholarly determination. Somerville had worked on radar, he remembered, and he hoped that he would listen. This meeting was as important as any he’d ever attended – and it *had* to be peaceful.

He saluted once, noting the slight differences between their uniforms, and began. “Admiral Harold Turtledove,” he introduced himself. “Commander of Task Force Reunion.”

Somerville’s head tilted; his eyes narrowed. “There is no Admiral Turtledove within the navy,” he said. “Who *are* you?”

Turtledove sighed. “It might help you to learn that I joined the navy in 1997, and received my Admiral’s rank in 2012, Admiral Somerville.” He paused for breath. “Admiral, there’s no easy way to say this, but my fleet is from the future.”

Somerville looked up at the helicopter. He had served in research departments; he had an open mind. Still, it was a hard fact to grasp...

"Your fleet is from the future," he said finally. "Are you responsible for what happened to the cable, or to the big transmitters in London?"

"Not exactly," Turtledove said, wishing that they were alone, rather than every rating on the flight deck listening in. "Admiral, we don't know what happened...but all of Britain came through the time warp."

There was a long moment of dead silence. "Impossible," Somerville said finally.

"It's true," Captain Townley said. "I've been to their Britain; its fantastic and strange. Sir, Admiral, we *win the war!*"

"I never doubted it," Somerville said. On the deck, the crew were smiling openly; their relief evident. Turtledove knew that he was about to shatter it. "You have something else you want to say, Admiral?"

Turtledove quietly cursed his perceptions. "Admiral, whatever's happened to our Britain, we displaced your Britain. Admiral, all your friends and family, whoever was on Britain that fateful night...they're all gone."

\*\*\*

Somerville felt as if he'd been punched in the gut. Several of the crew were crying; others were staring about them, unable to comprehend what had happened. He wasn't sure if he wanted to believe or not; did he have a choice?

"My family?" He asked finally. The strange new Admiral nodded grimly. "All gone?"

"I'm afraid so," Turtledove said. "Everyone we knew outside Britain itself is gone."

"All lost together then," Somerville said. He fought down his fear and horror with all the discipline of years in the Navy; his crews would need him. "Admiral, how will people react?"

"Badly, I'd imagine," Turtledove said. "Admiral, I have orders to assist you in defending what Britain holds now, but I have to wait for orders before launching any strikes against Italy."

Somerville glared at him; anger finally bursting out of his soul. "In God's name, why won't you join us in attacking Italy?" He demanded. "We might have lost the war now that you're here, and...oh God, how will the crews react?"

Turtledove looked compassionate. "Politicians," he said, making the word a curse. "They're still arguing about if they're actually at war with Nazi Germany or not."

Somerville stared at him. "I assure you that they are," he said, a cold edge of anger entering his voice. "The Germans are preparing an invasion of Malta, and the Italians are pushing into Egypt."

Turtledove's eyes narrowed. "That's not supposed to happen until the 12<sup>th</sup> of September," he said. "Their logistics must be dreadful; still, they were pretty bad in the first time around."

Somerville felt a flicker of pure anger. "Are you going to be flippant all the time?" He demanded. "We're fighting for our lives here..."

"I don't mean to be flippant," Turtledove said seriously. "I expect that a formal declaration of war will come soon. For the moment, however..."

He broke off as a ringing tone emitted from a device at his belt. "Excuse me," he said, and lifted the device to his mouth. "Yes?"

"Sir, this is Captain Allan," a voice said. Somerville realised that it was a kind of radio. "There are seven aircraft on the way here, coming from Algeria."

"French Algeria," Somerville muttered.

"They lose it in twenty years or thereabouts," Turtledove said absently. He looked up, suddenly serious. "Do you want to see what we can do?"

Somerville nodded, even as Captain Holland started to issue orders to prepare for an air raid. "Don't bother," Turtledove said, lifting the radio to his mouth again. "Captain, order one of the ships to take them down, using missiles."

"Aye, sir," Captain Allan said. Turtledove pointed to the tiny fleet; Somerville realised that there were fewer ships present than he'd assumed. One of the ships was moving, coming about.

"Should we not scatter?" Somerville asked, suddenly realising that the helicopter prevented *his Ark Royal* from launching its own fighters.

"Why bother?" Turtledove asked. "They won't get close enough to harm you at all?" He waved a hand at the manoeuvring ship. "HMS *Portland*," he identified it. "Type-23 frigate, commissioned in 2001, and refitted in 2010 with the modified Sea Wolf missiles. Watch."

It happened so quickly that Somerville almost missed it. A streak of fire launched from the deck of the *Portland*, almost like a firework, and lanced over the *Ark Royal*, heading east. Seconds later, there was a brilliant flash in the sky; three more missiles followed in quick succession.

"What was that?" Somerville demanded, as the crew broke into cheering. Watching the aircraft being swatted from the sky like flies had delighted them; Somerville only felt cold. "What *were* they?"

"Missiles," Turtledove said. He grinned and passed over a briefcase. "Admiral, some of my ships are supply vessels, designed to supply my ships. If you don't mind, I'd like to get into the Rock, and then decide on the next course of action." He leered at him cheerfully. "Since we're not allowed to seek battle, we'd better let the Italians see us, eh?"

Somerville held out his hand. "A pleasure to meet you, I think," he said. "So, what happens to the war and the world?"

"Now that, Admiral, is rather a long story," Turtledove said. "However, we have plenty of time to make the arrangements."

**10 Downing Street**  
**Whitehall**  
**11<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

The Ambassador to the court of King James, as he was formally called, stood up as the Prime Minister's secretary beckoned him into the office of the Prime Minister. He lifted his eyebrows as he saw no one behind the desk, but the Home and Foreign Secretaries standing, waiting for him.

"I'm sorry for keeping you waiting," Hanover said, once the essential preliminaries had been handled and wishes for good health exchanged. "I assume that you understand the situation, at least from your book-buying raids."

Ambassador King didn't blush; it was impossible for him. "I merely wish to ensure that President Roosevelt has all the facts presented to him," he said. "Now, what have you done with our troops?"

"I imagine that once we're certain of their reception, they can be returned," Hanover said. "Several of them have committed suicide and we've stored their bodies." He passed over a folder. "One of them requested his salary, paid into an American bank with a branch here, to be placed in trust for himself later."

King chuckled. "I'll try to handle it somehow," he said. "Now, I notice that you have interned the ambassadors...?"

"We have to make contact with President Roosevelt," McLachlan said. "With the Prime Minister unwell, we have to prepare to face a German onslaught, and we need food and aid."

"The Prime Minister is unwell?" King enquired. "What's wrong with him?"

"Heart problems brought on by stress, according to the doctors," Hanover said. He sounded annoyed. "For the moment, he can handle light work, but as long as Parliament remains divided..."

"The stress level just gets worse," King said. "I assume you want me to go to America?"

Hanover nodded, then hesitated. "You might want to send one of your staff," he said. "Ambassador, with all due respect..."

"They might consider me an uppity nigger?" King finished. "Yes, the thought occurred to me. I am Martin Luther King's descendent; how could it not have occurred to me?"

"And you still wish to return?" Hanover asked. "We will grant you asylum, if you wish."

*And to think I thought badly of him*, King thought. “I have my duty,” he said. “I’m sure that President Roosevelt will act to change matters, now that he knows the verdict of history.”

“Perhaps,” Hanover said. “John?”

McLachlan coughed. “We need food and coal,” he said, “and we need the US navy to aid us in escorting convoys. Fortunately, we have – just – enough shipping to handle the requirements, but we don’t have anything like the escort forces required.”

King scowled. He’d been reading up on the era for the last handful of days. “Didn’t Roosevelt send you some destroyers?”

“We would need him to send crews as well,” Hanover said. “You have to ask him to do everything short of declaring war.”

King nodded. “I see what you mean,” he said. “Tell me, will you trade some technology?”

“I think so,” Hanover said. “A mobile phone network, for example, would really help America; and God knows there are thousands of slightly outdated phones around.”

King hesitated. “What sort of books can I take?”

“Anything, but nuclear science,” Hanover said. “I would advise warning him about the spies in the American nuclear program.” King scowled at him. “I’m sorry,” Hanover said, “but the Prime Minister is very anti-nuclear.”

*I just bet you’re sorry*, King thought. “How do you plan to get me there?”

“Ship,” Hanover said. “The *Queen Elizabeth* can make the journey in a week. We’d send a plane, an airliner, but the CAA warns us that they’d need an airport designed to take them.”

“I’ll ask FDR to set one up,” King assured him. “When can I leave?”

“Tomorrow suit you?” Hanover asked. “Colonel George Palter, the senior American soldier, has been asked to go with you, along with a small bodyguard of Marines. Between you, you should be able to convince them of the truth.”

“Thank you,” King said. “Britain has been a good friend to America; I will ensure that that happens again.”

\*\*\*

Hanover allowed himself a smile as the American departed; naively heading back to the land of Jim Crow. Perhaps he wouldn’t be lynched, but he suspected that it would be a close run thing. He closed his eyes in thought; how would the Americans react to the news?

“The other ambassadors have arrived,” McLachlan said. “Shall we go meet them?”

Hanover stood up and motioned for McLachlan to lead the way. “Did you read the report from Admiral Turtledove?” He asked. “Seven French planes blown out of the sky! Damn it, what I wouldn’t give for one super-carrier!”

“Blasted French,” McLachlan agreed. The long-awaited new carriers, designed to match the best American units, had been a joint project with France – and Smith’s predecessor had allowed the *French* to build them. On the day of the Transition, they’d been fitting out for testing. “At least we’re getting the *Invincible* out of mothballs.”

The door to the meeting room loomed ahead of them, two guards waiting at the door. They opened the door in unison and the two men stepped in; the ambassadors from the nations of the British Commonwealth waited for them.

“Thank you all for coming,” McLachlan said. “I assume that by now you all understand and believe in what’s happening?”

“I wish I didn’t,” David Atwell said. The Australian Ambassador looked tired. “I’ve had calls all day from people who want to get back to reshape Australian history.”

“We’re sending you back,” McLachlan said. “We have a unique opportunity to reshape the course of history and avoid past mistakes. For some of you, your nations are already independent in all, but name; for others, India for example, the remains of the Raj still rules.”

Ajeet Homchoudhury coughed. “Can we assume that independence will be granted as soon as possible?” He asked. “The people of India yearn to be free.”

Hanover nodded. “Quite frankly, we don’t want to hold India,” he said. “However, we would like to see India improve from what it went through during Partition. Don’t you think that that’s worthwhile?”

Homchoudhury nodded slowly. “Now,” Hanover said, “we would like you to invite the leaders of your nations to Britain for a meeting, one month from now. For those nations that aren’t independent, I would like you to invite the nationalists; Gandhi, Nehru, Jinnah and those like them. Once we have some agreement, we can begin distributing technology.”

Atwell scowled suddenly. “Will you assist in defence?”

Hanover nodded. “It’s not going to be easy,” he said. “Once the news reaches Japan, they might just jump against our possessions before we can reinforce them. We can spare some aircraft for Australia; the problem is that we don’t have a large army. Any other questions?”

\*\*\*

“Remind me never to ask for more questions,” Hanover said afterwards. He sipped a glass of malt whiskey gratefully. “They all seem to think that we’re going to re-enslave them.”

“We will be the centre of the new world order for some time,” McLachlan pointed out. “It’s natural for them to be worried about their place in that order.”

Hanover shrugged. “How did your meeting with the industrialists go?”

“Oh, we’re going to have some pretty legal problems,” Hanover said. “Those Japanese electronic factories belong to people long dead, or unborn, or at war with us, or will be at war

with us.” He snorted. “We’re going to have to invent our own terminology for this sort of thing.”

“So, what did you end up with?” McLachlan asked, sipping his own drink. “What will happen?”

“I think that a new Act will be passed, basically handing ownership to the current directors, most of whom were front men to avoid European Union regulations and tariffs,” Hanover said. He chuckled. “They were delighted. Once we get a steady stream of materials, we can begin churning out consumer goods to pay for stuff in America.”

“Coming to think of it, who holds the rights to all the American movies?” McLachlan asked. “Think of what will happen once Hollywood gets its hands on movies that haven’t been made yet!”

Hanover’s pager buzzed. Absently, he picked up the phone on the wall and dialled PJHQ. “Hanover,” he said. “Has the attack begun?” He listened to the reply and felt his jaw drop. “John, the Germans have contacted us,” he said. “They seem to want to exchange the children from the crashed plane – and one adult – for the Germans currently living in the UK.”



## Chapter Ten: Final Moments of Peace

10 Downing Street  
London, United Kingdom  
11<sup>th</sup> July 1940

Howard Smith knew that he looked terrible as he took his seat at the head of the table. The War Cabinet looked back at him, with varying degrees of concern, sympathy and calculation in their eyes. The young army officer waited for him to give permission; Smith waved a hand in his direction. He knew that he was too tired to proceed – and also that he had no choice.

“Two hours ago,” Stirling began, “a woman called Sarah Oliver received a phone call from her brother, Jim Oliver. This was unexpected, as she’d been mourning him; Jim was one of the people lost overseas. Apparently, he was on the flight that we destroyed.” He took a breath. “Incidentally, the manifest for the flight we know he was on includes a history professor, several doctors and a small cross-section of other skills. Oliver himself is listed as a data courier; currently working for Cougar Industries, in Glasgow.

“Once she was convinced that it was not a joke, Mrs Oliver contacted the local police, who passed it on to us. In effect, the Germans have offered to return the children on the flight – and Mr Oliver, who was apparently chosen by lot – in exchange for any German citizens within the United Kingdom.”

Hanover steepled his fingers, effortlessly taking command of the room. “So, they know that we’ve come back in time,” he said. “Do we accept the offer or not?”

“It would be foolish of us to surrender the Germans,” Hathaway said. Her firm face scowled. “It’s obvious what they want; children can tell them nothing, but adults, particularly German adults...think what they could tell them.”

“Would they *want* to return?” McLachlan asked. “Some of our Irish citizens have been...reluctant to return to Ireland, despite De Valera’s invitation. Some of them have even asked us for asylum. They know what Nazi Germany will do to them.”

“Sir, they have offered to allow us to take the children and their guardian, and then ask any Germans if they *want* to go to Germany,” Stirling injected. Smith smiled; the young captain clearly knew what he was doing. “Basically, they’ve offered to let us pick them up from an airfield in Germany...provided we take a German representative along to meet with the German Ambassador.”

“Strange,” Hathaway mused. “Hang on, how are they doing this?”

“One of the items they captured was a mobile phone,” Stirling said. “We *can* locate the phone itself; it’s near Caen, where two German army divisions are based now. If that’s where the rest of them are being held, we could rescue them, but I very much doubt it.”

“Understood,” Smith said, making a determined effort to regain control of the meeting. “We will accept the German terms...”

“Prime Minister, I really must protest,” Hanover said immediately. “If we send a helicopter, or a small fleet of helicopters, to recover the children, we risk having the helicopter captured and turned against us.”

“We could always send a small force of Eurofighters along as escorts,” Chapman said. “Let’s face it; we’d see an ambush coming for miles off.”

“Perhaps, but it’s still dangerous,” Hanover said.

“None the less, my mind is made up,” Smith said, and wondered what the terrible pain in his chest was. The world seemed to go dim for a long terrifying moment. “Now,” he said, hiding the pain as best as he could, “General, what about the defence preparations?”

“My men have done splendidly,” Cunningham said. “There are some minor problems, but we have a powerful defence in place if the Germans try to invade.” He clicked on a laser pointer and pointed to the map. “The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Armoured Regiments, along with infantry units and supporting Harriers from No. 1 squadron, have been moved to positions near Dover and Maidstone. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Armoured Regiment has been held back in reserve, along with support formations, as the Germans may try to land near Southampton.

“Unfortunately, a shitload of people – pardon my French – have fled,” he continued. “Many of them have gone to relatives up north, others are bumming around in London driving hotel prices up. The police have done excellent work, but a lot of people are going to panic when the war begins.”

“It has already,” Hanover muttered.

“We’ve deployed SHORAD units around major targets and London,” Cunningham said. “Unfortunately, SHORAD funding was cut back sharply – even during the war on terror – and we simply don’t have enough units to cover every major target. We can kill every target we see, but once we run out of missiles, we can’t stop them. I have teams looking at ways to slave heavy machine guns to radar, just to give us some extra firepower, but that’s a month off at least. Everything depends on the RAF.”

Chapman coughed diplomatically. “We have been working like demons to get some of the older fighters up and ready,” he said, “as well as calling back the reserves and...pilots who retired during the Blair Government. Unfortunately, as General Cunningham says, we have far fewer aircraft than I’d like; if we have to start committing to other theatres as well, we may well simply...run out.

“At the moment, we have two hundred and thirty front-line fighters, and fifty-seven second-line fighters,” he continued. “At a pinch, we can press Jaguars and Hawks into service, which will give us extra numbers. The navy has allocated two squadrons of land-based Harriers to the air defence forces as well; in effect, we have a maximum of three hundred fighters to face the German swarm.

“The Germans have roughly nine hundred of their own front-line fighters and an equal number of bombers, all of which they can deploy to face us,” he said. “They may force their way through with sheer weight of numbers, and we will run through our stocks of missiles very quickly. Worse, the Germans will be quick to develop tactics to use against our jet

fighters – and we will be hard-pressed to rebuild the force. By the most optimistic estimate, it will be at least nine months before we can turn out new Eurofighters.”

McLachlan coughed. “I understand that we would not want to make copies of planes the Germans have, but could we not build some fighters from...say, 1960?”

“That would take longer,” Chapman said. “We’d have to rebuild large parts of the industry.”

“I see,” Smith asked. “So, is there a way to win?”

“Two ways,” Chapman said. “Short of using nuclear warheads, we must use a percentage of our cruise missiles against German factories, and their airfields. What we cannot do is close them down for good, but we can certainly force them to divert their operations. The SAS can also be inserted into enemy territory; they can attack German transportation and even important Germans, like Hitler himself.”

Darter coughed. Smith smiled weakly at her; she was one of his most important allies, but she could be very irritating at times. “Are we so sure that they’re planning to attack us?” She asked. “They could just be scared of us.”

“They’re moving troops and invasion barges into position,” Cunningham said. “Quite frankly, I’d like to slam a few cruise missiles into them while they’re there. They’re moving more and more planes into Northern France and stripping the coastline of people. That’s not a defensive position; they’re working to prepare jump-off points for troops. We’ve seen gliders and bombers; useless for anything, but an invasion. Attempts to penetrate our air defences have continued; isolated raids directed against our coasts.”

“And besides, these are the Nazis,” Hanover said coldly. “We can expect them to be enemies of all; they know what we are and they fear it.”

Smith nodded tiredly. He was tired, so tired. “General, please see to picking up the children,” he said. “Mr McLachlan, make the arrangements.”

**Near Caen**  
**France**  
**12<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

Oliver put down the mobile phone with an expression of relief. “That’s it, *Herr Standartenfuhrer*,” he said. “They will be here in one hour.”

“How can they be so certain of finding you?” Roth asked. Oliver allowed himself a smile; Roth was smart, dangerously smart. Who, but a very smart man, could have adapted so well to the suddenly-changed world around him. Roth would go far, if Himmler didn’t see him as a threat and terminate him. He knew he didn’t understand laptops and mobile phones and jet-propelled aircraft, but he was learning, and fast.

“Each and every mobile phone emits a signal to the phone network,” Oliver explained. “We’re close enough to Britain for the network to receive the signal and transmit a reply back. It sounds rather tinny because we’re right at the edge of the range.” He smiled.

“Under normal circumstances, a French tower would pick up the signal and route it through a satellite and send it down to Britain, but at the moment...”

“They can track the other phones?” Roth asked sharply. “What about the laptops?”

“I don’t think they can track the laptops,” Oliver said. “They will be able to find a phone that’s within range of the towers, so take them into Poland or somewhere.” He shrugged. “You won’t be able to use them anyway.”

“A shame,” Roth said. “Listen; are you sure that you want to do this?”

Oliver was oddly touched. “Yes,” he said. “It may not have happened yet, but losing the rest of the world means that my...organisation will have lost its main sources of money. We have to have more, as fast as possible.” He smiled. “And as I said to you, anything that hurts the French is fine by me.”

“Have you heard?” Roth asked. “Some of your naval units have turned up in the Mediterranean. Several Italian ships have been sunk, even though they’re trying to stay away from the newcomers. The good news is that the Italians took down one of the new planes.”

Oliver lifted an eyebrow. “Are you sure that actually happened?”

“One of our observers saw it,” Roth said. “He was flying in an Italian bomber when an Italian fighter collided with one of the strange aircraft. There was a very large explosion and both planes were destroyed.”

“Kamikaze tactics,” Oliver said. He checked his watch. “Not much time left.”

“True,” Roth said. The sounds of the children drifted to their ears; even with the drafted French nurses they weren’t happy at being separated from their parents. “I need to add an extra bit to your mission, one of considerable importance.”

Oliver turned to look at him. “What?” He asked. “What could be more important than data?”

“One of the events referred to in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* is a bomb plot against the *Fuhrer*,” Roth said. “What it doesn’t do is say who was involved. We need that information, as fast as possible, before they contact them and offer to assist them.”

Oliver nodded; it was yet another display of quick-thinking from Roth. “I’ll find out what I can,” he said. “You do realise it might be some people quite high up?”

“We have to know,” Roth said. “Good luck.”

\*\*\*

“Eagle-two, I confirm that the skies are clear until Paris,” Abernathy said, as the Eurofighters crossed the French coast. Several other Eurofighters were circling over Dover, prepared to intervene if necessary, and an AWACS hung back with its own fighter escort. The RAF knew now that there would be no replacements for the seven aircraft; Abernathy cursed the

decision to sell two to Australia, where they were now years in the future and utterly beyond reach.

“Eagle-two confirms,” Dunbar said. “I make it fifty-seven Messerschmitts, orbiting Paris.”

Abernathy nodded grimly to himself; the more powerful radars of the AWACS painting the picture for him in his display. “We’re moving in,” he said. “No sign of any ground fire.”

“Eagle-one, Eagle-two, Rescue-one is preparing to move in,” the controller said. “Keep an eye on things.”

“Earle-one confirms,” Abernathy said, muttering under his breath. If the Germans decided to attack in the air, the Eurofighters could fight or flee as they chose, but if they attacked on the ground, when Rescue-one was on the ground, options would be limited, to say the least. “We’re ready.”

\*\*\*

The scream of jet engines echoed across the sky. Across France, Frenchmen looked up with new hope; some in awe, others in dread. The British had suddenly become powerful beyond measure and the memories of the British abandonment of France at Dunkirk rankled. Petain’s government launched ever-growing anti-British broadcasts, pointing to the thousands of French sailors killed by the British, just before the future Britain arrived.

To the Germans, less given to delusions of grandeur even in defeat, the jet engines represented yet another piece of information about their new foe. Roth stood above the tiny airfield and watched as the strange aircraft floated in and came to a hover over their heads. As he stared, the propellers on the aircraft literally rotated around until they were pointing upwards, and the aircraft – a cross between a normal aircraft and a helicopter – sank towards the ground.

A roar split the sky and he looked up; two contrails lanced across the sky. The strange jet fighters, warning the Germans that treachery would be avenged. They seemed invulnerable, but Roth knew that they were not; Galland was working on ways to bring them down. Captain Sidney Jackson, a former RAF officer and lover of an Indian girl, had proven very informative. Roth smiled; it was amazing how talkative the future British could be when their lovers were threatened; did such things never happen in their world?

“*Herr Standartenfuhrer?*” Galland asked. The *Gruppenkommandeur* had insisted on being present, if only to learn more about the enemy. “Notice how the craft moves, adjusting airflow around its engines,” he said. He smiled. “I would bet that it handles fairly well, most of the time.”

Roth shrugged absently. Galland could afford to treat the war as a martial joust; *he* would face British officers in the air. Roth, on the other hand, was charged with developing a hell weapon – assuming that the British allowed him to leave the landing site.

“Look, they’re coming out,” Galland said cheerfully, as a hatch opened in the side of the machine. A man, dressed in a form of black combat armour that gave an impression of being extremely deadly, hopped out, acting as if he was leaping into a combat zone. The German officer, in full dress uniform, stepped forward.

“Brave man,” Roth muttered, as Hans Meyer stepped forward. The *Abwehr* officer seemed completely composed; Admiral Canaris had suggested an *Abwehr* man, rather than an SS man, and Oliver had supported him.

“I suppose,” Galland said. He’d lobbied to be the representative, hoping for a look inside one of the aircraft. Kesselring had forbidden him from even thinking about it; Goring had muttered about taking his rank away. “Look, he’s talking to the man.”

*Stupid comment*, Roth thought coldly. Meyer had finished talking to the single British soldier – *do they really think that they are that much ahead of us* – and beckoned the children forward. Oliver moved behind them, hands bound behind his back; a touch of theatre. The British soldier waved the children into the aircraft, before pulling out a knife and freeing Oliver, who smiled at him gratefully.

“Good luck, Hans,” Galland muttered, as Meyer boarded the aircraft and the hatch closed behind him. Slowly, awesomely, the helicopter lifted off the ground, heading back to Britain.

“Good luck, Jim,” Roth corrected absently. “Everything depends upon him.”

\*\*\*

“Don’t worry sir,” the Royal Marine said. “We’ll soon have you back to Britain.”

Oliver smiled weakly. Pretending to be weak was easy; he hadn’t eaten anything for the day. “Thank you Captain,” he said, deliberately misreading the Corporal’s rank badge. “They were *horrible*.”

The Marine nodded sympathetically. “What were they like? Did they torture you?”

“No, but I knew what they were like before, and I was so scared,” Oliver said. “Where are we going?”

“We’re going to land directly at RAF Lyneham,” the Marine said. “They have a place there to debrief captured personnel who’ve been recovered, sir.” He smiled what was meant to be an encouraging smile. “Doubtless the Press will have hacked our communications and discovered that you’ve been freed,” he said. “You’ll be the belle of the ball.”

Oliver *looked* at him. “I’d sooner be alive, thank you,” he said. “And what about Fatso here?”

The Marine looked up at the *Abwehr* officer. “He will be held at RAF Lyneham until higher authority can decide what to do with him,” he said. He stared directly at Meyer, holding his eyes. “In the unlikely event of you overcoming me and breaking into the cockpit, the escorting fighters will be quite happy to shoot us down rather than let you escape.”

Meyer spoke English with a clipped precise fussiness that bespoke formal training. He also didn’t know that Oliver was working, at least in part, for Germany. “I have given you my word of honour, upon the honour of the German army, that I will behave myself,” he said, almost offended. “What else would you have me do?”

“Your army has no honour,” the Marine said. An uneasy silence fell, broken only by Meyer’s awe at passing over the cities to the RAF base. Oliver sighed; once the RAF had finished debriefing him, he could make contact with the others and begin the operation. Smuggling information into Germany would be tricky, but he was certain that he could do it.

**RAF Neatishead**  
**Norfolk, United Kingdom**  
**15<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

“Sources in the navy report that a confrontation between Italian forces and contemporary naval forces, supported by Task Force Reunion, resulted in a decisive defeat for Italian forces. The MOD refused to answer questions about the probable death toll, but they did confirm that the Italians suffered heavy losses. Later, in Parliament, MP Noreen Adam, Brixton, asked if the war would be fought using nuclear weapons, a clearly ailing Prime Minister was unable to answer and...”

Flight Lieutenant Nicola lifted the remote and turned off the television, wondering if anything was going to happen. It was dawn, four days after the last incursion over the French mainland, and nothing had happened since, at least not near Britain itself. It was quiet; too quiet. The Germans seemed to be behaving themselves – and that was *far* from normal for Nazis.

The radar set that Nicola controlled was linked into an entire integrated system of radar stations and orbiting AWACS. She’d heard that senior RAF officers were already worrying about the expected lifetime of the aircraft; they’d already been used more than they had in years. It was a god’s eye view of the sky over Europe; under good conditions they could see all the way to Berlin. Countless German aircraft were on the ground – and they weren’t doing anything about it. The RAF could have *crushed* the Germans – and the politicians were keeping them on the ground.

*Ping!* She felt her heart leapt into her mouth as she checked the instruments; there was a flight of German planes rising from France, near Calais. As she watched, the force formed itself up, joined by dozens – hundreds – of new aircraft. The swarm started to move slowly, heading towards England.

“This is sector control,” she snapped into the telephone. Emails had already been sent to everyone on the distribution list; telephoning the first line of people was supposed to be just a back-up system. She knew better; during drills the entire system had failed on more than one occasion. “We have a major raid in progress!”

## **Chapter Eleven: Redoing the Battle of Britain**

Permanent Joint Headquarters  
**London, United Kingdom**  
**15<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

All of the radar stations along the south coast – civilian and military – were sounding the warning. At least a thousand aircraft, all German, were making their way slowly towards Britain, forming into several different attack prongs. Portsmouth, Dover and London seemed to be the main targets, although the several flights of German aircraft heading to the far north suggested that the Germans hadn't quite grasped the fact that Scarpa Flow had gone.

"Have you sounded the warning to the civilians?" General Cunningham demanded, taking long strides into the main control room. "What about the army?"

"They all got the alert," the duty officer assured him. "The Prime Minister and the Cabinet are being hastened into the bunker below Whitehall; the Royal Family is being evacuated even as we speak."

"Blasted idiot refusing to leave earlier," Cunningham muttered. "The sector controllers have taken command?"

"Yes, sir," the duty officer said. "The RAF is scrambling now; the jets on combat air patrol are being pulled back into the main formations. The navy is going on alert; the ground forces have been alerted."

"They'll swarm through us," Cunningham predicted grimly. "Any sign that they know where our bases are?"

"RAF Neatishead seems to be one of the targets," the duty officer said. "The east coast seems to be a major target in itself."

Cunningham scowled. "They must have interrogated the pilot of the jumbo jet," he said coldly. "They're *required* to know where the main air bases are."

**Over England**  
**Britain**  
**15<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

"Eagle-one, take point," the sector controller said grimly, as the Eurofighters thundered into the air. "Hawk-one, take point of group two."

Abernathy winced as the Eurofighter climbed frantically for as much height as it could. The RAF squadrons were scrambling, massing as much power as they could, and the enemy aircraft were carrying on their long slow progress towards England. He glanced at the information the Sentry AWACS were feeding to the Eurofighters; at least nine hundred German aircraft were heading towards Dover, and London.

"That's a lot of planes," Dunbar muttered, for once not challenging anyone. "How do we swat them all?"



“We take out as many of them as we can from long distance,” Abernathy said. He scowled; the Germans were maintaining a strong formation; fighters patrolling above, below and ahead of the bombers, which were lumbering alone slowly, but steadily. As the British forces closed in, he realised just how good the formation was; the bombers would be able to avoid fratricide and use their own guns on any British aircraft.

*Once we run out of missiles we’re going to have to close in*, he thought, and scowled. The Germans had much more primitive equipment than the Iraqis had, thirteen years before, but they were brave and determined.

“At least they show up as heat sources for BVRAAMS,” Dunbar said. “It’s a shame we don’t have more of them.”

“That’s enough of that,” Abernathy said, although he agreed. The Eurofighters carried two BVRAAM missiles each; the result of the desperate need to conserve the advanced weapons, and four ASRAAM missiles. Once they were gone, the fighting would be at knife-range, with cannons instead of missiles.

“Look down,” Dunbar said, and Abernathy stared. The German aircraft were outlined against the sea, never-ending streams of aircraft stretching all the way back to France. They seemed beautiful; a ghost from the past. They might be slow, but they were deadly; Abernathy knew that they would start bombing England soon.

“All right,” he said. “Eagles, Hawks, stand by to engage.” He studied the position; the Eurofighters were high over the unaware German aircraft. “Fire upon my command...Eagle-one, Fox Two!”

\*\*\*

The large bomber next to his fighter blew up in a spectacular explosion, knocking the Messerschmitt badly off course. Adolf Galland gabbled orders into his radio, commanding them to deploy the experimental weapons, and yanked his fighter into a tight series of evasive manoeuvres. They saved his life; a streak of fire screamed past him – he *heard* it even over the roar of the engines and slammed into a Heinkel bomber. The bomber literally disintegrated in midair, even as other missiles roared past, some of them heading for the flares.

*Thank you God*, Galland thought, as some of the missiles homed in on the flares the bombers had dropped, each one of them burning brightly. Others refused to be tricked; they killed bombers and fighters with a casual dispassion. An object screamed past him and he fired instinctively; streaks of tracer chasing the jet fighter. They missed; the fighter fired a long stream of cannon fire at a bomber, ripping it apart. Another jet, one painted red, swooped down on him and he yanked his fighter aside, avoiding a burst of cannon fire himself, before firing back desperately. He hit something; the fighter fell away trailing smoke and fire.

“Didn’t see anything,” Galland said. The orders from General Kesselring had been to show no mercy to parachutists – apparently it took months to train a new jet pilot – but *he* didn’t want to obey. He glanced from side to side, assessing the situation; the battle seemed to have ended for the moment. Huge gaping holes in his formation showed where he’d taken losses to his force, but he was certain that the enemy had been hurt as well.

He spoke into his radio, ordering the flights to prepare to engage the Dover defences, and sighed in relief. The hell-weapons had come for him and he was still alive.

\*\*\*

Abernathy swooped down on a German flight, firing madly, before twisting past the exploding bomber and plunging down towards the sea. Hit and run tactics seemed to be the best; close-quarter combat gave the Germans some advantages. He'd never faced a horde of bombers armed with machine guns before; they'd damaged his plane and he was grimly certain that several Eurofighters had gone down.

He pulled out of the dive just above the water and swooped away, catching his breath and checking the updates from the Sentry AWACS. The RAF had shot down at least two hundred German aircraft – probably more – and had lost twelve of its own. By any normal – 2015 – standards, it was a stunning one-sided victory, but the Germans were still coming. On the screens, the flights of German aircraft were heading across the coastline, heading over Britain proper – and the ground defences were weaker than they'd ever been.

“Eagle-one to all Eagles,” he said, as he pulled the Eurofighter back into the sky. A hunting Messerschmitt, trying bravely to intercept him, was blown apart by a blast of cannon fire. “Ammunition; how much do you have left?”

He cursed as the pilots sounded off. Half the flight had no ammunition left and were heading back for more ammunition. Several planes were short on bullets; no one had any missiles left.

“Sierra-three,” he said, calling the controlling AWACS. “Eagles are returning to the nest.”

“Acknowledged, Eagle-one,” the controller said. “Hurry back.”

Abernathy smiled at the note of concern in the controller's voice. At Eurofighter speeds, they could be back at their base and rearmed before the Germans reached the base, assuming that they could.

**Dover Police Station**  
**Dover, United Kingdom**  
**15<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

The desk sergeant picked up the telephone, listened carefully, his face growing pale, and slapped the alarm. Minutes later, the fifty-seven officers on duty arrived; panting for breath. The desk sergeant put down his phone and scowled.

“We have a German attack inbound,” he said grimly. The policemen, still unused to the fact that the entire island was back in 1940, shivered. Hardly anyone had any air raid experience; the British had abandoned civil defence exercises on a grand scale well before 2001.

“What the hell do we do?” A young constable asked. A scar ran down his face from the riots two days ago, when people finally realised what the closure of the Channel Tunnel meant. “Sir, we've never trained for anything like this...”

“I know,” Sergeant Pope said. “The army is based nearby; they’ve asked us to ensure that all people remain off the streets.”

“Not a chance,” Officer Brown injected.

“I know,” Pope said. “The radio stations have begun broadcasting a warning; we’re to head onto the streets and order people to get inside and stay away from windows and doors.”

“There’s going to be panic and looting,” Brown said. He stared around at his men. “I think that we can do this, if we work together.”

\*\*\*

“This is Kristy Stewart interrupting this broadcast with an urgent warning from the Ministry of Defence. German aircraft have engaged RAF fighters and are advancing on Dover, Portsmouth, Norfolk and London.”

Around the massive store, people turned to watch as the pimple-faced youth on the desk turned the volume up as loud as he could. “The MOD is warning people to seek shelter, to enter basements and to stay off the streets,” she continued. “I repeat, German aircraft are heading for...”

No one saw who ran first, but the entire crowd surged forward, running for the exits of the store. It was every man for himself; men women and children were trampled underfoot; the alarms sounded and no one could react. The handful of security guards were overwhelmed; thousands of people forced their way out, onto the streets. Others headed down to the basements, hoping to ride out the air raid underground; far too many people forced into a confined space. Panic began, not helped by an older man who remembered the first Battle of Britain singing *Land of Hope and Glory* at great volume.

The crowds surged onto the streets, running for their homes and families. Cars were broken into and stolen; bicycle owners had their bikes stolen by desperate husbands. The emergency services were completely overrun – and the Germans hadn’t even arrived.

“STAY CALM,” the police officer bellowed, as the first of seven police vans appeared. The loudhailer echoed, almost drowned out by the panic and the noise of dozens of shop alarms going off. “I URGE YOU ALL TO RETURN CALMLY TO YOUR HOMES AND...”

“Pigs,” someone shouted, and many of the younger people in the crowd surged towards the police vans. The police force deployed, lifting their riot equipment, and the man broke against them, forcing them back. Someone threw a rock; seconds later, rocks and garbage were raining down on the policemen.

\*\*\*

Constable Wigan ran forward to aid his partner, Constable Stacy, and smacked her would-be assailant on the head with his bludgeon. He crumpled to the ground; Stacy swayed against him, blood pouring from her head.

“Stacy,” he shouted. “You’re going to be all right.”

She shuddered once against him and fell still. He felt her pulse and realised grimly that she was dead. Flames were spreading through the centre of Dover; and the Germans weren't even bombing them. A scream echoed from a distant ally and he stumbled towards it; a man was forcing a girl against the wall, holding her jeans down and pushing his way inside her. Without thinking, Wigan jumped forward and brought his bludgeon down on his head, smashing the would-be rapists skull. The girl smiled up at him through her tears and began to pull her trousers up.

"Come on," Wigan said, as the noise of the riot seemed to fade. Reinforcements had arrived; dozens of new police officers and some soldiers. He headed back towards them, the girl in tow, and then hesitated. A new sound was echoing across the town and he turned to look; dozens of black aircraft were advancing across the sky, heading for the centre of town. As he watched, a streak of light rose up and smashed one of the bombers, swatting it from the sky. In return, the bombers opened their bomb bays, dropping streams of bombs on the city. Explosions rose up from the targets; advancing towards their position.

"Take aim," a voice bellowed behind him, and Wigan span around to see two soldiers aiming a rocket launcher up into the sky. He threw himself to the ground, dragging the girl with him, as the soldiers fired; launching a missile at the oncoming flight of German planes. One fell in fire, slamming into the town hall; the others kept coming.

"Oh God!" Someone shouted, as the blasts reached for him. By a miracle, he was unhurt; the girl clutched his arm. He glanced at her and saw that half her body had been blown off by the blasts. The German bombers swept on, heedless of the misery in their wake.

### **Over Dover United Kingdom 15<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

The Eurofighter pilots, the second wave to intercept the German craft, forgot their training as the Germans started bombing. Throwing caution to the winds, the planes flashed down, pouring fire and death through the German force. Bomber after bomber was swept from the sky; the other lumbering craft trying to retreat. The German formation was coming apart and the jets harried them, forcing them away from the city.

"Die, you bastards," Flying Officer Mick Eccleston screamed, as the plane swooped around a German bomber, pouring fire into it. He noticed the tail gunner trying desperately to target his fighter and he brought his cannon up sharply, blasting the entire tail of the fragile aircraft off the aircraft. He was flying on pure instinct, avoiding German tracers with ease and snapping off shots whenever he saw an opportunity. He lost count of the aircraft he'd hit and damaged; plane after plane fell to his weapons.

His cannon ran out of ammunition suddenly. He cursed, charging through the swarm of German aircraft before his training reasserted itself, yanking the irreplaceable aircraft up into the sky, well away from the Germans. On his radar, the Germans were moving back, retreating; they'd had enough for the day.

"Come back soon," he muttered, as the Eurofighter began its course back to RAF Leeming. "We'll be waiting for you."

\*\*\*

*At least thirty of their aircraft downed*, Galland thought, as the dull atonal sound signifying ‘retreat’ echoed through their radios. Slowly, ponderously, the German force turned around, heading back to their bases in France and Belgium. He allowed himself a relaxed smile; it was hard to be certain, but it seemed as if the British were allowing them to retreat without interference.

*We now know that the burners work*, Galland thought. Deploying the tiny flares was tricky – they had a tendency to catch fire at the wrong times – but they seemed to work to suck some of the missiles off target. Not all of them; some missiles had just ignored the flares, but several dozen aircraft had been saved by them.

“We’ll be back,” Galland said, and wondered if there would be an airfield waiting for them when they arrived.

**10 Downing Street  
London, United Kingdom  
15<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

Darkness fell slowly and the tempo of attacks changed. Night fighters tried to launch small bombing raids, but the patrolling Eurofighters slapped them out of the sky. The brutal battles had lasted for most of the day; only the German retreat had ended it. Smith stared at the pictures in horror; Dover, Portsmouth and Brighton had been badly bombed, even London had had a couple of intruding aircraft try to bomb the Houses of Parliament.

“We lost twenty-two aircraft,” Chapman said, as the War Cabinet assembled in its rooms. “Ten more are badly damaged and will need weeks to repair. In exchange, we killed something like three to four hundred German planes.”

“And they kicked hell out of Dover,” Hanover said. The Cabinet paled. “General Cunningham, what happened there?”

Smith felt his chest tighten. “The Germans broke through the defences by sheer weight of numbers,” Cunningham said. “Once they were over Dover, they apparently decided to bomb the town, along with the encampments of soldiers near the town. 1<sup>st</sup> Armoured lost several tanks to a bombing raid and Dover Airport is going to be out of service for some time.

“In effect, the current death toll for all of the bombed regions is in excess of ten thousand,” Cunningham said. “Dover alone suffered millions of pounds worth of property damage and the panic inflicted still more deaths.”

“We’re going to have to evacuate,” Hanover said. “Move people up to Scotland, out of the range of German bombers. Dear God, they can reach as far as Manchester, can’t they?”

“We’re learning,” Chapman said. “Give us a couple of weeks and we’ll have the first radar-guided guns in action.”

“How many Eurofighters will we have left?” Hanover demanded. “We can’t win this war by standing on the defensive, can we?”

The pain in Smith's chest increased; an elephant standing on his chest. "I don't think so," General Cunningham said. "At the very least, we have to start smashing German aircraft on the ground, using mine-deploying missiles to close their airfields for a while. We also need to sink the German surface navy – and the Italian one. Once that's done, we can end the North African war by deploying some of our units to Africa."

Smith spoke through a haze of pain. "What about their invasion fleet?"

Hanover snorted. "We can smash the barges in their harbours, sink them all and hopefully kill a few thousand German SS troopers," he said. "Face it; invasion is not a realistic proposition."

Stirling coughed. Smith recognised his nervousness; the junior officer finding himself at a table with seniors who could destroy his career in a moment. "Sir, there is a simple way to win ourselves some time," he said.

"Spit it out, man," Cunningham snapped. "Killing Hitler?"

"The Germans get a large percentage of their oil from oil wells in Romania," Smith said. "If we slam a few cruise missiles into them, they'll have to tighten their belts."

"An excellent suggestion," Hanover said. "Have the Oversight Committee put together a strike plan."

Smith gasped in pain, noticing the concerned looks from some of the Cabinet. "Are we at war with them?" He asked. "What about the Russian wells near Stalingrad?"

Hanover smiled. "I wonder how much Stalin knows," he said. "Prime Minister, it is my formal recommendation that we ask Parliament now for a declaration of war, a simple vote, and launch Operation Suppression this very night."

"And then..." Smith's voice trailed off. The pain in his chest grew; his eyesight dimmed. He heard Hanover's alarmed voice dimly, through a haze of pain and roaring in his ears, and then darkness. His head struck the table, but his mind had already fled. Darkness rose to claim him and he fell into it.

## Chapter Twelve: The Empire Strikes Back

10 Downing Street  
London, United Kingdom  
15<sup>th</sup> July 1940

The three men met in the cabinet room, alone and unobserved. Some of the other cabinet members had returned to Parliament to press the case for war, two others had been offered leave to visit their families in the war zone. Hanover stood near the end of the table, positioning himself for command; the other two took their seats as normal.

“How is he?” Kenneth Barton, Leader of the Opposition, asked grimly. The room seemed to hesitate, shadows flickering on the wall. A Prime Minister had never collapsed; it was a point of pride that Prime Ministers never flinched from what was required. Smith had; history would not remember him kindly.

McLachlan answered, his tones leaden. “He’s been taken to a hospital outside the danger zone,” he said. “The doctors said that it was a heart attack; apparently he’s been under a lot of stress later.”

It was a heartless remark. None of the men commented on it. “Which leaves us with a leadership problem at a time of critical severity,” Hanover said. His voice was cold, hard, and grim. “We are faced with an utterly unprecedented situation; the last Prime Minister to leave office in the middle of her term was forced out; Smith is likely to be ill for months and won’t be able to resume his duties, which leaves us leaderless.”

Barton got up and paced restlessly. “I assume that you have a suggestion?”

“This is an unprecedented situation,” Hanover said. “You do understand the problem?”

Barton nodded grimly. Traditionally, the Home Secretary also held the post of Deputy Prime Minister, and was the designated successor if anything happened to the Prime Minister, although it was no guarantee of the position. Also traditionally, the Leader of the Opposition received the post of Deputy Prime Minister during the formation of a War Cabinet.

“I cannot hold the post of Prime Minister,” Barton said flatly. He scowled; even with the control of a third of the House of Parliament, the Liberal Democrats would not be able to support him. His position would be very weak indeed.

“We have discussed the matter with the Party Whips,” McLachlan said. “For the moment, we have agreed to confirm Charles as Prime Minister, *pro tem*. The Party will have to decide if they want Charles to continue to hold the post, but the Monarch supports him, so we think that they will fall in line.”

Barton smiled. The reign of King Charles wasn’t too popular with Sir Charles; it must *gnaw* at the King to have to confirm Hanover as his Prime Minister, even with the certain knowledge that the Liberal Democrats planned to abolish the monarchy altogether. Hanover’s public opposition to some of his monarch’s more...*unusual* projects, such as aid to immigrants, had not endeared him to the monarch.

“So, all hail Prime Minister Hanover?” Barton asked. He made to prostrate. “Is that what you wanted to tell me?”

“We were hoping that you would continue in the war cabinet,” Hanover said. “We have to face them together, as a united country, and – quite frankly – we need you. Would you take on the position of Home Secretary?”

Barton gaped at him, fighting to conceal his reaction. In almost all war cabinets, opposition members were never given positions of real power. True, Hanover could hardly handle both the Prime Minister-ship and the responsibilities of Home Secretary, but there had to be any number of conservative Party members who could take on the post. On the other hand, it could be a way of attaching blame to him, should the government’s policy fail.

“Yes, thank you,” he said finally. “I would be honoured to take on the responsibility.”

“Welcome to Government,” Hanover said, extending a hand. “Parliament will be meeting later this evening, so I hope that you will attend.”

**House of Commons**  
**London, United Kingdom**  
**15<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

The news about the collapse of the Prime Minister, and the selection of Charles Hanover as the Prime Minister *pro tem*, was received in silence. The gathering of Conservatives and Liberal Democrats around him forestalled any opposition; the vast majority was behind Hanover. The vote of confirmation was perfunctory.

“We are at war,” Hanover said flatly. The mood in the chamber was dark; the desire for revenge was burning brightly. Several anti-war MPs had been bombarded with emails and telephone calls demanding their resignations; several MPs were actually facing demands that they step down.

“We have suffered the largest attack on British soil since the last time we fought this war,” Hanover said coldly. “We have had our citizens slaughtered. We have had blood running in the streets. We have fought as best as we could, with the gloves on and our hands tied behind our backs.

“I say *no more*,” he snapped, his voice rising. “We have had our noses rubbed in one fact; fascism and democracy cannot exist together. It’s time to say ‘enough!’ It’s time to fight! It’s time to show that the ideals of hatred and oppression cannot exist without good men taking up arms against them! It’s time to make a stand!

“We have argued long enough,” he said, his voice becoming calm. “Maybe we, children of 2015, were not at war with Nazi Germany, but we are now! All that stands in our way is our own inability to recognise that we are at war, with a foe that considers us nothing more than a nation to pillage. We are at war!

“I ask you, all of you, to place your votes now. Are we to declare war, and fight with every weapon at our disposal, or are we to surrender tamely! Consider your people; consider the



people that you represent. Would they be safer in a world without Hitler? Madam Speaker, I ask you to call the vote now.”

He sat down on his bench. The seat of the Prime Minister had been left empty; until Howard Smith died or was formally removed from office he would continue to be Prime Minister in name, if not deed.

“I second that motion,” one of the BNP MPs said. “Madam Speaker, I call for a vote now.”

“The vote has been called,” Madam Speaker said. She nodded once to herself. “I ask MPs to cast their votes now; vote ‘aye’ or ‘nay’ for a declaration of war on Nazi Germany.”

In the old House, the MPs would have walked through doors to establish their votes. In the new House, they pressed buttons to establish their voting choices; who voted for what could not be disguised. There was a long pause, and then names and votes began to scroll up on the screen. Hanover pressed his own button, voting ‘aye’, with a flourish. Other MPs hid their hands as they pressed buttons; foolish, as it appeared at once on the screen.

“The vote is 89% in favour of declaring war,” Madam Speaker said. “5% against declaring war; 6% abstentions. The motion is carried.”

“Thank you,” Hanover said. “We will win this war, I promise you that.”

“And I trust that you will keep the House apprised of progress,” Madam Speaker said, a quiet warning.

***HMS Trafalgar***  
**Near Denmark**  
**16<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

As it had done for the past week, ever since being surge-deployed from its base in response to the crisis, the submarine *HMS Trafalgar* extended a tiny radio mast from its conning tower above the water and conducted a quick radar scan of the area. Dawn was breaking and there were a handful of aircraft near Denmark, heading to Norway, but there were no hunting aircraft nearby.

“Bastards must have been moving all their aircraft down to attack Britain,” Captain Tyson muttered, as he activated the radio transmitter. There was no need to fear interception; the signal was too weak for the Nazis’ radios to detect, let alone decrypt the basic communications encoding system. The reply, pre-prepared for the *Trafalgar*, came back at once.

“Crash dive,” the Captain snapped, after confirming that the signal carried no demands for any reply beyond acknowledgement. *Trafalgar* headed under water, changing its position to ensure that it would be safe, and headed north. Once he was certain that they were safe – only two u-boats had passed the submarine, neither having the slightest idea that he was there – he ordered the computers to decrypt the message.

“We’re on,” he announced to his exec. “Bring the ship to battle stations.”

**From:** Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ)

**To:** HMS *Trafalgar*

Following the attacks on the UKADR and UKDGE, you are ordered to deploy your cruise missiles against targets specified (see attachment) and then proceed at your discretion into the Baltic Sea and sink any unit of the German Navy you find. Good luck; God save the King.

“I’ve loaded the coordinates into the Tomahawk targeting systems,” Lieutenant-Commander Davidson reported. “We seem to be targeting the German shipyards at Kiel.”

“Priority targets,” Tyson said. “Launch the drone.”

“Aye, sir,” the electronics expert said. “Drone launching...now.”

*Trafalgar* shuddered slightly as the rocket-propelled drone was launched into the air, climbing rapidly. The drone started to transmit back to its mothership as it discarded the rocket and extended long wings, drifting over Denmark and heading for Kiel.

“I’m keeping it over the water,” the electronics expert said. “It’s radar-invisible, but the Germans will rely a lot more on their eyes and ears.”

“I thought this thing was silent,” Davidson asked sharply. The Germans would be far more inclined to look for the source of a jet engine.

“It is, relatively so,” the electronics expert said. “It may sound a little odd to the Germans and they might try to look for the source.”

They fell silent as the shape of the German battleships came into view. “The *Admiral Hipper*,” Davidson breathed. A second ship, the *Admiral Scheer*, hove into view, followed by the skeleton of a battleship, a nearly-completed battleship and an aircraft carrier.

“I wonder if that’s the *Bismarck*,” Tyson said softly. The drone passed over a handful of cruisers and then two damaged battlecruisers. “Enough,” he said. “Start targeting them. I want a missile on each of the big ships, and then spread more over the u-boat pens and the factories.”

“Yes, sir,” the electronics expert said. He tapped at his computer, carefully targeting each of the big ships, and then spreading several more missiles over the factories. “Sir, should we target the airfield there?”

Every instinct in Tyson’s body screamed to say ‘yes,’ to crush the airfield. He knew that the German planes would not be so bothered by losing an airfield, and then they would have wasted a missile.

“No,” he said. “There’s no point.”

“Yes, sir,” the electronics expert said. The picture from the drone rocked violently. “I think they’ve seen the drone.”

“No shit,” Davidson said. “Get it out of there!”

“Too late,” the electronics expert said. The picture heeled drunkenly as the drone fell down towards the ground, then vanished altogether. “I got the omega scream,” the electronics expert said. “The drone self-destructed. There won’t be any Germans repeating the Iraqi balls-up.”

Tyson nodded. In 2003, the Iraqi Army had wasted countless bullets trying to kill non-existent pilots when a drone had crashed into a marsh. “Let’s not waste time,” he said. “Mr Exec, launch the missiles.”

“Aye, sir,” Davidson said. He twisted his key in the firing console; Tyson added his own key and twisted it. “Missiles launching in thirty seconds.”

*Trafalgar* shuddered violently as the first missile launched, followed by another, and another, until seventeen missiles, each one carrying high explosive, were launched.

“Radar contact,” the electronics expert said. “German seaplane, following the missiles, I guess.”

Tyson made a quick decision. “Lower the mast and get us out of here,” he snapped. “It’s time to start hunting u-boats.”

## **Kiel Shipyards**

### **Germany**

**16<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

Vice-Admiral and *Flottenchef* Günter Lutjens, German *Kriegsmarine*, glared at the remains of the strange aircraft. He’d read the extremely oblique briefing from the *Kriegsmarine* Command – and received a private and considerably more detailed briefing from *Generaladmiral* Erich Raeder – but he found it hard to believe. Aircraft that flew faster than the speed of sound? Warships that fought with missiles? If the briefing hadn’t been approved by the *Führer* personally, Lutjens would have suspected that someone was playing a joke on the *Kriegsmarine*.

*Goring would be quite happy to make us look incompetent*, Lutjens thought grimly. The portly ‘iron fatty’ was so determined to keep all aircraft under *his* control that he’d held up the *Graf Zeppelin*, the aircraft carrier, for months. He scowled; the strange aircraft suggested that the reports were true, which meant...

Something *flickered* in the sky. His head whipped around; *Admiral Hipper* exploded with the force of a million bombs. The broken back of the heavy cruiser lifted into the air for a long chilling moment, before falling back to the water. Something else *flickered* in the sky; he *saw* it this time, a streak of fire that slammed into the *Admiral Scheer*, smashing the pocket battleship with ease. *Bismarck*, the ship he kept pleading to be allowed to send out into the Atlantic once it was finally fitted out, had its stern blown off; *Tirpitz* exploded in a chain of shattering explosions. *Graf Zeppelin*, still incomplete, and ‘Carrier B,’ were destroyed in fire.

Lutjens found himself on the ground, clinging on for dear life, as the missiles changed their targeting priorities. U-boat pens were blown open and he thanked God that most of the u-boats were out hunting British ships. Factories and administrative centres were destroyed casualty; some of the missiles seemed to be firebomb warheads as oil and fuel caught fire, spreading across the shipyard.

He blacked out for a long moment. When he opened his eyes, he thought he was in hell; flames were blazing brightly, wiping away the results of years of careful work. Lutjens staggered to his feet and looked around; a handful of ratings were rescuing documents under the command of *Kapitän zur See* Ernst Lindemann. Lutjens shook his head; Lindemann had been slated for command of *Bismarck*, something that would now be delayed.

“*Herr Flottenchef?*” Lindemann asked, as Lutjens staggered up to him. “Do you need medical attention?”

“*Nien*,” Lutjens said absently, his body swaying. “Tell the *Fuhrer*,” he gasped. “Tell him to make peace, whatever the price...”

He fell to the ground. He never felt the impact as his head hit the ground.

**German Air Base  
Pas de Calais, France  
16<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

On the advice – unwillingly given – of Captain Jackson, and based on careful studies of the books on the Iraq War, Adolf Galland had given firm orders that pilots were not to sleep anywhere near their planes, and in fact that planes were to be well camouflaged and separated from every other part of the base. The orders had not made him popular with the other *Gruppenkommandeure*, but Kesselring and Himmler had backed him up, forcing them to disperse their planes.

“Let them burn through all their hell-weapons,” Kesselring had said, and the *Gruppenkommandeure* had leapt to obey.

Galland stepped out from under the camouflaged tent – another source of complaints was that the pilots had to sleep in tents – and stretched. There was a crick in his back and he rubbed it, watching as dawn rose. For once, there was no need to fly in rising sunlight; the British radars could track them in any light and there was no need to make life unnecessarily difficult for the German pilots. He smiled; it was difficult enough as it was, even with the new medal. It had been intended for a new SS regiment, but instead any pilot who downed a jet aircraft – and had it witnessed – received a special medal.

*With such baubles armies are led*, Galland thought, as he lit a cigarette. Seconds later, it fell from his fingers as a streak of light blasted across the sky and slammed into the pilot barracks – where no pilots slept. A second missile exploded in midair, scattering little...*things* over the runway. He stared as the *Jagdgeschwader*'s pet mascot, a German terrier – ran over to paw at one of the little spheres; the explosion blew the little terrier into tiny chunks of blood and gore.

“*Achtung*,” he bellowed, waking the pilots who had managed to sleep through the air raid. “Everyone watch for those bastards...”

He broke off. One of the pilots had stepped too close to one and peered down at it. Seconds later, his leg was blown off and his face was scarred. “Everyone keep well away from them,” he howled, as a medic began to tend to the wounded pilot, who would never fly again.

“*Herr Gruppenkommandeur*, why can’t we make them detonate?” A pilot asked. Galland stared at him, and then smiled.

“Why not?” He asked. Carefully, he picked up some gravel and threw it at the closest one he could see, detonating it. The blast wave whipped at him, tearing holes in the dirt track that they called a runway, but he was unarmed.

“Everyone off the runway,” he ordered, as some of the army units who were supposed to be guarding the airfield arrived. “Richter, you and Kruger start detonating the others. It was your idea, so you can carry it out.” He stared over at the ruins of the main building. “Moller, you come help me splice a line into the field telephone cables; I have to report to Field Marshall Kesselring, and I have the strangest feeling that using a radio is going to be extremely unsafe around here – so don’t!”

Leaving Richter and Kruger to detonate the little mines, for he suspected that was what they were, he headed back to the telephone cable, where Moller connected the spare telephone to the cable. Calling Kesselring proved to be difficult; he wasn’t surprised. He would have been astounded if *Jagdgeschwader 27* had been the only target of the attack.

“*Heil Hitler*,” he said finally, when he finally managed to get through to Kesselring. It had taken nearly thirty minutes; time spent waiting and watching the pilots detonating the mines before using a bulldozer to smooth the rubble. “Field Marshall, the British attacked the airfield of *Jagdgeschwader 27* and...”

He listened in growing disbelief to Kesselring’s list of other targets that had been hit by the British. By and large, the fighters had survived the experience, but nearly a hundred bombers had been wrecked by the air raid. Radio stations, the handful of radar stations, and several targets of opportunity – including the German Embassy within Paris – had been hit. Kiel Shipyard had been paged; targets within Germany itself had been hit quite badly.

*If this is forcing them to expand their arsenal, Galland thought grimly, will there be anything left of us by the time they run out?*

Kesselring started to issue orders and Galland nodded grimly. *Jagdgeschwader 27* and the other air groups were to prepare to launch a second air raid on Britain. The pressure had to be maintained, Kesselring insisted; the winner would be the one who held up under pressure.

## Chapter Thirteen: Ancestral Manoeuvres

RAF Lyneham  
Wiltshire, United Kingdom  
17<sup>th</sup> July 1940

*I wonder if I'm being foolish*, Ambassador Ernst Schulze thought grimly, as he waited for the guard to open the cell. RAF Lyneham was not a normal RAF base; among other things it provided a secure place, free from the press, for hostages to relax after being freed. Now, it was playing host to a Nazi; Hans Mayer. He glanced up at the window; the dark-haired man, so chillingly like his photograph, was sitting at a table, playing with a pack of cards.

He shook his head. Germans of *his* era were discouraged from learning about the Nazis, but they knew too much about them. The Internet providers in German were more welcome to share pornography than Nazi information – let alone far-right propaganda – but they could do nothing about sites in America. Every young German looked on the sites, wondering about the last time the world had paid attention to Germany and German power was feared by the world.

Schulze shivered. Showing an interest in Nazism was a career-wrecker in Germany, but as Ambassador he'd been able to do some private research. The results of his research on Mayer himself now lay in his pocket; as soon as he'd heard that the British intended to allow him to meet with the Nazi 'representative' he'd looked him up.

"Are you ready?" The guard asked. "He's been well-fed, which is more than the bastard deserved."

Schulze nodded. A number of German pilots who'd crashed on British soil had been lynched; several after shooting several angry British civilians. Two days of extremely brutal combat – the reconnaissance pictures from Kiel had been shocking – were taking their toll on both sides. The Germans had managed to bomb London twice; they'd even managed to hammer an RAF base, RAF Odiham. Civilian airports had also been pounded, along with docks and suspicious-looking buildings within the target zone.

The British, even under Sir Charles Hanover, had kept *their* targeting to military and industrial facilities. The Belgium and the Netherlands docks had been pounded – several of the 'invasion ports' had been hit with FAE weapons and transformed into infernos – and German communication links had been struck with cruise missiles. Factories within the Rhineland had been struck, damaging the German war effort, but they were so much easier to rebuild than the 2015 industry.

"I suppose I am," Schulze said, wishing that he really were ready. Countless Germans had planned meetings with the Nazis, safe in the knowledge that they would never happen, but what did one say to one of the demons that had almost destroyed the fabric of Western Civilisation?

The cell door opened. Mayer looked up as Schulze stepped through, lifting an eyebrow. Schulze had half-expected him to give the Nazi Salute; instead he just smiled quizzically at him.

“*Guten Tag*,” Schulze said, and took a seat on the opposite side of the table. He studied Mayer, aware that the Nazi was studying him, and shook his head; the Nazi didn’t seem like a monster, but a disciplined soldier. He passed over the single sheet of paper, already knowing what it said.

**Mayer, Hans.** Born; 23/04/1910. Joined German Army, 1929. Joined Nazi Party, 1932. Transferred to German Army Intelligence, 1936. Stationed in France, 1940-1943. Transferred to Germany, Berlin Station, 1943-1944. Executed on suspicion (no proof was ever discovered) of involvement with the July Bomb Plot. Buried, unknown location.

“So, it’s true,” Mayer said. His accent was harsher, more Prussian, than Schulze’s. “You are from the future.”

“I’m from the Germany of 2015,” Schulze said. “Do you have any idea of how much damage Hitler is going to do to Germany?”

Mayer, he was certain, had to be reeling inside. His voice remained calm. “The *Fuhrer* saved us from the humiliation of Versailles and has made us strong again,” he said. “I would never betray him...”

“Your nation – my nation – was crushed,” Schulze said. “Even today – in my time – we’re still suffering the after-effects of the war.” He glared at him. “We are unable to undertake an independent foreign policy without being accused of being Nazis,” he said. “We are too timid to send many troops outside Europe. We allowed Stalin to take over Eastern Europe; our economy is still fragile between him and the French. Any attempt to be realistic, to handle the problems of our immigrants, was decried as pro-Nazi – and there are some within our own government who would be delighted at bringing back some of the trappings of your era!”

“It seems like a display of sense,” Schulze said. He glared at Schulze. “According to Admiral Canaris, history will have been changed.”

“Yes,” Schulze said, knowing that Canaris would have been executed along with Mayer in 1944. “It has; the *Kriegsmarine* has been crushed already, only a handful of ships and u-boats survive. The air battle rages on and on, but the outcome is pre-ordained. You can no longer invade these shores and...”

Mayer smiled at him, a curious smile. “You are...happy about that,” he said. “Why?”

Schulze slammed his hand down on the table. “Your people, the Nazis, brought shame, dishonour and disgrace upon us,” he bellowed. “Do you have any idea at all how much damage will be done?”

“So you asked before,” Mayer said. “And now that history has been changed, will that damage be done?”

Schulze realised grimly that he’d underestimated Mayer. “Indeed,” Mayer continued, “this ‘July Bomb Plot’ may never happen. It might succeed, if it did happen. It might fail; there are no guarantees of anything now.”

“True,” Schulze said, through gritted teeth. “On behalf of the newly formed organisation handling German...visitors to the UK before we ended up here, I am informing you that we are *not* interested in returning to Germany. We have asked for asylum and the former Home Secretary informs me that there is a very good chance that it will be granted. Of nearly two thousand people, *none* wanted to return; got that?”

Mayer looked doubtful. “How do I know that you are telling the truth?”

“You’ll have to take my word for it,” Schulze snapped. “I have letters, statements and recordings from some of them for their families, if you want to take them back, but otherwise...oh, and do bear in mind that you either changed your position or the nazi regime executed you for nothing, but suspicion.”

With that, he stormed out, allowing the guard to close and lock the cell. His police escort fell in beside him as he walked as fast as he could away from the station, back to the Helipad. He’d once been angry when the Germans had been taken into protective custody, but that had been before Dover, before Germans were lynched on the street.

\*\*\*

Jim Oliver had been in prison several times under several different names. Even with DNA testing, neither the American, Mexican or Brazilian Governments had realised that they were holding a former convict; and in the latter two cases, large bribes had ensured that all the evidence had been removed. For a prison – which it wasn’t – RAF Lyneham wasn’t bad at all, more like a hotel. He’d had a lobster takeaway the first night he’d spent at the base and the canteen was excellent.

After several days of debriefing – he’d been careful not to mention anything about his agreement to ‘assist’ the Germans – the interest had faded. He’d reassured them that the data he’d been carrying, the official information, would be useless to the Germans before 2015, and they’d been willing to accept that. They’d pressed him quite hard on information such as where he’d been kept and what the Germans might have had access to, but he’d played dumb and they’d seemed to have accepted it.

The emotional meeting with his sister and girlfriend – actually a representative of the group that he worked for – hadn’t gone badly. He’d reassured his ‘girlfriend’ that he would be up in Glasgow in time for a meal – a meeting with the directors – and that he had a lot to discuss with her. Once she’d left, he’d turned his mind to the *real* problem; smuggling the material out of Britain. Fortunately, he suspected he had at least part of an answer.

“De Valera, the Irish Prime Minister, announced today that despite the preparations to hand contemporary Northern Ireland over to Eire – approved today by Parliament – Eire would continue to remain neutral and host the German Ambassador,” the BBC announcer said. Oliver watched carefully as the reporter displayed a series of pictures. “Ambassador Eduard Hempel is reportedly part of a plan to destabilise Ireland – or was – but De Valera has refused to evict him and the Germans.”

*Brave man*, Oliver thought coldly. “The Prime Minister’s office hasn’t commented yet, but sources within the Foreign Office suggest that Ireland’s neutrality, recognised by all powers, is not infringed by Hempel’s presence. Despite that, under pressure from the Irish lobby,



Parliament voted today to reopen tourist links to Ireland, under heavy regulations and control.”

A cough from behind him drew his attention back to the room. The RAF Colonel, the commander of the base, stood there. “Mr Oliver?”

“Yes,” Oliver asked. “What can I do you for?”

“Some decisions have been made,” the Colonel said. He smiled. “As it happens, both you and the children have been cleared to be released from the base; the children back to their relatives within the United Kingdom.”

Oliver smiled. “Don’t take it the wrong way, but I will be glad to leave,” he said, completely truthfully. “Colonel, what about the others?”

The Colonel’s expression tightened. “We’ve been trying to find them,” he said. “The bastards seem to have dispersed them all over Germany; we found one, but lost her again before a rescue mission could be mounted. They’re getting better at tracking down our ELINT drones, worse luck, and we’ve had to suspend strikes on their radar installations – we’ve been running out of radar-homing missiles.”

Oliver made a face. “They can’t get at us here?”

“I shouldn’t be telling you this, but we should be getting the first batteries of radar-guided guns in a week or so,” the Colonel said. “Once we have thousands of them ringing our cities, they won’t be draining our forces any longer.”

“That’s good news,” Oliver said. “Thank you for having me.”

“Cars and lorries are only running with government permission at the moment,” the Colonel said. “Apparently, we have some new oil coming in from the North Sea, but the sudden surge of oil wrecked a lot of equipment, and then we have to worry about escorting the tankers. Still, we’ll be flying you home in a RAF Tristar to Glasgow airport.”

He hesitated. “Some members of the Press would be very interested in your story,” he said. “We’ve kept your name confidential, but if you want to have ten minutes of fame...”

“No thank you,” Oliver said quickly. “Data couriers have to be anonymous. If my name is pasted over fifty thousand newspapers, my cover will be blown and everyone will be watching for me.”

“I don’t think it matters now,” the Colonel said, “but suit yourself.”

**Edinburgh**  
**Scotland, United Kingdom**  
**17<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

As she had done for the past twenty happy years of marriage, Mary McManus carefully finished baking the bread and pulled it out of the oven, before placing it on the plate for her

husband. Her children – her adopted children – watched nervously; her husband had been one of the casualties of the first German air raid aimed at Edinburgh.

“There,” she said, smiling at her children. They were her children in all, but blood; she was barren. She loved her husband dearly and had never looked back from the day she’d accepted his proposal, but children had been the one thing she had been unable to give him. Sean hadn’t minded – despite his skinhead he was a decent man and a valiant fire fighter before his retirement – and they’d adopted five children and made them their own. “Just right for Sean.”

“Mom,” Cassie, her oldest daughter, said carefully. “Mom, Dad’s...gone.”

Mary sank onto the chair and started to cry, feeling everything catch up with her. They’d been looking forward to many happy years of Sean’s retirement, to Cassie’s wedding in October, to watching their grandchildren grow up. And then Britain had fallen back in time, Sean had been recalled to the fire brigade, the Germans had tried to bomb the city...and Sean had been caught in a burning house and killed.

“Eat the bread,” she said. “Eat the bread,” she snapped, when they hesitated. They knew that voice; it meant that if they didn’t comply Mary would reach for her hairbrush. The two boys, growing into fine strapping men, sat down and reached for the bread themselves.

“Mom, Farther O’Dougal offered to perform a funeral,” Cassie began.

“No,” Mary snapped, her fury blazing through. “I will have *nothing* to do with him, understand?”

The children shrank back under her rage. It was true; for all that she was a God-fearing Christian, Mary had flatly refused to allow them to go to Church, or to receive formal Catholic education. Her children went to a public school; the sole religious education came from Sean or Mary. It was the source of much gossip in the Irish community, but few dared to object; the last thing the Church needed was more scandal.

“They’re making us learn about World War Two in class,” Donald said. Tall and tough, he was still respectful of his mother. If he hadn’t been, his father would have taught his behind the lesson. “Mom, the history teacher says that everything is going to change now...”

“And she might be right,” Mary said absently. When news of Ireland – that it was the past Ireland – had been on television, a thought had occurred to her. She’d been born in 1960, but her parents were children in 1940; she was older than her parents. There was someone else she was older than, but that thought refused to form clearly in her mind.

Cassie put the television on. The BBC speaker spoke at length about a German u-boat that had surrendered near Orkney, before moving onto local news. A race riot had erupted – again – in London, following some of the Contemporary personnel from 1940 trying to find their families. They’d been less than amused to discover that their homes had become Asian districts and their remarks had provoked a riot. Mary tuned it out, concentrating on ensuring that her children had their schoolbags packed and that they were ready to go.

“The Scottish Tourist Group today announced the formation of new tourist trips to Ireland,” the speaker said, and Mary’s attention whipped back to the television. “Spurred by suggestions that many people would like to visit the 1940 Ireland, particularly now that the IRA and the other paramilitary terrorist groups have been wiped out, they have now arranged new tourist trips. For further information, log onto their website; trips will cost forty pounds of British money.”

“Cassie, go log onto their website,” Mary ordered, spying Sally about to pour salt into Donald’s boots. “Stop that,” she snapped, smacking Sally firmly on the rear. “Cassie, move before school.”

“Yes, Mom,” Cassie said, running into the next room. Mary had learned how to type for a typing course – Sean had joked that he would one day dictate his memoirs to her – but using the Internet was beyond her. She cleaned up the table, hearing Cassie type, and washed the table with a cloth, before shoeing the other children out of the door.

“It’s up,” Cassie said, running back into the kitchen and scooping up her bag. She gave Mary a kiss and ran out of the door, leaving Mary alone. Carefully, she left her tasks aside, feeling her heart break as her eye fell on Sean’s favourite mug, and entered the computer room. Cassie had been as good as her word; the website for the Scottish Tourist Group was on the screen.

*Let’s see*, Mary thought, brushing aside her silvering hair. She’d been a natural redhead, which had attracted boys, then men, and one other, to her. She’d had it hacked off once; Sean had never known. For all his decency, Sean could never have allowed an insult to his wife – and she’d been far more than just insulted – to go unpunished.

The website boasted of specially-booked hotels in Dublin, Cork and several other locations. Tourists would be shipped to one of the docks and transported to the hotel, then either allowed to go off on their own or escorted around the Island. A list of prohibited items followed; computers, history books and portable televisions, along with a handful of other items. Mary smiled; she didn’t know much about technology, but she was certain that a computer was useless without a power supply – and batteries didn’t last *that* long. Certain regions, including Northern Ireland, were out of bounds, with a note that anyone taken as a hostage by the remains of the IRA – simultaneously denying that any such remnants existed – would not be bargained for or any monies paid for their release. ‘Travel at own risk’ seemed to be the bottom line, something Mary approved of; it was something that Sean would have approved of as well.

Taking her life in her hands, Mary noted the telephone number and dialled, reaching the office after only five minutes on hold. “Hello,” she said. “I would like to book a place on one of the tourist trips to Ireland.”

“Certainly, madam,” the operator said. “The earliest is four days from today; is that acceptable?”

“Yes, of course,” Mary said, and gave her details. Between Sean and her, they had more than enough money to cover the trip and a booked room in a hotel, even if she didn’t use it. “Thank you for your trouble.”

She put down the phone and allowed herself a sigh of relief. She *would* go to Ireland, and she *would* see her parents, and then she would see someone else. She thought of something Sean had brought home and taught her to use, something designed to keep her safe, and smiled. It would be used at last.

## Chapter Fourteen: Plans and Preparations

Permanent Joint Headquarters  
London, United Kingdom  
18<sup>th</sup> July 1940

Admiral Somerville stepped inside the PJHQ's main briefing room and shook his head. On the surface, it seemed far less luxurious than the rooms that Sir Dudley Pound had commanded the Royal Navy from, but the amount of information at the fingertips of the men and women who worked there was astonishing. Even more astonishing was the sexual equality; *this* Royal Navy had female captains, female admirals, even a female First Sea Lord. Admiral Joan Grisham, he'd discovered since being flown to the future Britain, didn't take any crap from anyone.

His guide and minder, Alistair Lewis, waved cheerfully at a chair and offered to bring coffee. Somerville shook his head; he felt as if he needed a stiff drink. He declined; the PJHQ banned alcohol and cigarettes with equal favour. Somerville had wanted to smoke his pipe and had received a lecture on the dangers of cancer as a result.

"Can you put up a map of the Mediterranean?" He asked, and Lewis leapt to obey. The young officer – he suspected that Lewis was from MI5 or whatever it was called in this strange Britain – clicked the controls on the massive table and a perfect map of the Mediterranean Sea appeared in front of him. By now, he was getting used to the computers, even to use the basic interface with limited confidence.

He blinked. He'd finally worked out what was missing. "No ships?"

"You are cleared for more access than that," Lewis assured him, and typed more commands into the system. The map changed; the location of the ships of the 2015 naval units and the 1940 units appeared in front of him. Somerville devoured it with more eagerness than he'd felt when he saw some of the women of the strange era; the map was *useful*! The 2015 fleet, the surface units at least, were working with the 1940 units to escort some units from Palestine to Malta. The submarines were probing the Italian coast; the war cabinet had ordered that they abstain from offensive operations until the outcome of the Battle of Britain was decided.

Somerville smiled. With such technology, he had no doubt that Germany would be defeated. The Germans and their Italian lapdogs were working hard to reinforce Libya, shipping as much as they could across the Mediterranean, in support of Mussolini's push into Egypt. The Italians had reached Mersa Matruh, lashed by the force of their German 'advisors' and Mussolini's desire for glory, despite Field Marshall Graziani's natural indolence. General Sir Archibald Wavell, the commanding officer in Egypt, hadn't believed in the future Britain until the *Ark Royal II* – as it was now being called – landed a flight of Harrier aircraft at Alexandria.

"Ah, Admiral Somerville," a voice said from behind him. "I understand that you wanted to see me?"

Somerville turned around to see the Prime Minister, although through some strange legal argument he wasn't *exactly* the Prime Minister. He wasn't certain what to make of Hanover;

there was no question that he was a powerful and dignified man, but he seemed to have the attitude of a Chess player, rather than the brusque determination that Churchill had shown.

“Yes, I did,” he said finally, and waved a hand at the map. “Prime Minister, why are we not attacking?”

Hanover took a seat opposite him. “The remainder of the PJHQ staff and the COBRA committee will be here in ten minutes,” he said absently, not answering the question. “I would prefer not to subject you to the media inquisition, which is why the meeting is being held here.”

Somerville stared at him. It took a brave man to argue with Churchill; he wasn’t certain about Hanover. “Prime Minister, I would...appreciate an answer.”

“We cannot mass produce the weapons we need,” Hanover said. “You’re right; we could have inflicted the agony we inflicted upon Kiel upon Taranto; we could have sunk most of the Italian fleet. *However*, to do so would burn up some missiles that we could hardly spare – until we knew for certain how the battle of Britain would go. That’s the first reason; the second is more complex.

“Italy wasn’t too keen on the war in the first place,” Hanover said. “We were hoping that once the devastation that we inflicted upon Germany became clear, they would withdraw; in fact we offered them a peace agreement. Unfortunately” – he tapped the controls; a tactical map of Italy with some German army units appeared – “the Germans have taken steps to prevent an Italian defection from their camp.”

“The Germans will not respect Italy’s neutrality,” Somerville agreed. “It’s been a surprise that they respected Spain’s neutrality and didn’t march through them to get to Gibraltar.”

“That might have changed,” Hanover said. “We’re reading all of the German communications through the airwaves – even through some bastard slipped them a warning about *Enigma* – and they’re clearly planning something to add to the pressure upon us over England. Given Graziani’s natural laziness, Egypt is clearly one place where they’re putting on the pressure, and then removing Gibraltar would cripple us. They could place the same guns that shelled England there and close the straits to us.”

“Your ships have less armour than ours,” Somerville observed. “I do have another question; the books your...guide loaned me talked about how the war ended, with atomic weapons being deployed against Japan. Can you not use them against Hitler; end the war that way?”

“I’d be out of office in an instant,” Hanover said dryly. Somerville gaped at him. “More seriously,” Hanover continued, “we would ruin Germany and a good part of Europe in the process, and ruin any chance of building a new world order. Finally, if we expand one on a convenient target, we will show the rest of the world that an atomic bomb is possible – and point the existing atomic programs in the right direction.”

He grinned up at Somerville. “We’re not going to lose, Admiral,” he said. “Now, what did you think of the new London?”

*Terrifying*, was what came to mind. “It’s strange,” he said. “Every so often, there’s somewhere that looks familiar, and then it’s...not. There are so many strange people around...Indians and Africans, and strange buildings and shops.” He placed his head in his hands. “It doesn’t feel like home, Prime Minister; my wife and children are gone – dust – or lost in the time bubble that did this. Sir, what’s going to happen with the men in Egypt; they’ll have lost everything because of this?”

“The scientists are still arguing over what did this to us,” Hanover said. “They mentioned something called an Alien Space Bat” – Somerville giggled – “and looked, more practically, for physics experiments that might have done this to us. They found nothing, but a strange burst of interference on all channels at midnight. If Q or something like him did this, we have no way of asking him to put us back.”

“Q?” Somerville asked, as the doors opened and the staff entered. “Who’s he?”

“Never mind,” Hanover sighed, standing up and moving to the chair at the head of the room. Somerville stood up and saluted Admiral Grisham – they’d decided that she was clearly senior and she’d nearly bitten his head off when he’d tried to treat her with kid gloves – and she sat down next to him.

\*\*\*

Captain Stirling wasn’t having a good war, if the truth were to be told. Britain was under attack daily – and *he* was left running the Oversight Committee. Once they’d gotten over the shock, every decent and halfway decent historian and social scientist had descended on Northwood, offering help and support – often for being included in the classified loop. Being breveted to Major – a rank he’d *never* be allowed to keep unless he held the brevet rank for at least three years – didn’t soften the blow; not everyone thought he’d deserved it.

“I call this meeting to order,” General Cunningham said. The Chief of Joint Operations was acting as Chair; Hanover had declined the honour. “Major Stirling, if you would be so kind as to do the daily briefing...?”

Stirling stood up. At least General Cunningham made ‘Major’ sound like a genuine rank. “Thank you, General,” he said. “Over Britain, the Germans launched a smaller air raid that normal, employing around five hundred aircraft of various types. Another attack is expected this afternoon, but we hacked down seventy of the attackers, in exchange for five Jaguars and one Tornado. There was no attempt to attack Edinburgh after what happened yesterday, when a pilot had the bright idea of deploying a FAE bomb against the flight.

“On the plus side of the ledger, we can now be certain that an invasion is...unlikely to be even attempted,” he said, displaying a map. “We struck all the invasion ports in Belgium and totally wrecked the places. Barges, E-boats, even the handful of transports; we killed most of them. That means that we can free up some of the army for duty elsewhere, such as the Mediterranean.

“The search for the remaining prisoners has drawn a complete blank,” he continued. “We took the risk of flying an AWACS close to the German coast and amplifying the standard mobile phone system, but there was no reply. We’ll keep probing, but I suspect that unless the Germans slip up or we get lucky, we won’t find them at all. On a similar basis, Hitler survived our attempt to get him; we intercepted a broadcast from him hours after the

*Reichstag* was destroyed. I suspect that most of the Nazis have moved house by now; we seem to have injured Admiral Lutjens, but he might have been the only high-ranker to be hit.”

There was a slight snigger as his speech defect pronounced ‘ranker’ as ‘wanker.’ McLachlan coughed. “Major, can you be certain that it *was* Hitler broadcasting?”

“Voice print matches and he referred to the attack in detail,” Stirling said. “Unless he’s precognitive, he’s still alive.”

“Bother,” Hanover commented mildly. “Carry on.”

Stirling adjusted the map again. “From Admiral Turtledove, the Italians have been pushing into Egypt and heading for Cairo, having stripped most of their divisions to support a frontal attack at high speed. They’re moving troops and support equipment to Libya as fast as they can, despite our half-hearted interdiction efforts. The Germans have also moved several units into Italy itself; analysis suggests that they are intended to keep the Italians on side. General Sir Archibald Wavell would like to launch a counter-attack and has been preparing; unfortunately many of the units he was supposed to have got...lost when we arrived.

“In addition, the Italian forces are continuing into East Africa and pushing our Contemporary forces there hard,” he said. “I suspect that Hitler is trying to open as many fronts as he can; there are suggestions that the Germans have been strong-arming Franco to act against us in Gibraltar.”

He altered the display again; a summarisation of the briefing. “As yet, its impossible to be certain what Stalin knows about what’s happened, although the known presence of Soviet spies in Germany means that he was almost certainly know what the Germans know,” he said. “There has been some contact with American radio hams through radio – our own radio hams at work – but that depends on atmospheric conditions. The Oversight Committee recommended securing a relay station on Iceland, now that the prospect of Germany seizing the island has been negated.” He smiled wryly. “In conclusion, thank you for listening.”

“Thank you,” Cunningham said. “Prime Minister, the First Sea Lord and I have prepared a plan to conclude the war in the Mediterranean as quickly as possible,” he said. “Bernie?”

“Having ended the threat of invasion, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Armoured Division, the 1<sup>st</sup> Mechanised Division, the 15<sup>th</sup> Infantry, the 52<sup>nd</sup> Highland Brigade, and a handful of other units can be released from defence duty,” General Bernie Ascot said calmly. “As much of the expeditionary equipment has been pre-prepared for our NATO responsibilities, we can have that force in Egypt in five to six days, using a mixture of our own and Contemporary ships. In addition, No. 1 squadron of Harriers from the United Kingdom can be freed up and transported on merchant ships, as we did in the Falklands War. Once they’re there, under the command of General Robert Flynn who will be technically subordinate to Wavell, they will...”

“Excuse me,” Somerville said, who’d been tapping at his console, “but I believe that we should sort out the question of command. With all due respect to General Flynn, it is General Wavell who commands the forces in Egypt and holds the confidence of the men.”



“And a fine job he made of Operation Crusader,” Hanover said sincerely. “Admiral, I understand your concern, and I understand your feelings, but General Wavell knows nothing of the capabilities of the forces we possess. We have to smash the Italian forces, taking them prisoner if possible, and then push on into Algeria and cut the Germans out of North Africa entirely.”

“DeGaulle will make a stink,” Somerville said.

Hanover grinned. “He was in London at the time of the... Transition,” he said. “He’s gone. Dear me.”

“So, what are we going to do with Algeria?” Somerville asked.

“Politically, our objective will be to form a democratic government that will join the British Commonwealth,” Hanover said. “We might not get it, but our priority will be to stay long enough to establish a stable government and then leave. Besides, we’re doing the French a favour; no Algerian War in this timeline.” He smiled. “Admiral Grisham?”

“We expect to have the troops in Egypt on the 24<sup>th</sup> at the latest,” Grisham said. “By that time, we’ll have reinforced Admiral Turtledove with some extra Harriers and several submarines and frigates. On the 24<sup>th</sup>, we’ll destroy the Italian Navy and seal North Africa off from Europe, and then proceed on the ground.”

Somerville coughed. “We could do that now,” he said. “Why not interdict them now?”

Hanover smiled at Stirling, who’d come up with the idea. “We’re going to need some cannon fodder...ah, Free Italy Army,” he said, and chuckled. “The more they send over, the more who’ll surrender to us.”

“I see,” Somerville said thoughtfully. “Sir, what about the Japanese?”

“Good point,” Hanover agreed. “The sooner we handle the Mediterranean problem, the sooner we can prepare to face the Japanese. Admiral, please make the arrangements as quickly as possible.”

“Meeting adjourned,” Cunningham said quickly, as Hanover rose. “God save the King.”

**Jackson Industrial Estate  
Glasgow, United Kingdom  
18<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

The seven men in the room called themselves, when they were inclined to give themselves a name, the *Legitimate Businessmen*. The Jackson Industrial Estate, a modern computer-manufacturing plant, comprised a completely legitimate cover for the men, who handled one of the largest organised crime syndicates in Europe. More than a few of the ships owned by the Jackson Industrial Estate had been used to smuggle material; more than a handful of the staff of the Estate, who had very little to do with the companies that used the Estate for genuine reasons, worked for the syndicate.

Jim Oliver allowed himself a smile as he finally passed through the inner security fence and into the main meeting room. The ELINT check, fully as advanced as the best American equipment of their home era, revealed no sign of any surveillance devices; Oliver had half-expected the RAF personnel to have tried to bug him, but there was nothing. Even if they had, he *was* going to his workplace; he *was* one of the shareholders – and one of the directors of the *Legitimate Businessmen*.

“You have returned,” a man said. It bugged Oliver that he’d never been able to identify his origins; Allan Kasper seemed to have appeared out of nowhere. His career within the criminal underworld proved his *bona fides*, but Oliver still wondered. “I get nervous when you insist on doing the courier work yourself.”

Oliver shook his head. “I do have to hold a day job,” he said. “Nothing attracts investigation than living with no visible means of support. One day, I will retire somewhere, but not for a while.”

Kasper nodded. “I do trust that you were not followed,” he said. “This may be your legitimate place of work, but you have been in the public eye recently.”

“Some RAF bastard needs a pair of cement leggings,” Oliver said angrily. “How *dare* he leak my name to the Press?” Kasper shrugged. “Even if I was followed to a place I should be going to anyway, the reporter could hardly have gotten inside, could he?”

“No,” Kasper agreed. “Shall we proceed?”

The other men nodded, waving Oliver to a seat. “We have a problem,” Kasper said. “We were expecting delivery of a consignment of Black Aleph from America, which will be seventy-five years late.” No one smiled; Kasper wasn’t known for joking. “The net result is that we are seriously overextended; we are holding many asserts and we might well have lost our income.”

Oliver smiled; they would be just ready for his pitch.

“Already, our creditors, some of the organisations in Scotland, are demanding their money or their supplies or designer drugs,” Kasper said. “We can give them neither.”

A long silence fell. “I believe that I have a solution to our cash flow problem,” Oliver said, and explained the deal he’d made with Roth. There was a long silence.

“You’re talking about treason,” Hanford Fox said finally. The man spoke in a strong Irish brogue, name notwithstanding. “In case you haven’t noticed, the bastards have been blowing hell out of the English. If we supply them with information, they’ll use it against us and we’ll...

“Carry on,” Kasper ordered. “Tell me your plan.”

“There are three...sections of information that the Germans want,” Oliver said, who’d been giving the matter some careful thought. “They want historical information, defence information and technical information. By now, they already have a good idea of what is to come; they know the outline of history.” He smiled; he’d spent a day in the library

researching. “If we tell them who was involved in the July Bomb Plot, they would wipe out a fair percentage of their competent generals and commanders.”

Kasper made the closest noise he ever made to a laugh. “Therefore we would be helping the government to defeat the enemy,” he said. “Continue.”

Oliver bowed in his general direction. “We should not supply them with any form of defence information,” he said. “By now, they will know a great deal about our defences; I see no reason to expand what they have.” He smiled. “That would introduce the possibility that they might win.”

Fox nodded. “That *would* be treason,” he agreed.

“As for technical information, we could give them a lot that would be useless to them,” he said. “We could share information on their own later weapons, which are still outmatched by the RAF. We could give them the plans to the T-34; they never quite matched that tank until it was too late.”

“I do not believe that we have a choice,” Kasper said finally, as atonal as ever. “Mr Oliver, please prepare some...information for the Germans. I trust you do have a way of getting it to them?”

Oliver nodded. “I’ll get on it at once, Mr Kasper,” he said, and relaxed.

## Chapter Fifteen: Ruler of the Waves

Combat Zone

**Egypt**

**24<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

There were two ways of looking at the world, Field Marshall Graziani knew; the Mussolini way and the *real* way. Despite his attempts to warn the *Duce* of the dangers, the Italian Army was advancing across the desert, stripped of most of its equipment. At the urging of *Herr Obersturmbannfuhrer* Strudel, the German officer who'd been assigned to help them, he'd stripped every unit of their trucks and tanks, merging them into a single fast force, leaving the other units to make their way forward as best as they could. Despite that, a single British air raid, using one of the old aircraft, no less, had crippled their supply lines; the Italian army was moving ponderously to refuel and rearm the mobile force, which had dug in near Mersa Matruh, a small town in Egypt.

*I suppose the blasted German comes in handy*, he thought dryly, as the sounds of German-accented Italian rose up from outside. *Obersturmbannfuhrer* Strudel – what sort of rank was an *Obersturmbannfuhrer*, he wondered – might or might not have served with Rommel as he claimed, but he certainly understood military matters. The Italian Artillery, the most well-trained service the Italians possessed, were learning new tricks from him. They'd already heard about how tough British Matilda-class tanks were; now they knew the German trick of massing their artillery and allowing the tanks advance to break under their fire.

He wished the same could be said for the rest of his army. *Obersturmbannfuhrer* Strudel had said a lot of sharp things about it – and he had to admit that most of his complaints were justified – but there wasn't the money or the resources to equip the Italian Army with better tanks, or even to train like the war was coming tomorrow. He'd tried to warn Mussolini that the army would be unlikely to succeed in making it to Cairo against serious opposition, but the *Duce* had been adamant; Italy needed victories and it needed them now. They had to appear equals to the Germans, or else Hitler wouldn't take them seriously.

Graziani snorted bitterly. After *Obersturmbannfuhrer* Strudel made his report, he suspected that Hitler wouldn't take them seriously anyway. He was training as fast as he could with the waiting troops, but there was no way that they would be ready for modern war. Not for the first time, he cursed the adventure in Spain; it had cost the Italian Army strength for no reward at all. Franco had refused to become involved in the war; if he'd shut down Gibraltar the problem of Egypt would have...gone away.

*We've never faced a British army*, Graziani thought angrily. The Italians had faced colonial troops, stiffened by a handful of Englishmen, in Africa before, but General Sir Archibald Wavell commanded a *real* army. The Germans had defeated a British army, but the British had been allied with the French, whom Graziani hated. Without German support, Graziani suspected that the attack on Egypt was doomed, but at what price would that support come?

A polite knock, the form of politeness that suggests rudeness, started him out of his thoughts. *Obersturmbannfuhrer* Strudel had come to complain about something else, perhaps the supply lines, which were...not in the best of shape. If the Navy had kept its word, then they would have been able to land directly onto the shore, but instead they were dependent upon

Tripoli. Just as he called for the German to enter, he remembered where he'd heard the rank *Obersturmbannfuhrer* before. It was an SS rank.

*What is an SS officer doing in Libya?* He wondered, as *Obersturmbannfuhrer* Strudel entered the office.

\*\*\*

Unbeknownst to either Grazini or his German advisor, a small pilot-less drone hung high over their heads, watching them. Light, nearly transparent, radar-invisible, the only sign of the drone's presence was the steady stream of information it was broadcasting back, with a flagrant disdain for security precautions that would have cost its operator his or her career back in 2015. In 1940, nothing the Axis had could even detect the UHF signal, let alone launch a missile that would home in on the signal and kill the drone.

"They're still strung out," Cadet Younghusband observed. Normally, the British Army would have refused to send someone who was a cadet – particularly one with as little experience as Younghusband – into combat, but there was a grave shortage of people. Nineteen years old; Younghusband was demonstrating technology to men many years his senior, including some out of history. General Sir Archibald Wavell – commander of the Contemporary Forces and future Viceroy of India – and General Robert Flynn, Commander of the 2015 forces, stood behind him, staring down at the field laptop. The system, developed for the Iraq War, could be turned into a mobile command centre with ease.

"It looks as if they've outrun their supply lines," Wavell said. "I intended to *face* them at Mersa Matruh; your people insisted that I fall back."

That wasn't entirely true, General Flynn knew. Admiral Cunningham had *urged* Wavell to fall back when the Contemporary Forces hadn't known exactly what had happened in Britain. If Wavell had stood, without the forces he'd possessed later during Operation Crusader, which had been averted by the Transition, he might have lost.

"That is hardly the point," General Flynn said, as diplomatically as he could. Wavell's missing eye, lost during Ypres, seemed to glare at him. "We now have an opportunity to cut them off and crush them utterly."

"And your forces are going to do it," Wavell said. "What are my men here for then?"

"Support," Flynn said. "General, Archie, I understand as well as you do just how...inconvenient this entire situation is. Rest assured that I intend to see your people brought up to spec as fast as possible; they're already refurbishing older tanks to press into service. We are retooling some of our factories to produce AK-47s for your people; you will not be denied your chance to fight."

"At the same time, your forces have been seriously demoralised," Flynn continued. He'd insisted on waiting until his forces had arrived before making the announcement about the Transition to the British troops already on station. The sight of the Harriers, the helicopters and the strange, powerful tanks had convinced many where words had not. The Indian soldiers hadn't been that bothered, but the other soldiers, British, New Zealander and Australian, had been horrified. Already, there had been seven suicides; men who had lost

their wives and children forever. Other men were taking refuge in drink; there had been several drunken riots already.

“I know that,” Wavell snapped. His own wife had been lost forever. “My troops are not babies or Italians; they can fight under any circumstances!”

Flynn nodded grimly, understanding. Wavell wanted to lash out at someone, anyone. An intensely disciplined man, Wavell was under terrible strain; he dared not let go for anything.

“General, with all due respect, your troops can only move at walking pace,” he said, not entirely correctly. “You have a force of Matilda tanks” – fortunately they’d been in transition when the 1940s Britain vanished – “and some lorries, but your force as a whole can only move slowly. My force can punch around them here” – pointing to Mersa Matruh – “and destroy their supply lines, here and here.” He tapped the map. “Once that’s done, the forces in Mersa Matruh can surrender or die of thirst.”

“And my troops will accept their surrender,” Wavell said firmly. Flynn nodded. It was a small concession to make and it might start the long process of repairing the moral of the troops.

“As soon as Admiral Turtledove sends the signal, we attack,” Flynn said. He smiled; with the reconnaissance information from the drone, it would be very hard to *lose*.

## **Ionian Sea/Taranto Harbour**

Mediterranean

**24<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

After the attack on Kiel, the *Trafalgar* had been hunting u-boats, killing five before being summoned back to the Royal Navy’s main base for reloading and dispatching to the Mediterranean. Their success at Kiel might have come with a price, the PJHQ had warned them; the official war stocks of the Royal Navy included five hundred Tomahawk missiles; and they’d burnt through nearly a hundred of them, bombarding German positions.

“Up mast,” Captain Tyson ordered. It was nearly noon; he’d wanted to delay launch until evening, but the plan for a joint offensive – using Contemporary Forces as well as 2015 – required the land attack to be launched in the day. “Radar scan...”

“No sign of anything apart from the Contemporary Forces, twenty kilometres due south,” Lieutenant Patel reported. The Contemporary Forces, Admiral Cunningham’s forces, had been equipped with improved radar, communications and air support, courtesy of Royal Navy Harriers that had been based on Malta. *Their* task was to interdict the sea-lanes; even through two nuclear submarines could have remained on station for weeks, if necessary. He’d heard that plans to refit the battleships were under development, but he wasn’t certain if the Royal Navy could even begin to handle such a task.

Captain Tyson chuckled. The Contemporary Forces had been delighted with their new fire-control radars – even though they’d had basic fire-control radars anyway – and were looking forward to the next German or Italian air raid. No one had had the heart to tell them that the basic algorithms had come from a wargame from a PC game company; *Battle of the Giants*.

“Admiral Turtledove has just cleared the attack,” Lieutenant-Commander Davidson said. “We are receiving a feed from the orbiting drone.”

“Show me,” Tyson ordered. The screen cleared; the Italian harbour at Taranto loomed ahead of them. Battleships and cruisers floated at anchor, protected by a flight of German aircraft; there were no Italian aircraft orbiting. The display altered as more information was downloaded; identifying each of the battleships by name and linking to the stored information in the fleet’s database.

Lieutenant-Commander Davidson smiled. “*Conte di Cavour, Giulio Cesare, Andrea Doria, Caio Duilio, Littorio and Vittorio Veneto*,” he said. “The pride of the Italian fleet, hiding in the harbour and cowering from an inferior foe. If they’d bothered to develop their radar system, they would have proved a match for Admiral Cunningham. The Germans should have just taken it over and crewed it themselves; no one ever accused the Germans of lacking in competence.”

“You’ve been reading up on this,” Tyson said wryly. “The other ships?”

“*Zara, Fiume, Pola and Gorizia* are all heavy cruisers,” Davidson said. “Three of them are due – were due – to be sunk a year in the future at the Battle of Cape Matapan.” He changed the display. “In all, six battleships, seven heavy cruisers, two light cruisers, and eight destroyers.”

Tyson shook his head. “Good God, we don’t even have a terminology for this,” he said. “Mr Exec, designate targets...and fire!”

\*\*\*

Vice-Admiral Inigo Campioni, newly confirmed as the commander of the fleet-in-being that waited at Taranto, kicked his cigarette into the water. He’d commanded the fleet in the Battle of Calabria, which had been an Italian victory no matter what the Germans and British said, and the news that a newer and dangerous Britain had appeared – and trashed the German shipyards at Kiel – had alarmed him. More alarming were the two German divisions that had appeared in Italy, officially to train the Italian army to German standards. Unofficially...

Unofficially, they were a German dagger pointed at Italy’s heart. The King, several of the less competent ministers and almost all members of the opposition, such as it was, had been placed in their custody. Mussolini, bolstered by their presence, had announced yet another efficiency drive – using German aid and advisors. In some ways, it was helping Italy; he’d heard that a new Italian radar system would be going into mass production soon, but it came at a cost. Italy’s would become nothing, but an adjunct to the German war machine – in pitiless combat with a super-advanced Britain. He’d heard that the King had planned to move against Mussolini, but it had been too late; the Germans were in control.

*When are you going to attack the British? They keep asking, he thought bitterly. Do they not understand that the Navy is the only thing that Italy has of value; it must not be squandered. It’s the only bargaining chip we have; the one thing the Germans do not have...*

He scowled grimly. Several hundred *Kriegsmarine* officers – the survivors of the Kiel attack that were not shell-shocked or wounded – were on his ships, helping to train the Italians and improve their systems – and, he suspected, to provide a cadre for a German take-over of the

fleet. It was surely no coincidence that half of the crewmen had been ordered to remain on shore, rather than onboard their ships; they'd been forbidden to practice rapid crewing of the ships in case of a quick sortie.

*We're prisoners of the Germans*, he thought, and then *Conte di Cavour* literally blew out of the water. A thunderous explosion shattered the battleship's hull, blasting chunks of debris across the port, and then detonating its ammunition. In seconds, the battleship that had once carried the King to America had been blown to fragments. An air raid warning sounded, too late, as black dots swooped down from the sky, precisely targeting and slamming into the battleships, killing them one by one. Other missiles targeted the facilities; the half-empty oil tanks, the ammunition dumps, and...

Vice-Admiral Inigo Campioni had only seconds to realise that he'd escaped the Germans forever before a missile blew him and the docks into very tiny pieces of rubble.

Combat Zone

**Egypt**

**24<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

The tanks powered their way across the desert at very high speed, carefully avoiding the main Italian concentrations at Mersa Matruh before angling around to move along the Italian supply lines. Behind them, their support vehicles and infantry IFVs held back, waiting for the tanks to complete their part of the mission. Further behind them, every lorry and transport that General Wavell had been able to move up was also moving; heading directly for the Italians.

"Targets ahead," the driver said. The tank commander checked the scope; it was several Italian lorries and a handful of the piss-ass tanks they were driving, ones that could never have stood up to a Matilda, let alone the Challenger main battle tanks that the British were deploying.

"Gunner, load high explosive," he said formally. There was no point in wasting armour-piercing rounds on the crappy little tankettes. "Fire!"

"Firing high explosive," the gunner said, and the tank shuddered. A single round shot over the desert and slammed into the Italian tank. It exploded in a single blast; killing the crew instantly.

"Fire two," the commander ordered. "Kill them all."

"Aye, sir," the gunner said, as the other tanks commenced firing. One by one, the Italian tanks were picked off, the British shooting from well beyond the Italians' range. There was no attempt to fight as the tanks slowed; the Warrior AFVs moving up to surround the lorries.

"Surrender or die," the infantry officer shouted, as the infantry disembarked. The Italians showed the same willingness to die that the Iraqis had, seventy-odd years in the future. Trapped in a hopeless position, they surrendered quickly, even offering to drive their own lorries to the British camp.



“Time to move on,” the tank commander said. “Reconnaissance shows more convoys moving across the desert, and we don’t have any time to spare.”

He checked his GPS system. Losing the satellites had *hurt* their navigation, but now, with several navigation beacons set up, they could locate their position with a high degree of accuracy. “According to Recon, there’s a second convoy moving east ten miles west of us,” he said. “Let’s go put them in the pen.”

\*\*\*

A second whistle echoed in the air and an ammunition dump exploded with an uncanny precision. Field Marshall Graziani shuddered; he didn’t know how the future British were doing it – he’d never heard of laser targeting from a high-altitude drone he didn’t even know existed – but they were slowly stripping away his forces from far out of his own range.

“Field Marshall, there is a British armoured car waving a white flag,” his Lieutenant said. “Perhaps they want to surrender.”

Graziani shook his head. The young man was naive; they’d lost all of the convoys that had been supposed to reinforce them from the irritating hen-pecking attack that was steadily wiping them out. Their shells – he was wondering if it was only one gun rather than the hundreds that had fought in the Great War – were diabolically accurate.

“Let’s see,” he said, lifting his vintage binoculars and peering through at the strange armoured car. It seemed tough enough to be a tank in its own right; he recognised the man sitting on the roof. General Wavell himself. “Put up a flag of our own,” he ordered. “I’m going out to meet him.”

The Lieutenant didn’t protest. Grazini walked behind him, allowing him to carry the flag. He hadn’t realised yet; hadn’t realised that the British officer was here to demand their surrender. He was dimly aware of *Obersturmbannfuehrer* Strudel joining him; his German uniform glinting in the sun.

“Good afternoon,” Graziani called, as Wavell jumped off the armoured car with a sprightliness that belayed his age. “What might I do for you?”

Wavell’s one good eye fixed him with a stern look; the upper-class Briton looking down his nose at the foreigner. He remembered that Wavell had served as an ally before, and that Italy had kicked the British while they were struggling for their lives. He scowled, cursing Mussolini with all the viciousness he could inside his head.

“I will not bandy words with you,” Wavell said finally. “Our...descendents have pushed their armoured units all the way into Libya and are advancing on Tripoli. Many of your units have been encircled, as you have been here, and have been rendered helpless...”

“We’re not helpless,” the Lieutenant said hotly. *Obersturmbannfuehrer* Strudel nudged him, not gently.

“You are helpless,” Wavell said. “I am assured” – there was a dark note in his voice – “that picking off your men one by one is possible, and it will be done if necessary. You have lost

the puny tanks you sought to deploy against us; your supply lines have been cut, and you will die of thirst in a few days, sooner if we blow your water tanks open with a well-placed shot.”

A man hopped out of the armoured car. Graziani stared at him; he wore black body armour and carried a weapon that seemed to be almost as tall as he was. “I am prepared to accept your surrender,” Wavell said. “Your men will be well-treated, although you will understand that we have very little food at the moment. If you do not surrender, we will wait until you all die and walk in and take over.”

Graziani felt what was almost relief. The responsibility would be over. “In that case, I surrender,” he said finally.

“No,” *Obersturmbannfuhrer* Strudel snapped, and lifted his pistol. Time seemed to slow down as he pointed it at Graziani, his finger tightening on the trigger, and then the strange soldier fired his weapon. *Obersturmbannfuhrer* Strudel fell back, a neat hole appearing in the back of his head.

“I accept your surrender,” Wavell said. “Please, have your men parade, so we can handle this with a little dignity.”

10 Downing Street  
**London, United Kingdom**  
**24<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

Hanover examined the map with considerable interest as the computer updated it. The armoured columns were advancing at a considerable rate, supported by naval gunfire and Marine raids from the sea. The Italians simply could not muster any resistance; Tripoli was screaming to be allowed to surrender after the *Warspite* had shelled the city and its defences. With supply lines cut, quite firmly, the Italians were going to lose and knew it. Even the brutal air raids on Britain were seeming to slack off, giving the RAF some much-needed respite.

*And then, Algeria – or French North Africa as its called here*, he thought, and smiled. It wouldn’t be long before the fields of Libya and Algeria were teeming with crops, thanks to an imported genuine 2015 desalination plant; one had already been moved to Egypt to make the desert bloom. The British forces in the field would never have to worry about shortage of water again, nor would Egypt need to build costly dams, like the one the Israelis had blown open in 2010.

*We’ll have to set up a council of local dignitaries*, he thought, reading through the papers from the Oversight Committee. Avoiding the debacle that had followed the historical invasion of North Africa would be important; ensuring that the Africans were allies would be even more important. The prospect of a British-allied Africa, developed to 2015 standards, would solve many of the world’s problems. Proper government would solve so much; a ten-year plan to develop and then leave them as independent nations; the expatriates from Britain had already showed an interest in working to avoid Africa’s slow slide into chaos.

“Prime Minister?” His assistant said. She’d been appointed by Smith and he hadn’t bothered to replace her. “You have an important telephone call from Ambassador Heekin. Sir, apparently something’s gone very wrong in Ireland.”

## Chapter Sixteen: Past Present

German Embassy

Dublin

24<sup>th</sup> July 1940

Ambassador Eduard Hempel, German Ambassador to Ireland, knew that his tenure and his life hung by a thread. He rather enjoyed working in Ireland – both sides took care to avoid sinking Irish ships and they had no rationing – and it was peaceful. He knew that Churchill had invited the Irish to join in the war, and that the *Abwehr* had agents in Ireland, but relations between him and De Valera were cordial.

However, the new future Britain, if the wilder claims in their newspapers were true, was something else. They'd offered to *give* De Valera Northern Ireland and his dream of a united state for *free*; they hadn't even demanded that Ireland toss him and his nest of spies out on their ears. The ambassador from some weird future Ireland, Ambassador Heekin, had buttonholed him and lectured him about the evils of the Nazi regime during a reception. He hadn't enjoyed *that* conversation, not with an *Abwehr* agent 'escorting' him.

Still, as long as De Valera held out on the subject of Ireland remaining neutral – and the shockwaves of learning about the future of Ireland spreading through the population – his seat was assured. The *Dail* had – quite firmly – insisted on censoring some of the material on the future, aided by the withdrawal of what were now being called the Contemporary Forces from Northern Ireland. A five-sided civil war seemed to have broken out in the north, and news of their future had not gone down well.

He grinned, sipping his Spanish wine. The Germans didn't send ships directly to Ireland – the British future newspapers, which had massive gaping holes on the front pages, had raved about the devastation unleashed on Kiel – but the shipping lanes with Franco's Spain were still open. Spanish ships carried some Irish produce; in exchange transporting wine, ambassadors and some secure communications. He glared at his latest communication from Berlin, which had passed through France and Spain to reach him, ordering him to convince the Irish to join the war.

*Outdated before I even got it*, he thought grimly. De Valera would not be swayed, not now, not with his dream of a united Ireland in his grasp. Ambassador Heekin's little gifts, including the tiny 'mobile phone' network, served to convince the *Dail* that opposing the future British would be suicidal. Besides, they had too many other problems – such as a string of people from Britain assisting the various civil war sides – to worry about a second war.

"*Herr Ambassador*, there is an Englishman to see you," his secretary – an *Abwehr* man reported. Hempel nodded; several dozen Englishmen and more Irishmen had visited his embassy since the... Transition, as everyone was calling it now. Some of them had begged for asylum; others asking for German assistance for *their* attempts to forge Ireland into the kind of state *they* wanted. The purge of every member of future organisations had sent thousands scurrying for whatever hiding places they could find.

"Send him in," Hempel said. "Let's see what he has."

The Englishman stepped inside the room and Hempel lifted an eyebrow. He was dressed neatly in contemporary clothes; only the strange object he was holding in his hands betrayed his future origins. He tapped his lips, waving the device around the room before closing the curtains and taking a seat.

“The room is clear,” he said. “It’s rather trusting of the government; given their advantages in electronic surveillance technology they would have no trouble in placing a unique bug in these rooms.”

Hempel inclined his head, inviting him to speak on. “I have been sent by a representative of an organisation that struck a bargain with SS-*Standartenfuhrer* Herman Roth and his superior officers,” he said. He placed a parcel on the table. “That represents the first delivery of information.”

Hempel opened the parcel with care. It was full of the little shiny discs he’d seen before, from some of the technology that his agents had had a look at. He narrowed his eyes; how were they supposed to use them?

“You already have the ability to read them,” the man said, answering his unspoken question. He passed across a business card. “We have taken up lodgings here,” he said. “Should you wish to contact us, you can do so through there, but I would ask you to be discreet.”

Hempel nodded. “That CD at the top is for the *personal* attention of SS-*Standartenfuhrer* Herman Roth,” the man said. “I would advise you to be careful with it.”

“I will,” Hempel promised. “Thank you for your time.”

Ferns

**County Wexford, Ireland**  
**24<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

Ferns was a small town, situated near the east coast of Ireland, near a crumbling castle. History had once touched Ferns – and marched and trampled all over it – but by 1940 it had been almost forgotten by history. Mary knew that history would remember it again, and not in a kind way, but for the moment she was almost lost in its...innocence.

It had taken her several days to work up the nerve to step back into history. She’d even cancelled the trip several times, but she’d finally dared to go. Subconsciously, she’d been expecting tour buses and travel guides, but instead it was quiet, almost as she remembered. She’d been born later, in 1960, but Ferns hadn’t changed much at all in the intervening twenty years.

She parked her car on the edge of the village, carefully locking it with the village children looking on, and wandered into the village. The inhabitants were warm and friendly; finding a room at the local inn had been easy. Some of the children had begged for a ride in her car – a vehicle fifty years out of place – but she’d refused. There would be no petrol in Ireland for a long time yet; in 2015 the Irish had been fanatical about converting to hydrogen-powered cars.

*Dear Mary*, she thought, as a middle-aged man entered the room. The Innkeeper and he used to be good friends, of course, and she kicked herself for forgetting it. Time seemed to slow down around her as she stared at him; her grandfather as a young man.

He still had the same twinkling smile she remembered; a face that was warm, with a twinkle in his eyes. His beard was brown; the grey she remembered would develop over twenty years. Behind him, a little girl, no more than three at most, toddled behind him; her mother. Her grandparents had only had one daughter.

She was so distracted that she didn't notice her grandmother coming up. "Is there a problem dear?" She asked. It wasn't the subdued hostility of a person who'd grown up in a world of unfriendly child molesters, but a genuine warm concern. She'd died of cancer in 1970; ten years after her granddaughter had been born.

"Grandmother," she whispered, and fainted.

\*\*\*

Three hours later, Mary was in the odd position of bouncing her mother on her knee. Her grandparents had been delighted to see her, once they'd seen the photographs and artefacts she'd brought with her. One of them, the George Cross her grandfather had won on the Somme, lay on the table, next to an exact copy. They'd been chilled to see it; the scars on the Cross were exactly the same.

"So I have great-grandchildren now," her grandmother said. The coloured photographs were a marvel to them – even though they'd tut-tutted at Cassie's dress – and they'd thumbed through them. "When are they coming to see us?"

"I'm not sure," Mary admitted. "They should have been on holiday, and then someone had the idea of bringing them back to school so they could learn more about this era." She smiled. "They made a fuss about that."

"Well, they'd be welcome," her grandfather said. He'd gone very quiet when he'd seen the George Cross, even though she'd refused to talk about their future. "Who is Eileen going to marry again?"

"Shamus McManus," Mary said, and set off a round of chuckles. Her father's father was in the room; he'd been equally stunned to know his children's future. She took a breath; the room was full of tobacco smoke. She *had* tried to warn them about that.

"If you don't mind, I need to go for a walk," she said, and hurried out, sinking onto a bench. It was all too overwhelming; she felt as if she were jet-lagged, but time-lagged. This little village wouldn't change too much, but then...

"Are you alright?" A male voice asked. She looked up to see a young man in a priest's formal robes. "I'm Father Brennan."

The shock that ran through her body must have shown on her face, for he instantly grew more concerned. She stared at him; his voice was different, his face was young, but it was unquestionably the same person. He'd been young when he'd come to Ferns, she remembered, and he'd remained there for over sixty years.

“I know you,” she said, and he looked astounded. “I know you, Father.”

“I don’t see how,” he said, and smiled down at her. The smile was the same; warm, comforting, manipulative...and chilling. How had she been fooled the first time? How had her family been fooled? How had *everyone* been fooled? With the wisdom of sixty years, she looked through the mask and shuddered.

“Father, do you believe in predestination?” She asked. “Do you believe that we always walk the same paths time and time again?”

“The Church believes that God knows the future as easily as he knows the past,” he said carefully. She understood now; he hadn’t wanted to be a priest at all. “If you swear to pray in the future if He gives you something, he will know if you will keep your promise.”

“But if someone was to do something wrong in the future, might God still hold it against them if they died first?”

Father Brennen shrugged, losing interest in the conversation. On one level, she sympathised; he had to argue with older parishioners who understood more than he did. On the other level, had it been *this* even that had...

“I’m sorry,” she said. “In some ways, it could be said that I’m doing your soul a favour.”

“I beg your pardon,” he said. He didn’t understand. She reached into her bag and pulled out the pistol; Sean had been issued it when young thugs had been attacking police officers. She shot him once, through the head, and dropped the weapon on the ground. She didn’t resist when the police officer arrested her; she even helped him to use her phone to call Dublin. Her Grandparents asked her why, but she refused to answer; they would never have understood.

**British Embassy  
Dublin, Ireland  
25<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

Heekin had been offered the use of the British Embassy for as long as he wanted, along with Ambassador Darter. He wasn’t certain if Hanover had sent him a woman who was so idealistic out of a desire to help or hinder him, or if he’d been simply getting rid of someone who had to have been getting on his nerves.

After all, she’d been getting on *his* nerves.

“Prime Minister,” he said, into the mobile phone, wishing that they had the bandwidth to mount a videoconference system, “Mary McManus has been remanded into our custody, but De Valera wants her to stand trial.”

“I see,” Hanover’s voice said. At least they’d gotten the connection strong enough for a proper conversation; Ireland would be dotted with phone masts soon. The Isle of Man, which hadn’t come through the time warp, had been just as astounded as Ireland, but at least they’d adapted better without the threat of civil war.

“Under the limited information I have, I can hardly make a decision,” Hanover continued, brushing aside Heekin’s thoughts. “The Police hadn’t turned up any reason for her actions; have you been able to interview her?”

“I’m afraid so,” Heekin said. He scowled down at the transmitter. “She was apparently abused by the priest she killed, Father Brennen, in 1970. After seven years of hell, she came to Britain as a seventeen-year-old on a work program, married at twenty-one and moved to Edinburgh. Father Brennen himself apparently died in 1990; we found some records in the Internet archives to confirm that. She saw the tour trips to Ireland and...well, you know the rest.”

Hanover scowled. “The Police did find out how she got the weapon,” he said. “It was issued to her husband during the worst years of 2011, when we had the uprising. He never gave it back and no one caught him; clerical error.”

“Prime Minister, what do we do about it?” Heekin asked. “De Valera wants her to stand trial here, but she’s a British citizen and she did have good cause. He’s also worried about a scandal; there are bound to be plenty of others who would want revenge. Hell, sir, what about Americans such as Nixon, or Willy Horton, or who?”

“Willy Horton?” Hanover asked. “Never mind; you have a point. Do we grab someone who would have committed a crime in the original history? Do we allow a known criminal to be discriminated against for a crime he hasn’t committed yet? Hell, there must be dozens in the Contemporary Forces.” There was a chuckle. “The Oversight Committee never thought of *that* one.”

“And just wait until the Press gets hold of it,” Heekin said. “De Valera is sitting on the Irish press, but it won’t be long before *our* press learns of it. Coming to think of it, do we have a *duty* to warn people of possible abusers?” He scowled. “This is going to cause a great deal of trouble with the Church.”

“Fuck them,” Hanover said, with all the courage of a man who followed a different religion. “They didn’t condemn the Holocaust, so the Pope can go hang.”

Heekin scowled. “Sir, what are we going to do?”

“I’ll have a discussion with the Law Lords and then try and push some emergency legislation through Parliament,” Hanover said. “Dear God; I understand her point and I understand why she did it, but why now?”

“I’ll try and convince De Valera to give her a suspended sentence,” Heekin said. “With all the troubles up north, he has more to worry about than one semi-murderess. Still, once the press hear of it...”

**Supreme Court of the United Kingdom**  
**London**  
**25<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

The Supreme Court of the United Kingdom, which still enjoyed the nickname of the ‘Law Lords’ despite having come into existence to replace the original Law Lords, had had very little to do with the Transition and the response to the Nazi attack. Indeed, so many of their functions were irrelevant to the ongoing war that they had even disbanded themselves for the summer, until Hanover had summoned them back to London.

Kristy Stewart, fuming over the Government’s ongoing refusal to allow her to slip into Nazi Germany and interview Hitler, paced in the pressroom. The debate between the assigned team of judges was taking place in private; they would provide a temporary ruling until Parliament decided upon its response to the crisis. The news had broken only two hours ago, and the Supreme Court had been in closed session ever since. Only the brief note that a decision had been reached had brought her and her fellow reporters to the chamber.

“I apologise for the delay,” the man said at the end of the room, striding to the podium. He didn’t fit her mental impression of a judge – being dressed in a conservative business suit rather than a robe and wig – but he seemed efficient enough.

“The Supreme Court” – he strongly resisted the term Law Lords – “has been asked to rule on the question of future crime and the criminals who committed them. This has proven to be an issue of some concern; there are reports that several other Irish expatriates are planning to bring a civil suit against the Irish Government. There is also the danger that someone in the Contemporary Forces will have a history of future crimes, some of them calling for the death penalty.”

Stewart nodded, wishing he’d get to the point. The death penalty had been reintroduced in 2010 for serious repeat crimes; she had no doubt that the Nazi leadership would receive the same penalty as they had before.

“We have had great difficulty in coming to even a temporary verdict,” the Judge continued. She used her camera to film him; knowing that dozens of photographers would be making the same decision. “In some regards, it is clear that their crimes have not been committed – yet – and so they do not deserve punishment. In other regards, their crimes were serious enough to warrant some observation, if not outright removal of their freedom.

“Finding a compromise was not easy,” he said. “Finally, we ruled that a Contemporary person, even a criminal, was not the same as the historical person. What that means is if Ordinary Seaman Jones committed a crime in 1950; Ordinary Seaman Jones cannot be discriminated against for a possible future crime. We drew a precedent from the genetic testing ruling of 2009; it’s illegal for employers and insurance salesmen even to ask about it.

“However, working from the Repetitive Criminals Act of 2012, we have endeavoured to warn everyone we could of any possible revenge acts, and we will regard a repeat – if that term can be used - of their crime as a repeat crime, and thus earning severe punishment. Certain people responsible for acts of child abuse will be quietly watched by parole services, although there will be no limits on their legal activities.

“This is not a perfect solution,” he said grimly. “Parliament is due to debate the matter in a week; there seems to be some thought that the war is more important than this. Still, it’s a compromise – and we hope it will stand long enough to let us get back on our feet.”



## Chapter Seventeen: The Would-Be Powers

The White House  
Washington DC, USA  
25<sup>th</sup> July 1940

Ambassador Jackson King was confident that there had been other free black men in the White House of 1940; he'd even read about some of them in Grade School. Frederick Douglass, Washington's freedmen, even perhaps the President who was supposed to have 'passed' as white. The America of 1940 had abolished slavery, but it was still twenty years before they would be forced to confront their own social issues; black men were still not considered equals. It would be impossible for any lesser man to face the concentrated disdain from some members of Roosevelt's Cabinet; some of them had *hated* him at first sight.

He sighed internally. Beside him, Colonel George Palter seemed to be receiving some of the same treatment, even though he was white. His obvious deference to King wasn't being well-received; the computer files now displaying on the laptop had been provided from RAF Feltwell's internet cache and files borrowed from the British. The ten-page summary of the future lay beside Roosevelt's wheelchair, very well thumbed.

At the rear of the room, Lord Lothian, the British Ambassador from the Contemporary 1940, was talking in hushed tones with Captain Sir Lethbridge-Stewart. Apparently, they were related on some level; the Contemporary seemed to be having trouble grasping the concept. HMS *Edinburgh*, which had escorted the *Queen Elizabeth*, had astounded the Americans when it had arrived. Ambassador Quinn, a personal friend of Hanover – the 2015 ambassador to the United States having been left in 2015 – had given Lord Lothian a briefing and the ambassador had never been the same since.

The attention of the room focused on the projector from the *Edinburgh*. Communications with Britain were tricky without satellite relays, but by bouncing a signal off the atmosphere the British could contact HMS *Edinburgh*, which had forwarded the message on to Ambassador Quinn's computer system.

"So, I am to die in 1945," Roosevelt said. His wheelchair squeaked alarmingly. "And it seems I am to go through two more Vice Presidents."

Vice President Garner snorted. He already knew that his term as Vice President would end if Roosevelt won or lost; Henry Wallace would be Vice President if Roosevelt's quest for a third term were successful.

"You would do better to move directly to Truman," Palter said calmly. "It has long been suspected that Wallace was a Soviet agent."

"Hoover is going to go nuts when he sees all of these," Garner said calmly. The Texan didn't seem to be too irritated. "This list of spies includes a lot of..."

He broke off. Only a handful of the men in the room had been able to grasp that what would one day become the Manhattan Project had been penetrated from top to bottom; that all their secrets were open to general view.

“I would advise you to swoop on them before they can react,” King said, his southern accent contrasting with Garner’s. “The Press has already figured out the bare bones of what’s happening - and you have to secure the Philippines.”

William Franklin Knox, the Secretary of the Navy, coughed. Despite being firmly in favour of aid to Britain, Knox hadn’t taken the reports on Pearl Harbour very well at all. Learning that his personal friend Kimmel would become the scapegoat for the disaster had alarmed him; he’d even ranted about a ‘nigger fantasy’, which King had ignored. Not all of the Marines had been so calm; his escort detachment had been sucked into a brawl when one of the coloured Marines had been insulted to his face.

“How do we know that this is still going to happen?” He asked sharply. “If that...image there” – he waved a hand at the film of the attacks on the German and Italian Navies – “is genuine, then won’t history have been changed already?”

It was a perceptive question, King acknowledged. From the hints of racial unrest that were already appearing in Washington, he suspected that the United States had already been changed and would change further.

“Mr Knox,” Palter said, “the German strategy seems to be to force the British to fight on as many fronts as possible. By now, Japan and Soviet Russia will be aware of the...change, they will be aware of their own futures. The British do not have any communications with Australia yet, but they’re working on a relay system for radio transmitters. What they don’t have down there are modern ships; ships that could sink every ship in the Japanese Navy without breaking a sweat. To Tojo and his band of goons, it seems like a window of opportunity.”

He sensed Knox’s concern and Roosevelt’s flicker of worry. Roosevelt had once been Secretary of the Navy; he understood the old style of naval war. “The Japanese will have had an intelligence windfall fall into their laps,” he continued. “If the worst-case scenario is true, they will know *everything* about the Allied navies; the good, the bad, the ugly. They will also know that their only hope of victory is to force us out of the Pacific and work to develop new weapons from what they’ve learned.”

“You allowed some weapons to fall into their hands?” Knox demanded, finding a target for his rage. “*Fucking* careless handling.”

*I didn’t know that that word was in use at the time,* King thought absently.

Stung, Ambassador Quinn rose to Britain’s defence. “Mr Secretary, if you have plans to handle your entire nation being moved back in time, then you can talk. This caught us by surprise; we had *no* clue that this would happen.”

“There is also the matter of you owing us money,” the Secretary of the Treasury, Henry Morgenthau, said. The news of the Holocaust had shaken his Jewish soul to the roots. “Ah, Ambassadors, you do owe us a lot of money.”

“With all due respect, we have just given you priceless information,” Quinn said. “We are prepared to offer a single batch of information that you *will* need to develop new weapons, and we are prepared to establish a mobile phone network that will be completely secure. In

exchange, we need food, fuel, coal and a supply of the new weapons. We also need you to write off the debts.” He smiled. “We already paid them once.”

“You will not tell us how to make the mobile phones?” Garner asked. “We would be dependent upon your production.”

Quinn smiled. “You will be unable to duplicate them for at least twenty years,” he said.

Roosevelt tapped the side of his wheelchair. “Young man,” he said, addressing King directly. “If you don’t mind, I would like to talk about the matter privately with you.”

“That’s fine by me,” King said, surprised at the level of respect he was being shown.

“Delores, would you mind supplying these men with coffee?” Roosevelt said. He wheeled the wheelchair into the next room; King followed him. Behind him, he heard the clink of china cups and of men relaxing; Lord Lothian seemed astounded. He understood how he felt.

\*\*\*

“All this history is genuine?” Roosevelt asked, waving the documents over his lap. “We will go to war in 1941?”

“Yes,” King said flatly. “Mr President, I come from seventy years in the future. You cannot imagine the changes that happen between now and then.”

“Indeed?” Roosevelt asked. “Here you are, a black man who holds the respect of a white man, and of Marines to boot. The strange British ship in the Potomac. The...laptops. At the moment, I’d believe anything.”

King looked at him. “Including the information about your affair?” He asked. Roosevelt seemed unbothered. “You should never have slept with Lucy Mercer.”

“A minor mistake,” Roosevelt said. “I expect that many truths will come out over the next few years.”

King smiled in admiration. “They can cure you now,” he said. “There will be no need for you to die.”

“That’s beside the point,” Roosevelt said. “Tell me, Ambassador of 2015, should we deal with the British as they have suggested?”

“You have to do so,” King said. “You also need to make some legal changes.”

“I read your note,” Roosevelt said. “Once all the competing interests get a look at the next twenty years...”

“Chaos,” King said. “Mr President, you have to press for racial equality now, before it’s too late. You also have to force your own technology forward as fast as possible; the British information will help. You will also have the help of the other Americans who were marooned in the UK; those of them who will return to the United States.”

Roosevelt frowned. "You expect that we will fight the British?"

King took a breath. "Mr President, the British of this – of 2015 – know just how many mistakes happened because of your policies," he said. "Already, they are moving to make the best use of their second chance. With luck, they can build a fourth British Empire; a genuinely democratic system.

"And there are other troubles to alter," he said. "You have to push into space and establish a genuine foothold on the Moon. You have to convert to hydrogen before the deal with the Saudi devil has to be paid for. You have to regulate international commerce so that it doesn't work towards leaving the poor poorer and filled with hate for America."

"It seems like far too much for me," Roosevelt said. The President's voice sounded weak. "What's in the British information package?"

"I skimmed though it," King said. "They've presented you with some details on torpedo designs, basic radio sets, automatic weapons that will treble the firepower of infantry, anti-tank weapons that will destroy any German tank, and a mass-produced tank provisionally dubbed the Firefly."

He smiled; the Firefly was an improved T-34, designed by a British tank enthusiast who'd been delighted to be able to put his hobby to use. It was simple to build, simple to drive, simple to repair, and very tough, tougher than any other tank until 1960. He didn't mention the source of the idea; it would only have upset people.

Roosevelt smiled. "And they want us to make them for them," he said. "Why can't they build them for themselves?"

King shook his head. "Their industrial plant is geared towards turning out higher quality equipment that takes longer to build," he explained. "If you produce them, they'll be able to produce more of the war-winning systems that you'll need."

"I suppose we have no choice," Roosevelt said. "I suppose I'd better discuss the matter with my esteemed rival for the coming election, just in case."

"One other matter," King said. "Mr President, a lot of the people in the UK who are Americans are black, like me; they will not appreciate being treated as second-class citizens."

"I'll do what I can," Roosevelt said. "It's hard to make promises during an election campaign."

\*\*\*

Lord Lothian, aka Philip Kerr, 11th Marquis of Lothian, was shocked. He'd heard crazy rumours for the last couple of days, but nothing like what he'd just been told by the new ambassador. If he hadn't seen the *Edinburgh* and its Lynx helicopter, he would have assumed that the entire story was some kind of crazy joke.

"So you're telling me that this...ah, Sir Charles Hanover is Prime Minister now?" He asked finally, after reading through the history digest. "Have you lost your senses? We cannot afford to break ties with America at this moment?"

“Britain has just trashed the only two possible threats of invasion,” Quinn said calmly. “We also want to deal with the Americans as equals, rather than their subordinates. Making it clear that we will only deal with them on a premise of equality is important.”

Lord Lothian looked weak. They’d warned him that he would die soon. His beliefs as a Christian Scientist prevented him from accepting his future relative Captain Sir Lethbridge-Stewart’s offer of the services of his ship’s doctor.

“If you will just come back into the main room,” Roosevelt’s assistant said. Lord Lothian stood up and led the two newcomers back into the Oval Office. Roosevelt and the big black American were waiting for them, along with the rest of his cabinet.

“We have discussed your offer,” Roosevelt said, without preamble. Lord Lothian shuddered inside. “We have decided to accept your offer, although one hopes that the development of the technology will offset the economic damage.”

Quinn smiled. “Perhaps we could sell some of our products in America and use the funds to purchase the tanks and guns and other materials that we need,” he said.

“That would be helpful,” Morgenthau said. He looked pale. “Ambassador, if your nation can stop the horrors...”

“We can’t, not yet,” Quinn said gently.

“We will also make what preparations we can for a Japanese attack,” Roosevelt said. “Perhaps we will forestall it.” He smiled. “However, there is a condition. We want the Americans in Britain to be sent here.”

“Those that are willing to go we’ll send,” Quinn assured him. He passed Roosevelt a sheet of paper. “I took the liberty of working out the terms of the treaty.”

“Thank you,” Roosevelt said, as Lord Lothian cringed. He signed once on the paper. “I’ll have to show it to Congress and ask for them to ratify it, but even if they refuse you can sell your produce in the US.”

“Thank you,” Quinn said. “With your permission, we will erect the communications tower here and inform our government that you have agreed.”

## **The Kremlin**

### **Moscow**

### **25<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

Whenever he stepped into the private rooms of Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili – also known as Stalin - Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov wondered if he would leave again alive. In person, Stalin was shorter than his propaganda posters suggested – Molotov knew that he’d stood on a pedestal for one of the photographs – but he radiated a malevolence and determination that allowed him to dominate the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. After the Terror, after the Party and the Army and every other corner of Russia had been brutally

purged, still Stalin was *scared*. His life had been forged into that of a man determined to reshape the world in his image; only then could he know safety.

“So, tell me, Comrade, what do you think this is?” Stalin asked, pointed at a strange plastic box sitting on the General Secretary’s desk. “Can you guess?”

His faint accent, heightened in moments of stress, never failed to chill Molotov to the bone. Making mistakes could be fatal in the Kremlin; so was failing to laugh at Stalin’s jokes, even though it was hard to tell if he was joking.

“I do not know,” he admitted finally. Stalin’s grin grew wider; he opened the box, revealing something that reassembled a typewriter keyboard. “A strange practice typewriter?”

“No, Comrade,” Stalin said. There was a grim fury poking at the edge of his smile; it didn’t seem to be directed at Molotov, but at the...whatever. “It is something called a laptop computer, built by the future British.” Stalin’s smile vanished. “According to my sources within Germany and France, the Germans have launched an attack on the future British, and are taking a beating.”

Molotov nodded as respectfully as he could. He’d heard rumours through the Foreign Ministry, suggestions of strange aircraft and missiles devastating German formations, but he hadn’t been willing to believe them. The thought of the fascists taking losses, perhaps even weakening themselves so socialism could be established in their counties, was delightful, but what would the newcomers do?

“The Germans approached us with an offer,” Stalin said. Molotov blinked, concealing his annoyance and sudden desperate fear; as Foreign Minister, he should have been the conduct for any contact. “It was the German Ambassador in person,” he continued, “and he requested that it remain a secret for now. You and Beria will be the first to know.

“He brought this device,” Stalin continued, “and explained that the war – the long war between capitalism and communism – will be lost by us, in the first history.” Molotov frowned inwardly at Stalin’s calm tone. “The Germans didn’t tell me this, but our sources within their government informed us that one of the reasons for their defeat was attacking us, in 1941. Apparently, we will win that war – and lose to the Americans.”

Molotov sat down rather hastily, accepting the glass of tea from Stalin’s orderly without comment. At least the tea suggested that he was not going to be hauled out and shot at once. It was hot and sweet, with just a hint of lemon.

“Yes, Lavrenty Pavlovich had the same reaction,” Stalin said, meaning Beria. “We have been offered a chance to change the verdict of history. The Germans have offered us entry into their Tripartite Pact, a full share in the recovered information, and even to share technology with us. In exchange, they want us to attack Iran and occupy the nation as we were considering. He also suggested taking Afghanistan to present a threat to the British in India.”

Molotov sipped his tea, considering. Stalin eyed him like a snake, waiting for him to talk. “The plan could be a fascist diversion,” he said. “They could be expecting us to place our best forces in Iran, well away from Moscow.”

“I have considered the possibility,” Stalin said. “Comrade Georgy Konstantinovich has informed us that for logistic reasons we will not be able to deploy more than a handful of divisions in the region. The defences of Moscow will remain in place; improved, even, with the future knowledge.”

He turned on the laptop, turning it to show Molotov the lighted screen. “If the fascists could build that, they would have won by now,” he said.

Molotov thought quickly. Georgy Konstantinovich Zhukov, the victor of the battles in the Far East, had been involved with planning to conquer Iran while the British were otherwise occupied. He was perhaps the best general – *the best one left*, his mind whispered – that Stalin had. If it could be done, he would do it.

“If this new Britain is as advanced as they say, do we really want to fight them?” He asked, hoping that Stalin would not take it as defeatism. Men had been shot for less. “We might get a better bargain by dealing with them.”

“I have considered that as well,” Stalin said. “We run a risk by engaging them. However, they will not be induced to share their technology, and they will be working on deploying more of it to the rest of the world. We have an opportunity; one that won’t come again.” His voice darkened. “The Germans are developing atomic weapons,” he said.

Molotov winced. The Soviet Atomic program was far behind the fascist program, even though they had information from America. If the Germans developed an atomic bomb, the Soviet Union would be at their mercy.

“We need time,” he said.

“Indeed,” Stalin said. “We will deal with the Germans and oppose the British. If it goes wrong, we will retreat from Iran and sue for peace; they will sue when they realise that the Japanese are also moving against them.” He smiled. “Should *their* war go badly, we will have a chance to snap up North China.”

## Chapter Eighteen: The Other Side of the Hill

HMS *Warspite*

Near Sicily

**28<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

It was a sight that Admiral Somerville had never gotten quite used to, despite having met several different incidences. The *Town*-class light cruiser HMS *Manchester* slipped though the water in formation with the Type-42 destroyer HMS *Manchester*. The carrier HMS *Ark Royal*, his own carrier rather than its future counterpart, was stationed ten miles west of the force as they approached Sicily, its flight decks still packed with Fairey Swordfish, Blackburn Skuas and Fairey Fulmars. Captain Holland had asked for Harriers, but there was a shortage of the VTOL aircraft.

Still, it wasn't as if *Ark Royal* was completely as primitive as HMS *Manchester* made her look. Both Contemporary and 2015 personnel had worked hard to modify her, building a complete C&C system into her, and duplicating it on *Warspite*. Two large propeller-driven aircraft from 2015 had been converted into miniature AWACS and based in Libya now that most of it had fallen to the British. Their coverage of the Mediterranean, complete with radar beacons, navigation beacons and far improved surveillance, made him feel almost like a god.

"Order *Valiant* to prepare to open fire," he said calmly, and the 2015 officer leapt to obey. *Warspite* itself began targeting the Italian positions on Sicily, preparing to start pounding Mussolini's people out of the Island. In the original history, Sicily had been taken in 1943; here they would simply cut it off and devastate the military bases.

"*Valiant* confirms," the officer said. "Recon drones suggest that there are no Germans on the island, apart from the air bases."

"We'll target them first, then," Somerville said. The Italians had mounted shore-based guns on Sicily, but he was dismissive; they were nothing like as powerful as the cannons carried by *Warspite*, he doubted that they would be able to hurt the battleship. The smaller ships would hang back, just in case; their armour was nowhere near as powerful.

He smiled. "Open fire," he said.

*Warspite* shuddered as its main guns fired. Blasts of fire and smoke appeared around *Valiant* as the second battleship fired; seconds later explosions blasted up from the shore. Flickers of light showed that the Italians were trying to fight back; towering bursts of water rose up from where their shells landed.

"Missed," an ensign shouted. He'd been young; young enough to adapt to the new technologies without too much shock. He wasn't married; he would marry within the future Britain and avoid the pain of loss.

"One hopes they'll keep missing," Somerville said gravely, and glanced at the reconnaissance results. The Italians were producing smoke at a terrible rate, trying to disrupt the sensors of the drone, but they couldn't hide the infrared signature. Fires were exploding all over the target zone; plumes of oily fires suggested they'd hit old dumps.



“Captain, incoming aircraft,” Ensign Jason snapped. Somerville watched as the Captain gave orders to prepare for incoming aircraft; a flight of ninety German aircraft rising over Sicily.

“Contact Malta and Captain Holland, ask them to send air cover,” Somerville said. The German aircraft were visible now, diving down to launch torpedoes rather than dive-bombing, jinking to and fro to avoid being struck by the radar-guided anti-aircraft guns.

“*Manchester* is shooting,” Ensign Jason reported. The 2015 crewman looked delighted as four Sea Dart missiles lanced across the waves and shattered a handful of German aircraft, the close-in chain gun engaging the enemy craft as they closed in, dropping torpedoes into the water.

“Independent manoeuvring,” Somerville ordered, as the fleet began to move, trying to avoid the torpedoes. A Contemporary destroyer was struck and started to list to starboard, the aircraft that had scored the hit falling to *Warspite*’s pom-poms. Somerville swore suddenly; the swarm of German aircraft were concentrating on the 2015 warship; the *Manchester* was under heavy attack.

“*Fuck*,” he heard Ensign Jason breath. One of the German aircraft had been hit by *Manchester*; instead of exploding it slammed into the future ship. For a long moment, it seemed as if the ship had survived, and then it exploded.

“The aircraft are retreating,” Ensign Jason said. Somerville nodded grimly as the wreckage of HMS *Manchester* settled into the water; they’d managed to take out one of the most powerful ships on the water and damaged several more.

“Secure from battle stations,” he ordered. “Get me a direct link to Admiral Turtledove. He’d going to have to know about this.”

### **Undisclosed Location**

**Berlin, Germany**

**28<sup>th</sup> July 1940**

The Americans hadn’t exactly declared war on the *Reich*; they hadn’t sent bombers to hurt the *Reich*, they would send no soldiers to conquer the *Reich*. What they had done was order units of the hastily reactivated Atlantic Fleet to escort convoys that just happened to include ships going to Ireland; a legal fiction that fooled no one, least of all Hitler.

“This is intolerable provocation,” the *Fuhrer* thundered. *Generaladmiral* Erich Raeder, the unfortunate who’d brought Hitler the news of the American decision – and the news of the sinking of a u-boat at American hands – winced. “The degenerate Americans have not the nerve to risk war with us. *Generaladmiral*, can your ships sweep the Americans from the seas?”

Himmler shuddered internally. The reluctant Professor Horton had compiled a long report on why they’d lost the war; declaring war on America had been one of the reasons. It was bad enough having to hold meetings in this building – the British missiles had struck many of the known government buildings in Berlin – but to run the risk of war with America before the new forces were ready...

Himmler took his life in his hands and coughed. “*Mein Fuhrer*, we should ignore this provocation,” he said, as carefully as he could. Hitler’s mood had swung backwards and forwards when the war with the future had begun; he wasn’t safe to be near. “Can the Americans produce the wonder-weapons of the future? Of course not. Once we hold the future Britain in our hands, we can use the weapons to defeat the Americans. If we fight them now, they will send their troops to England and make defeating them impossible.

“You said that you could defeat them,” the *Fuhrer* snapped, swinging round to confront Goring. The Iron Fatty shivered; Himmler allowed himself a cold smile. The battles over England had raged backwards and forwards, neither side emerging a clear winner. Losses were heavy – they knew for a fact that they were worse for the *Reich* than their opponents – but they had thousands to spend.

Goring coughed nervously, sweating in his proud uniform. “*Mein Fuhrer*, we are winning,” he said. “Our tactics are improving” – he neglected to mention that the future British were also improving – “and they were deploying less aircraft against us. They have also stopped targeting our radar installations; we have nearly a complete radar net tracking aircraft over Britain. We are starting to build up a comprehensive picture of how they operate....”

Himmler allowed the fat oaf to babble on. Who would have thought that the co-pilot of a degenerate passenger aircraft would have known so much about the RAF’s defences and bases? Did the future British have any concept of security? They had even included a chart of civilian airports in the captured aircraft!

“Now the new weapons have begun mass production, we can degrade and diminish their capability still further,” Goring continued. “The remotely-piloted aircraft will destroy their bases and save the lives of my pilots and we will...”

Hitler cut him off, rounding on Kesselring. “And the Mediterranean?”

“The damage to Italian and French possessions is quite great,” Kesselring said calmly. Himmler knew that he was understating the case. “The Italians are now having the dead weight of their foolish economy removed from their necks; production has already increased. However, we must act on the assumption that North Africa will be lost; the damage to the Italian Navy makes that quite clear.”

Hitler had never been comfortable with naval warfare. He’d still raged with news of the destruction of the Italian fleet had arrived, even with the single piece of *really* good news.

“Despite sending Admiral Darlan as a Special Representative to North Africa, the British have continued their advance,” Kesselring said. He scowled; the British made the concept that would later be called *Blitzkrieg* seem meek and mild. “They are apparently bent on taking over the French possessions. Petain has requested permission to send more troops to North Africa, but at the speed of the British advance, they will have swept to Morocco by the time they can arrive.”

He smiled. “On the other hand, we have one important new datum,” Kesselring said. “One of the future craft was sunk when a brave *Luffwaffe* pilot crashed his plane into the ship, punching through its armour. They don’t have the armour needed to survive in modern war; *our* war.”

“My pilots will bear any burden,” Goring proclaimed loudly. “If swarming their defences is required, we can do it, and if any of them should be asked to give his life for the *Reich*, they will do it.”

“I was thinking more of using Italian pilots,” Kesselring said smoothly. “Perhaps if we were to...”

Hitler rapped the table and they both fell silent. “Has there been any response to our diplomacy?”

“The Greeks have refused to allow us to use their territory as a staging post,” Ribbentrop said. Himmler scowled; the jumped-up champagne salesman was anything, but efficient. “The Turks have expressed cautious interest in joining us, but only at a serious price. The Spanish have been reluctant, but might be persuaded should the British move into Morocco as well.”

“Inform them that they will be invaded if they refuse to cooperate,” Hitler snapped. “Speer?”

Himmler nodded in approval. Speer’s new appointment as Director of War Production had annoyed Goring; it had been worthwhile pushing for it on that ground alone. Todt’s death in a British missile strike had cleared the path for the man whom Horton had identified as the only man with the genius to streamline production of German weapons. Hitler had given him total authority; he’d already worked miracles.

“Production has reached 300% of production before the...ah, arrival of the future Britain,” Speer said. “For this month, we will have produced nearly three thousand warplanes of all types, while finalising the designs for future variants. In addition, we have constructed nearly nine hundred of the new-old V1, from plans in the laptops. They have been extremely helpful; we have jumped generations ahead of where we were.

“On the waves, the newest model of u-boat is about to enter production,” he said. “We have copied an American business model that was apparently invented by myself, three years in the future.” Hitler laughed; the others took it as their cue to join in. Himmler, who knew perfectly well that it had been invented by a clever Jew, didn’t. “We have finalised the design and broken it down into dozens of components, all of which can be built by...labourers, and put together at the final destination. The *Elektroboote* requires far less fuel than any other design, and it’s a great deal quieter.

Himmler tuned him out as he went on to speak about tank production and *Panzerfaust* rockets. He was due to meet with Roth in half an hour and he hoped that he would not be delayed. Roth had received information from the future Britain and he’d promised Himmler a report.

\*\*\*

Roth stared down at the treacherous CD-ROM, lying on the desk. It had been addressed to him personally, and he’d read it at once. The other CDs, gigabytes – a term he’d had to ask one of the prisoners to explain – of data, waited for his team to begin exploring, cataloguing and distributing it across the *Reich*.

Hot tears stung his eyes. The July Bomb Plot – and others like it – had failed. The names, however, had been recorded for posterity; the thousands who would betray the *Fuhrer*. Name after name sprang up on the screen, but only one of them held his attention. Field Marshal Erwin Rommel; the *Fuhrer's* personal favourite. Others scrolled by – Oster, Canaris – all of whom held high positions within the *Reich*. The evidence of history was damning; Oster had apparently betrayed the *Reich* once already, but – irony of ironies – he hadn't been believed by the enemies of the *Reich*.

He shuddered. Whole nests of Russian spies, Frenchmen who would resist the *Reich*, German communists, all of them existed. The *Gestapo* hadn't even scratched the surface, he realised; how could they have?

History scrolled on past his eyes. The Germans had never invaded England; they'd never succeeded in the African desert. They'd moved into Russia and lost whole armies in the snow; entire *gigabytes* of data studied German mistakes and errors, from declaring war on the United States to refusing to withdraw from Stalingrad. Oliver had attached a whole series of analysis documents of the war; Horton hadn't been able – or willing – to give them such detail.

Carefully, he set the printer to begin printing the names of those who would have to be...purged, and started to read through the technical abstracts. Oliver had done a good job, he realised; the plans for heavy 1945-era tanks, if not later tanks, could be placed into production very quickly. Rockets – the V2 and upwards – could also be designed and constructed, and then used to burn godless socialism off the face of the Earth. There was no information on nuclear weapons – he'd scanned for that when he realised how much was needed – but with the information he did provide, it was possible to read between the lines.

He allowed himself a sigh of relief. With the entire combined team working at the hidden bunker, doing research as a united group, Jews and Aryans, they would make progress. He'd snatched every physicist he could; with the new information, they would succeed – he was certain of it.

"*Heil Hitler*," a stern voice said from behind him. Roth snapped to attention and gave the salute before his mind caught up and identified the newcomer as *Reichsführer-SS* Heinrich Himmler. The *Reichsführer* looked tired; Roth knew he was about to come back to life.

"*Heil Hitler*," he snapped. "*Herr Reichsführer*, you have to see this."

He passed over the list of known traitors. Himmler skimmed down the list, his face darkening. "These *vermin* will not be allowed to infest the *Reich* any longer," he snarled. "Have copies made of the list and I will get the SS to begin the purge."

"*Herr Reichsführer*," Roth said carefully, "some of these men are important to the *Fuhrer*, Rommel for example. He was slated for command of a force for the invasion of the future Britain and..."

"I will show the *Fuhrer* the evidence," Himmler snapped. He picked up the sheets of paper and the CD-ROM. "The purge will begin now."

He stalked out, leaving Roth behind with his thoughts. One thought in particular; *Reichsführer-SS* Heinrich Himmler had attempted to negotiate with the Allies towards the end of the would-have-been war. He wondered if Hitler would ever see *that*.

\*\*\*

It had been easier than Himmler had allowed himself to fear. While he was preparing for the meeting with the *Fuhrer*, he read through the entire list, thanking God that it had been cross-referenced by some kindly British academic. The handful of SS men who would show weakness in the future were quickly arrested by his men in Berlin; *they* at least could be arrested without informing anyone. He made notes beside their names; most would be executed, but some might 'volunteer' for a special mission.

The *Fuhrer* had read the list in a kind of shocked silence. Rommel, who'd once commanded his bodyguard, had been given his command in France by Hitler; he'd been earmarked to command the *entire* operation in Greece and the Balkans. When he was finished, Hitler issued some specific instructions regarding individual people, and then gave Himmler permission to go ahead and start another purge.

Himmler returned to his own bunker, a non-descript building that had once belonged to a Jew, and issued his orders. SS men fanned out all over Berlin, arresting those who had plotted against Hitler in the future that would never be. Resistance was minimal; Hans Oster shot down several SS men before being dragged away into the nearest camp. Several other long-term plotters, including a handful whose only crime had been opposing Himmler, were arrested; they didn't go quietly.

Burst transmissions from France and Italy came in over the next few days. The *Wehrmacht* officers who *had* known about their plots fled, or tried to mount a mutiny, all of which failed. Himmler ordered them all to be returned to Germany; the only exception was Rommel, whom the *Fuhrer* had ordered to be held in France and away from anyone else. The pace of the war over Britain slacked sharply, even with the British punching into the French holdings in Tunisia, and both sides were relieved by the break.

Other officers, those who would become competent commanding officers in the future, were offered promotions and command of their own forces. Many of them accepted; Himmler received some credit for their promotions.

"We can put the new tanks into production in six months," Speer reported, after studying Oliver's information. "While they will not be competitive with the British tanks we have seen in the desert, they will be ahead of Soviet or American designs."

Kesselring nodded. The news about the T-34 and the JS-1 had come as an unpleasant surprise to the *Wehrmacht*. "When can we expect a tank equal to the British designs?"

"Not for some time," Speer admitted. "Their armour is made from a process we don't understand, let alone be able to duplicate, and they have production lines we don't have. However, there are other tactics that can be used against them; the *Wehrmacht* officers are developing them now."

“Very good,” Hitler said. A new light burned behind his eyes. Knowledge of how close death had come had shocked him into new activity. “When can we proceed into the Balkans?”

The group looked at each other. “It will take some time to redeploy units,” Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel said finally. “At least a month, just in time to join the Japanese and the Soviets.”

“Ah, Wilhelm,” Hitler said jovially. “You always counsel caution.”

Keitel smiled weakly. The future history told of how he’d foiled the plot against Hitler. “I will take your advice,” Hitler said. “I want the attacks to be launched in a month, no more and no less, understand?”

## Chapter Nineteen: Jihad

Pyramid Heights  
London, United Kingdom  
1<sup>st</sup> August 1940

Foreign Secretary John McLachlan knew that there was someone in his apartment before he even entered the lobby. Decades of television melodrama aside, even the relatively light security situation, post-Transition, was capable of preventing assassins, reporters and idle members of the public from bothering government ministers. The four people who'd come to see him hadn't exactly been invited – their MP had interceded – but he had cleared their way into his apartment.

"They're in there, sir," a security guard said. Pyramid Heights had its own security force, SAS-trained, and the guests would have been searched before they were even allowed to enter the main centre uninvited. McLachlan took a breath and stepped into his apartment.

"Good evening, dad," the young man waiting for him said. All of McLachlan's planned remarks vanished in an instant as he rushed forward to embrace his son, the young man who'd left his family a long time ago. He hadn't seen him in four years; all the little pains within his heart tore open.

"Steve," he breathed, holding his son. "It's good to see you."

"Shahan," Steve/Shahan corrected. He'd changed his name four years ago. "I'm Shahan now."

"You'll always be Steve to me," McLachlan said. "Is...*she* here?"

"Yes, she came as well," Shahan said. "Are you ready to meet your daughter-in-law?"

"I suppose," McLachlan said, with a twinge of the old pain. His son's...conversion had shocked him; he'd blamed it on the girl he'd fallen for and eventually married. People in *their* station didn't marry people of *her* station, let alone adopt her religion. The former might have been acceptable; the latter definitely was not.

"Sameena," Shahan called. McLachlan looked up as his son's wife came into the foyer. She was from an Indian family; her skin was dark brown, with long dark hair. He supposed that she was pretty; he'd never looked at another woman after his wife died.

"Good evening," she said, a little nervously. McLachlan lifted an eyebrow; she was clearly pregnant.

"Good evening," he said, as calmly as he could. "Steve's child?"

She nodded. McLachlan felt tears running down his cheeks. "Welcome to the family," he said finally. "Steve, are the others here?"

"I asked them to wait in the next room," Shahan said. "They understand the...delicacy of the situation."

“I should hope so,” McLachlan said. “You know just how close you came to being handed over to...them.”

\*\*\*

In 2010, the House of Saud had been forced to accept the Wahhabism practice of Islam by the growing currents of what ill-informed observers called fundamentalism. Not only was more and more oil money being devoted to terrorism, but there were new and very unwelcome restrictions on who could travel to Mecca; a fundamental Muslim obligation. It was no longer enough to be a Muslim; one had to follow Wahhabism. In many ways, it had proven to be the turning point of the war on terror; many Muslims became devoted to defeating the evil and restoring the ideals of Islam, and the Jihad to Recover the Holy Cities had been in the forefront.

The House of Saud had demanded, in no uncertain terms, that the JRHC be disbanded and its members extradited to Saudi Arabia to stand trial. The then Prime Minister, grimly aware of growing anti-Saudi opinion, had refused; MI5's quiet cooperation with the JRHC against terrorism had won them friends and allies. Amid rumours that the JRHC was training *Jihadis* to fight in Saudi, Howard Smith had discovered that there was no manoeuvring room at all; parts of the establishment were using the JRHC as a bargaining counter.

After all, how could one extradite the son of the Foreign Secretary?

“I suppose it would have been too much to expect you to have come for a pleasant meal and then a chat,” McLachlan said calmly, as he took his seat. His son and his wife sat on the sofa, holding hands; his other two guests took their chairs. Noreen Adam, member for Brixton and unofficial leader of the Muslim Party, and Sheik Kashif Hussian, the semi-official leader of Britain's Shia Muslims.

“We would have preferred to make a formal contact,” Noreen agreed. McLachlan had read her security file; she was middle-aged and unmarried, almost unique for an Asian woman. Rumour suggested that she was barren, or had a sexual disease, but there was no proof of that one way or the other. McLachlan suspected that they were just rumours by her political opponents. The BNP was quite determined to ruin her career, whatever it took.

“As you know, Dad,” Shahan said, “I have been involved in the campaign to recover the Holy Cities of Islam...”

“You founded it, organised it, funded it and ran it,” McLachlan commented.

“And we were hoping that some kind of peaceful solution could be worked out,” Shahan continued. McLachlan shook his head; the growing tension between Saudi on one side and a strange alliance of democratic Iraq and very undemocratic Iran would lead to war, or would have done. If the two nations had any reason to actually work together, there would have been war by now – or by 2015.

“Unfortunately, the Saudis were proving bloody-minded,” Shahan said, without missing a beat. “We were preparing...some actions of our own, but we were very limited by what we could fund and deploy, as I'm certain that you're aware.”



“Steve, as interesting as this is, I am a busy man,” McLachlan said. “We are at war with Nazi Germany, which is adapting quicker than we dared fear. V1’s are not supposed to show up for four more years, but the plans would have been in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, a copy of which seems to have fallen into their hands. Hell, schoolchildren could build one, given time and materials.”

A distant explosion underlined his words. “We have to negotiate with powers that are getting used to the idea that we have a sudden technology advantage, many of whom are scared to death. We have to produce new weapons. We have to build democratic governments in Egypt, Libya, Algeria and Tunisia. We have to overcome centuries of mistrust. Steve, what do you want?”

“We want to recover the Holy Cities,” Noreen said. “At the moment, they are in the hands of Ibn Saud and his band of barbarians. You know what they’ll do in the future – if you allow them to do so.”

“You want us to recover the Holy Cities for you,” McLachlan said slowly. “I admit that the idea of removing the House of Saud before it ever becomes a threat is tempting, but what will you do with it?”

“We can build a democratic Muslim state that will be a strong ally in the Middle East, decades before the first genuine democracy was established,” Shahan said, leaning forward. Sameena put a hand on his shoulder. “There are thousands of Muslims in Britain who would be willing to go to this state and build.” He smiled. “We could make the desert bloom with life again.”

McLachlan nodded. The House of Saud, frightened of boosting its population, had resisted establishing a desalination plant in their nation. His mind ticked over and over; if his son was right, they would solve two problems with one stone. On the other hand, he suspected that many of the Muslims would return to the UK when they realised how difficult it would be. That would create a security nightmare; they’d refused to allow any new tourists or immigration in order to prevent security breaches.

“We would also be willing to go,” Hussian said. “This will be a joint endeavour; Sunnis and Shias, working together as equals.”

“Perhaps,” McLachlan said. “You do realise that I cannot promise anything? I will have to discuss the matter with the Prime Minister. There is also the danger of becoming involved with America; they had interests in Saudi at the time. Tell me something; what’s our guarantee that you won’t create yet another disaster area?” He looked up at Noreen. “Even in Iraq of 2015, women are often regarded as second-class citizens. How do we know that we are not condemning British citizens to a life of hell?”

“You exaggerate,” Noreen said.

“Not by much,” McLachlan said. “Another question; how much are you expecting us to provide? We might provide transports and weapons, if a brigade of troops or so can be spared we might send them, but we don’t have the resources to embark upon a long-term project.”

Shahan didn't hesitate; he'd taught him well. "All we ask for is transports, although if you're offering troops and supplies we would be delighted to have them. We have quite a collection of building equipment from various Muslim companies that has been pledged to this...endeavour." He smiled. "Among other things, we would also be building a 747-capable airport, like the one you have planned for Algeria."

McLachlan scowled. His son must have a source within the Foreign Ministry. "We do need to get the airlines up and running," he said. "We don't have enough transport yet. And I admit that it would be helpful, particularly if you invested your new funds in building infrastructure that could help the region to develop."

"If you do this for us, the Prime Minister will be supported by the entire Muslim Party," Noreen said. "I imagine that nineteen certain votes in the Commons will be very helpful."

"Perhaps," McLachlan said. He steepled his fingers. "I will discuss matters with the Prime Minister," he said. "Now, if you don't mind, I would like to spend some time with my son and his wife."

Noreen bowed slightly. It had become the accepted way of signifying respect when handshaking wasn't respectable. "I hope to be hearing from you," she said, and led Hussian out of the room, leaving the McLachlans' alone together.

**10 Downing Street**  
**London, England**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> August 1940**

"Production of radar-guided anti-aircraft guns has now reached a steady rate of three hundred guns and thousands of rounds of ammunition per day," Anna Hathaway, Secretary of State for Defence, reported to the War Cabinet. "Although there are glitches in some of the communications network tying civilian and military radars into the gunnery net, we can feel confident that we can afford to give the RAF a much-needed rest, at least some of the pilots."

"As per request from the Contemporary Forces, we have shipped dozens of the new guns to Malta, sweeping the skies of any Axis aircraft that dares to come too close to Malta. I am happy to report that interdiction of Axis shipping lanes is total; we have cut Germany off from North Africa. With the new radar systems, communications network and surveillance drones, we have total coverage of the Mediterranean Sea."

Hanover smiled to himself. "Splendid," he said. "General Cunningham?"

"We have pushed into Algeria, having overrun Tunisia, and are making progress towards Algiers. The Vichy French don't like us much, but fortunately their weapons are junk and we can just smash through them. We've captured enough German 'advisors' to prove that the invasion was necessary; Hitler was apparently forcing the French to join the Italians and invade Egypt." He scowled. "There's a lot of pent-up anti-French feeling; we're having to separate the *pied noirs* and the natives from time to time. There have even been several rebellions in the rear."

“For the moment, we’re interning Frenchmen along with Italians,” he continued. “Their ultimate fate, of course, is in your hands, but leaving them in Algeria seems likely to lead to their doom.”

Hanover nodded. “Major Stirling?”

The young army officer stood up from his seat at the rear of the room. Hanover had already considered simply confirming his rank; his *de facto* position as Head of the Oversight Committee seemed to require someone with more gold braid.

“The Germans have finally managed to work out lists of who betrayed Hitler,” Stirling said. “Unfortunately, the momentary confusion in the German ranks was insufficient for us to take more than local advantage of it; the Germans clearly move with efficiency and considerable brutality. From what we can determine, through SIGINT and some other sources, the vast majority of current traitors were simply shot in the head and dumped. Those who would have been *future* traitors have either been shot or condemned to penal battalions.”

He hesitated. “Some of them seem to be being held in France, so we’re working on finding out who and why,” he said. “Unfortunately, there are other problems; who would have thought that the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* would cause so much mischief?”

The weak joke prompted some smiles. “The Germans have apparently increased their production of aircraft, although it’s hard to be certain as our records came originally from them. What we are certain they’ve done is streamline their production; in the next couple of months we expect that their production will skyrocket. Oil remains their problem, but they are apparently pushing ahead with bio-fuels and supplies from the USSR. Unfortunately, we lack sources in Russia to confirm what Stalin is doing.

“Worse, they have mastered the production of V1 automated missiles,” he said. “While they are old and slow, they are capable of launching hundreds of them in one volley and the RAF has to shoot them down before they get over land. Some of them are loaded with a primitive fuel-air explosive; we’re watching for ones with biological weapons.

“It’s hard to be certain about what Hitler’s long-term intentions are,” he concluded. “They’ve cut their radio traffic to almost nothing, and they’re using code phrases to conceal their plans from us. What is certain – and this comes from Ireland – is that they’re meddling in Spain, trying to force Franco into invading Gibraltar. They have apparently given him some of the future data, including the fact that Gibraltar would never go back to Spain. There’s also evidence of communications with Turkey – and some suggestion that the Balkans will get an offer they can’t refuse soon – and they will have overland communications through Russia with Japan.

“It’s very difficult to predict with any accuracy what *Herr Hitler* will be able to develop,” he concluded. “The Oversight Committee was divided on the question of if he’ll be able to produce nukes, but with the future information it becomes a near-certainty. He might also try for biological and chemical weaponry, both of which would make our defence problems far worse.”

“Thank you,” Hanover said. “Finally, John?”

McLachlan grinned. “Finally, we have circled the world,” he said. “We have established relay stations, new ones, in Africa, Kuwait, Ceylon, India, Singapore and Australia. There was considerable shock from the Contemporary Nations and units; the Viceroy of India was not too receptive to a request that he attend an imperial conference, and that he brings the leaders of the nationalist movements with him. Fortunately, Admiral Cunningham convinced him to come.

“The Australians and new Zealanders didn’t argue, not once they saw the devastation we inflicted upon Germany,” he said. “They want, for the moment, some of our ships to be deployed down under, and they were very grateful for the technical database that their ambassadors brought. So, hopefully, we should have a full house; even South Africa has agreed to come.”

Hanover locked eyes with him for a moment. “We’ll discuss that later,” he muttered.

McLachlan nodded. “It’s hard to be certain if President Roosevelt will win the election in November,” he said. “Thanks to our arrival, he suddenly has more challenges to cope with. There have been several waves of violence across the country; directed at Germans, blacks and Japanese, once the news of the war got out. Tokyo is aware of this and very unhappy at the insult.

“He’s also had to drop Wallace and replace him with Truman,” he continued. “That damaged his standing within the Party, and affronted Wallace’s allies, all of whom are loudly denying being communists. Ambassador King has nearly been killed twice; he is also being approached by black American organisations for help. Several of the former Marines, black Marines, have disappeared into the black regions, apparently to formant trouble.”

“The Americans, on the other hand, are also looking forward to recovering their personnel stationed here and some of their equipment. That does present a problem – we can’t tear Feltwell out of the ground – and some of the personnel have requested asylum. However, we should have at least a thousand Americans who want to be repatriated, so that can be done quickly.

“Finally, one piece of good news,” he concluded. “Our new companies within the United States are doing very well indeed; a complete basic mobile phone network should be up and running in a month or two. Even if the Americans refuse to join the war, we should be able to fund purchases of American goods through trade.”

“Excellent,” Hanover said. “This meeting is dismissed.”

\*\*\*

“You were very abrupt then,” McLachlan observed, after the room had been cleared. “Something the matter?”

“I could tell that you had something you wanted to tell me,” Hanover said. “What is it?”

“I had some visitors last night,” McLachlan said, and outlined the meeting. “That’s their offer; they want us to help them conquer Saudi and in exchange they will help us with oil and supplies.”

Hanover steepled his fingers in thought. "Is it worth the risk of clashing with America?" He asked finally. "The Roosevelt administration was always anti-colonial, and we don't need a collision with them, do we? On the other hand, we do need the oil, we do need the bases, and it's a neat place to dump our unwanted Muslims."

He scowled. "Taking the place won't be a problem," he said. "Hell, we could always give them Matilda tanks and some other contemporary stuff; they won't meet any real opposition until Iraq, which is in a state of unrest. Having friends in the region will be very helpful, won't it?"

McLachlan nodded. "We are going to need friends in the Middle East," he said. "By now, the Shah has begun the task of wiping out those who would challenge his rule, now that he knows we're going to invade. Or would have invaded, or something. There's also the report of Soviet tanks moving into Georgia, positioning themselves to threaten Turkey – or Iran." He glared down at the sheet of global reports. "You'd think with all our technology we could do better than 'vague reports.'"

"If the game was easy, anyone could play," Hanover said wryly. "Have your office contact the JRHC group, in the name of the intelligence we shared. Tell them that we'll provide them with transport, and have some up and coming guy from the MOD go through a plan with them, with a proposed launch date of one month."

He smiled tiredly and examined the map. "With the new secured airfields, we can fly smaller aircraft, Tristars for example, around the world. The Americans and Australians promise that they'll have airports capable of taking bigger jets soon, which should improve our communications still further. The leaders of the dominions and the colonies are coming here for the conference in a week, and we have to be ready for them. They will be sceptical; we will have to be careful what information we give them."

He picked up one final sheet of paper. "The issue of the American...internees is quite serious," he said. "I think its time to put C Section to work."

McLachlan gaped at him. "Prime Minister – Charles – is that necessary?"

"Perhaps," Hanover said. "You know what's at stake."

McLachlan lowered his eyes. "I know," he said grimly. "I do understand. I just wish that there was a better way."

## Chapter Twenty: Nationalists, Fascists and Goons

Algiers

**Algeria**

**4<sup>th</sup> August 1940**

The book was entitled *A Savage War Of Peace* and had the improbable publishing date of 1988. The British officer's explanation, that it was from his personal collection, didn't make sense to Messali Haji. A lot about his current situation didn't make sense at all.

The French, whose usual approach to anything hinting at Algerian nationalism was a mix between horrified parental punishment and recrimination, and brutal oppression, had clapped him and a large percentage of his organisation, which dared to suggest that Algerians should have equal rights to Frenchmen, in jail. They'd been waiting there until the city had fallen – surrendered – to a British attack. From what General Robert Flynn had said, and what Messali was certain he'd left unsaid, something very odd had happened to the British.

For that matter, he wasn't certain if he was a prisoner or not. His current set of rooms had been owned by Admiral Darlan, who'd been unceremoniously arrested when the city fell, and they were as comfortable as an officer of Vichy France felt he deserved. On the other hand, there were guards outside – and a strange book to read. His English was fluent and English was a very easy language to read; it took him only five hours of study. They even gave him breaks for prayers!

"I do not understand," he said, when General Flynn returned. They conversed in Arabic; he hadn't been surprised to discover that the Briton spoke Arabic, although with an odd accent. "What is this?"

"It's a long story," Flynn said. His unshaven face smiled tiredly at him. He seemed to be treating Messali as an equal; something unique in Algeria. Algerian Muslims were only equal to Europeans when it came to dying on the battlefield. "You see, we've come back in time."

Messali blinked at him, feeling his beard bristle. Time travel was not part of his worldview. And yet there was the odd book, detailing a history of Algeria that horrified him.

"A lot of mistakes were made, back then," Flynn said. "As you can see, your people won their independence from France, almost plunged into a civil war at once, finally did have three separate civil wars – and are living in a disaster area in 2015. We're offering you the opportunity to change that."

Messali stared at him. "And you will seek to rule us like puppets, fit only to die for you?" He asked. "What's in it for you?"

"A safer world," Flynn said. "You see, back when we came from, the world was still feeling the after-effects of decolonisation, when the nations of Europe gave up their colonies. Of all of the nations that are colonies today, only a handful, like India, can be termed any kind of success. The price of rapid decolonisation was anarchy, dictatorial rule, and theocratic rule, nothing that helped the people. Where I come from, Africa is a sinkhole of violence, blood

and ruin. I served in many tin pot states; you cannot even begin to imagine how far your people will fall.”

Messali, despite himself, began to believe him. “What exactly are you offering us?”

“The benefits of hindsight,” Flynn said. “What we are hoping you will do is convene a council of...local dignitaries to run Algeria, eventually becoming an independent democratic state. That’s the price of our help; you embrace democracy and equal rights for all.”

“Even Frenchmen?” Messali asked. “The *Pied Noir* won’t like that.”

“Too bad,” Flynn said. “We would suggest that you allowed them to live as equals – they do have valuable skills you will need – but if you can’t stand their presence, then ship them back to France, once the war is over. We’ve interned the French troopers who were stationed here; they can join you or we’ll return them to France once the war is over.

“As for democracy, and why you should embrace it, countries with a stable democracy grow faster,” he said. “Democracy is a form of natural selection; your economy will expand faster and you’re sitting on top of valuable reserves. Starting from where you are, you could match France or even best her, very quickly. You have to give everyone a stake in your system; democracy and equal rights can do that for you.”

Messali smiled. “Equal rights to women, Jews, even Frenchmen?”

“Yes,” Flynn said. “Trust me; it pays off in the long run.” He took a breath. “I don’t want to tell you to hurry, but we don’t want to remain here for any longer than we need. The sooner a provisional government is formed, the better.”

“We did want to work with them, you know,” Messali said. “We would have tried to form a united government.”

“I know,” Flynn said. “I’ll come see you later. You can tell me your decision then.”

“I’ve already made it,” Messali said. “I’d be glad to try, for my country.”

\*\*\*

General Flynn hadn’t been looking forward to the next meeting. Admiral Darlan, one of Vichy’s most senior officials, even Vice-President at one time, was not Britain’s greatest fan. In the original history, Darlan had been killed by a resistance fighter; he wondered how the news had affected the Contemporary man.

“These quarters are quite unacceptable,” Darlan snapped, as soon as Flynn entered. “The food is appalling and the bed is hard.”

For a moment, Flynn wondered if his command of French was failing. The complaints seemed to be extraordinarily pedantic claims for a man facing the full knowledge of the future. He’d made certain to underline the passages about the future of France; war, civil strife, even the Paris Uprisings.

“These *Anglo* lies are nothing, but lies,” Darlan snapped. “You have illegally declared war on a state that was not at war with you, and invaded our territory. The forces of France will avenge this insult full fold and you will be crushed without mercy!”

“I see sucking German cock has lost none of its appeal,” Flynn said, giving in to temptation. “How much did they tell you about us?”

“They said that the British were going to take over our territory and strengthen their empire,” Darlan said. “You betrayed us...”

“Oh, come on,” Flynn snapped. “Surely a nation with the heritage of Napoleon, of Louis, even Marshal Foch, would have thought that it might be a good idea to make certain that all possible angles of attack were covered, eh? Indeed, an army unit near the Ardennes would have crushed the *Boche*; instead of sucking them off you could be sipping drinks in Berlin.”

“We were betrayed by Communists, traitors, Jews,” Darlan snapped. “The entire army was badly handled – your people...”

“Expected you to live up to your boasts,” Flynn sighed. “Admiral, I wanted to try to talk you into joining the war against the Germans – seeing that they now have no reason to put up with Vichy any longer – but you’re clearly unreasonable...”

“I would have command of the invasion, if you’re as powerful as your notes suggested?” Darlan asked. “I could bring the French Empire to the table...”

“Most of the Empire has already fallen to us or to the Japanese, for whom you opened the door,” Flynn said. “Allow me to explain your position; you have no empire, no modern forces, and the Germans will begin converting France into a bastion to fight us from, while they get their nukes ready.

“Oh, never mind,” he snapped, as Darlan began to look interested. “You have no bargaining power and a complete refusal to look reality in the face. You will be held here, pending the outcome of the war.”

He stormed out, passing the guards at the door; they’d not put the Frenchman in the cells used for dissidents. Pacing down through the stairs, he reached his armoured car and climbed in, nodding politely to the driver.

“Well?” The driver asked, as he took the armoured car back to the new base. Flynn knew better than to bite his head off; the driver didn’t work for the army. “How did it go with the Frog?”

“Badly,” Flynn said. “That man is very unreasonable.”

“What do you expect?” The driver asked. “He’s French. C Section?”

“It looks that way,” Flynn said to the driver who was not a driver. “As soon as possible, if you please.”

“It shall be done, Superior Sir,” the driver said, and laughed at Flynn’s puzzlement.



\*\*\*

General Flynn took off his uniform jacket with every expression of relief, before taking the seat in the conference room. Air conditioning hadn't been a concept the French commander had enjoyed; setting up a proper solar power plant and air conditioning had been a priority, along with a powerful and capable communications station. The room was now one of the most advanced command centres in the world, linked into the similar centres on Malta, Gibraltar and *Ark Royal II*.

"The French are proving unreasonable," he said without preamble. Beside him, General Wavell snorted. "Apart from the sheer refusal of their leaders – those who survived the bloody nationalist purge – to cooperate, some of them have made it clear that they will only assist us in exchange for great power status."

"Talk about playing without a full deck," Colonel Weston commented. "What about the German prisoners?"

All eyes turned to Doctor Hamilton. "We have begun to use the recordings of Nazi Germany to attempt to convince them that they were fighting on the wrong side," he said. "Unfortunately, we have only a handful of German prisoners, mainly trainers ordered to stiffen Italian spines. The results have been mixed; we really need someone of great stature."

"Bother," Flynn said. "What about the Italians?"

"We captured nearly fifty thousand Italians in the war," Hamilton said. "Most of them are very resentful at being told what to do by the Germans, the more so when we explained what the Germans were doing in Italy. Many of them would be willing to fight for us, they would need a great deal of training, however, and it might not be wise to trust them with modern equipment."

"People are working on that," Flynn said. "General Wavell?"

He'd appointed General Wavell his deputy and given him command of the final missions. The Contemporary had adapted surprisingly well; his mixture of caution and confidence, combined with a genuine concern for his soldiers, had made him popular with the 2015 officers. Politically, appointing him made sense; he was nowhere near as incompetent as some historians would later brand him.

"We have finished the task of occupying Morocco," he said. He tapped the map delightedly; he'd fallen in love with the electronic maps. "The Spanish fought hard, so we had to blast them out with field guns. Unfortunately, this is likely to lead to war with Spain."

"It was a political decision," Flynn said. He suspected that the Prime Minister and the War Cabinet had seen it as a way to underline the danger to Franco if he came out on Hitler's side, and at the same time to get a head start on investing in the new free Morocco. With the Spanish undecided about joining the Axis or not, with two examples of punishment from each side, he couldn't tell which way they would jump in the end.

“The downside is that we’re at 30% of Contemporary ammunition,” Wavell said. He scowled. “Guns need bullets, field guns need shells, tanks need shells, and aircraft need and so on and so on. We’re simply not getting any from home anymore.”

Flynn winced. Somehow, the thought of running out of Contemporary ammunition had never occurred to them. “We’re working on providing you with reactivated tanks, mainly Chieftains,” he said. “There are so many things to do and hardly enough trained men to do them.”

“There have also been some discipline problems,” Wavell continued. “The common soldier doesn’t like the fact that your troops are obviously better looked after, better paid and better armed. There have been scuffles already, some injuries and a handful of accidents when they experiment with your equipment. It’s also started to sink in that they’ll never see home again; the married men in particular have been shocked, particularly when they got the letters...”

Flynn shuddered. Some of the men, hardly more than teenagers in 1945, had older versions of themselves in the 2015 Britain. There weren’t many, all in their nineties, but there were enough to cause more legal problems. Others had heard from older versions of their wives, or their children, all of whom were older than them.

“I won’t say that morale is down, because the victories have boosted it, but it’s starting to fall again,” Wavell said. “General, what are we going to do?”

“They’ll have to go back to school,” Flynn said, thinking of two cases in particular. A woman in Britain was suing for divorce; her husband had warned his Contemporary counterpart not to marry her when she arrived from France. A second case had been an angry note from a woman who’d killed the future counterpart – after she’d been treated very badly indeed. The legal ruling that Contemporary personnel were not their future lives in the original timeline was under challenge; the crimes everyone remembered were the really grim ones.

“That won’t help much,” Wavell said. “General, how can they fit into your society?”

“I don’t know,” Flynn said. “We have to try, though; we owe your men so much.” He coughed once. “Ideally, we should be getting the reactivated Chieftain tanks in a week or so, so we can begin training your men to use them. They’re not up to Challenger levels, but they are still far more advanced than anything else on the planet. Then we have to decide what to do next and...”

He stopped speaking as a messenger hammered on the door. “Come in,” he called sharply.

“Sir, there’s terrible news,” the young Contemporary person said, through heavy breathing. He’d clearly run up the stairs to his commanders. “Admiral Darlan hanged himself in his cell. He committed suicide!”

“Thank you, young man,” Flynn said, before Wavell could explode. “Please give Colonel Tyburn my regards and inform him that I shall wish to discuss his security later.”

“Yes, sir,” the Contemporary man said, and vanished.

“Well, that means we’ll have no choice, but to treat France as a hostile nation,” Flynn observed. “I suppose, if we had to go for the landing in Southern France, it makes some things easier.”

\*\*\*

The man was sunburned, with a walnut-brown tinge, but there was no mistaking the famous voice. A group of soldiers, Contemporary and 2015, were watching the play; it contained elements of slapstick humour that would later become famous beyond measure. Gavin Gateshead, talent spotter, knew that he’d finally found his key to fame and fortune. The performer finished with a trumpet solo that seemed to be extremely insolent, aiming the trumpet in the direction of Germany.

“Ah, way more fun than those strange colour jumping boxes,” the performer said, and ducked to avoid a hail of good-natured objects. “See you next time!”

The performer jumped off the stage, discarding the strange mixture of 2015 and Contemporary clothing, and danced over to a trailer. It was a 2015 invention; a mobile home that provided quick showers for the performers. Gateshead ran after him, calling for him to stop.

“Who are you?” The performer asked, taking in Gateshead’s strange suit, one tailored to be as cool as possible in the desert heat. “What do you want with me?”

Gateshead stuck out a hand. “Gavin Gateshead, Talent Spotter,” he said, announcing himself. “I am here to make you rich beyond your wildest dreams.”

The man looked at him, eyes narrowing. “I’m good,” he said finally, “but I don’t think that performers get that much money, and I have pretty wild dreams.”

“Yes, I know,” Gateshead said. “Listen, would you mind coming to my office to discuss it?”

He smiled all the way to his office. Bribing the BBC staff to allow him to travel with them had been easy; a French tax-collector who’d lost his money, his penis and his life had been in no position to object to him taking his office. The Algerians seemed to be half in love with the British, half wary of them.

“Neat place,” the performer said finally, looking around. Apart from the required water cooler, there was a laptop and several cameras lying on the table. “I’m surprised it hasn’t been stolen.”

Gateshead shook his head. “It’s impossible to use that laptop without my permission,” he said. “You’ll see that it’s nailed to the floor; that thin wire needs a very strong laser to cut through it.” He grinned. “Now, Mr Milligan, I’m about to make you rich. Listen.”

He pushed a button on his laptop. The sound of two men arguing over a piece of paper with the time written one echoed through the room. Milligan stared at the laptop; the voice was instantly recognisable as his own.

“In 1960, you wrote the Goon Show,” Gateshead said. “At the moment, you could write more; you have a chance for your genius to be appreciated in its own time.”

Milligan frowned. He’d been nobody’s fool, Gateshead remembered. “If I would have written them,” he said, “does that mean they’re mine?”

“Of course,” Gateshead said. “Your estate and the BBC holds the copyright, but it would be yours if you came back, from the dead as it were.”

“How did I die?” Milligan asked. Gateshead lifted an eyebrow. “I want to know, damn it!”

Gateshead frowned. “You died in 2002,” he said. “It was a combination of bipolar disorder and mental breakdowns.”

“Not a short life,” Milligan said. His face changed alarmingly; Gateshead remembered that he’d always had a history of mental breakdowns. “Tell me, what’s in it for you?”

“I beg your pardon?” Gateshead asked.

“You’ve come a very long way to recruit me,” Milligan said. “Please don’t flatter me; I want to know why!”

Gateshead smiled. “I work on my own, more or less,” he lied smoothly. “The big boys of the industry always cut me out because they have more money to do the promotion, and with money you can elect a monkey as Prime Minister.” He chuckled. “And they have done so, on occasion. Money can get five girls with no talent a number one slot; money can lure potential performers away from me and I get nothing for all the legwork.

“But you; you’re a national treasure,” he continued. “Thousands would come to see you read boring history books, let alone your Goon Show. Once we get your fellows up, all the promotion has already been done – and the money can roll in!”

Milligan smiled. “I agree,” Spike Milligan said.

“Then Ying-Tong-Iddle-I-Po,” Gateshead said. Milligan looked blank. “You come up with that in 1970 or thereabouts.”

Milligan laughed and clapped him on the back. “Perhaps I could read them boring history,” he said, “or perhaps a skit where the teacher is trying to teach, and the class are so bored because he has a really boring voice...”

## **Chapter Twenty-One: Back in the USA**

Ronald Reagan Airport  
**Nr Washington DC**  
**15<sup>th</sup> August 2004**

Ambassador King didn't know if the airport, situated well away from where the original airport would have been built years later, would be allowed to keep the name from the future. Certainly, some limited investment by the ambassadorial staff – those that had chosen to come with him from Britain – had provided for an airport that would be far better planned than the American airport system had been in the original timeline. The fantastic amount of labour available in depression-era America made planning and preparing far cheaper than it would have been in 2015. The huge project didn't seem to daunt the Contemporaries at all; they just started work.

“An impressive achievement,” President Roosevelt said, watching as the first pieces of the runway were laid in the ground. “Do the aircraft really need such a long runway?”

“I'm afraid so,” King said. “A 747 requires a long run to pick up the speed to take off, let alone land safely. The British CAA has agreed to send us the radar and radio sets we'll need before pilots can be trusted to land here, but once its built we can trade secure from German interference.”

Roosevelt nodded softly. “Tell me; are the British telling the truth about some of our people demanding asylum?”

“I think so, yes,” King said. “It's no reflection on their patriotism.”

“Hoover thinks it is,” the President said grimly. “He wants the price of any deal to be their return to face charges; desertion, treason and whatever else the FBI can drum up.”

“Hardly fair on anyone,” King observed. “Mr President, half of your staff thinks I'm an uppity nigger. Will they not think the same about other black men, or Asians? There have already been three anti-Japanese riots; Admiral Kimmel was demanding that the Japanese near Pearl Harbour be removed, despite the fact that history says very few of them worked for the Empire of Nippon.”

“Unfortunetly I do not have the free hand of an emperor,” Roosevelt observed. “Everything I do burns political capital; if I order the Army to accept black soldiers as equals, they'll protest and Southern Democrats will join them. On the other hand, you know how much...hope has been invested in the forces overseas; their return could make or break some companies.”

King nodded grimly. Several of his staff had been lured away to companies interested in their future knowledge. The thought of what a 21C fighter pilot could teach a 20C company had the executives drooling in their coffee. The thought of developing a viable television network, as the returnees suggested, was exciting and terrifying newspaper owners.

“There’s also the fact that the British have called an...ah, Imperial Conference of their empire,” Roosevelt continued calmly. “Some of the isolationists see that as a threatening act; they think that they intend to reassert control.”

“In the original timeline, you handled the British empire pretty badly,” King said. “With the benefit of hindsight and the most powerful force in the world, they might be able to build something stronger in its place, something based on democracy.”

“And they’ve invaded French North Africa,” Roosevelt said. “Apparently, they intend to develop it as an independent nation, instead of keeping it in trust for the French. Not everyone believes them, you see.”

“And, what do you think?” King asked. “For myself, I think they don’t mean you any harm.”

“But they’re keeping some of our people,” Roosevelt said. “There are people, such as Admiral King, who fear the power of the new British. They’ve fought Germany to a stalemate, if the war news is to be believed.”

King waved a hand at the mobile phone on Roosevelt’s belt. There were only a handful of the new phones in America; they were being shipped over slowly, with the American-based corporations that had offshoots in Britain trying to take the lead. They were competing with British companies that had suddenly seen a vast new market for their old models opening up, calling in every favour the government owed them to get preferential treatment in the limited shipping available.

“It’s very difficult to get away with a lie in 2015,” he said. “They’re telling the truth.”

Roosevelt shrugged. The air war over Europe had died down as both sides licked their wounds and rebuilt their forces. The Germans had deployed primitive cruise missiles, V1-type aircraft, and were tossing them at Britain in swarms of one to two hundred a day. The British were concentrating on going after the German factories and rail links, but the Germans simply had a larger industrial base, even if it was more primitive.

The worse news was that the Germans had been developing kamikaze tactics, either fanatical nazis or press-ganged Italians, and using them against the modern ships. Three more British 2015 ships had joined HMS *Manchester* under the sea, victims of a German plane loaded with explosives. Through swarm tactics, some considerable skill and sheer determination, the Germans had limited British activities in the Mediterranean Sea. Submarines still moved under the waves, launching cruise missiles from time to time, but for the moment the war had stalemated.

But not all of it. “You know the Nazi Germany remains undeterred,” King said, referring to the invasions of Yugoslavia, Greece and the occupation of Romania. The Soviets – which meant Stalin – had taken half of the nation in a thieves’ pact, before beginning the long process of shipping the Romanians to gulags in Siberia.

“I don’t understand,” Roosevelt said. “I understood that the Romanians were Hitler’s allies?”

“They were, until 1944, when they switched sides,” King said grimly. “Hitler is destroying his own command structure, and the bastard doesn’t care! Thousands of people are dying for being the wrong race, the wrong colour, the wrong religion! Look at the reports from Poland; they’re turning the entire nation into a slave camp!”

“I saw,” Roosevelt said. “If the Polish constituency had their way, I would declare war on Hitler and Stalin tomorrow. The problem is that not everyone cares; they believe that the US can stay out of the war and assimilate the new technologies you’ve brought us. And, of course, we have the movie stars, the producers, the writers...all of whom want royalties from countless copies of movies they haven’t made yet.”

King snorted. “Good luck to them,” he said. The case of Spike Milligan had been a wonder in the UK; as had the handful of growing cases like it as the ripples spread out. “A lot of movies entered the public domain when their companies folded; others should never have been made at all.” He snickered. “Just wait until Hoover and his cohorts sees the snuff movies.”

“I don’t want to know,” Roosevelt said sharply. Suddenly, he looked very old indeed, despite the course of medication the embassy doctor had prescribed for him. He knew now that he would die in four years; if the stress of how the United States was reacting to the future Britain didn’t kill him first. “What’s your thoughts on the Japanese situation?”

“I think that *Herr* Hitler must have shared something with them,” King said. The British had sent Ambassador Quinn a detailed report, now that global communications had been re-established, and Quinn had shared it with him. “They now know that they are doomed to lose a war against the United States, should they choose to launch one. They also know that the newly-arrived British have weapons that can sink the Japanese fleet in an afternoon and they won’t want to tangle with them.

“And at the same time, they’re clearly preparing for war,” he continued. “Most of the original intelligence sources are still active, including someone within the Russian Embassy, and the Japanese are preparing for a major war. We don’t have very good sources within their establishment, but it seems like there’s been a major upheaval. I suspect – and MI5 agrees – that they’re planning to launch a war to snatch the British and French possessions in East Asia before the new weapons can get to the Pacific.

“They’ve already marched into Indochina and – and I quote – accepted the request for ‘liberation’ by Indochina’s natives,” he concluded. “British Intelligence believes that they have every intention of snatching the resources they need, without involving you in the war.”

Roosevelt scowled. “Can they do it?”

King laughed. “You’re the President,” he said. “You tell me.”

“I hesitate to answer,” Roosevelt said wryly. He took one final look at the beginnings of an airport. “Was it a mistake not to push the Paney Incident?”

“Quite possibly,” King said. “Every President has to handle the mistakes of his predecessors.”

“Thank you,” Roosevelt said dryly. “One final point; the British have these atomic weapons, right?” King nodded. “So why haven’t they used one on the Germans?”

“I think that the Prime Minister refused to even consider the option,” King said. “Atomic weapons are not simple firecrackers, you know.”

“So General Groves assures me,” Roosevelt said. “He was astounded at getting the command, two years early, but he now believes that we can have a simple device completed within two to three years, particularly with the computers you’ve given us as assistance. There’s just one question; are the named Soviet spies really Soviet spies?”

“The list was compiled by American researchers following the end of the Cold War,” King said. “I understand your meaning – the British are taking a childish revenge and not sharing information on atomics with you – but I don’t think that they sabotaged it at all.”

“Good,” Roosevelt said. “I’m not certain what to do with you, so for the moment you will remain as official liaison to Ambassador Quinn. I’m not quite certain why some of the men of your detachment insisted on remaining with you as a guard” – King looked sharply at him, meeting nothing, but innocent eyes – “but the Secret Service has issued the necessary documents for them. Take care of yourself.”

King watched the President go, wondering what had happened to the missing Marine. The young black man had vanished a week after they’d arrived, taking with him some information on urban warfare and guerrilla warfare. Hoover had not been happy; hardly anyone had been, but the prospects for total disaster were far too high.

Sighing, wondering if Colonel Palter was having a better day, Ambassador King left the airport and headed for his current residence. There was work to be done; America had to fast-forward its development, or the streets would run red with blood.

**Brest**  
**Poland**  
**15<sup>th</sup> August 2004**

The shooting was beginning to die away as Colonel Tibaski ordered his tanks forward. The Polish resistance had fought bitterly, but they were seriously outclassed from the start; the NKVD had deployed thousands of heavily-armed troops in the region and could call upon the support of the Red Army if necessary. The city had been stubbornly defended, but the Great Stalin had ordered him to reduce it if it killed every Pole within the city; he’d been honoured to have been chosen for the mission.

“Fire,” he commanded, and the tanks fired as one. New training methods, working on improving their coordination, had been ordered; the results of the early exercises – he’d heard – had been disastrous. If the fascists – who seemed to be the *Rodina*’s friends at the moment – had chosen to attack, the Russians would have spilled far too much blood before forcing them back to ultimate victory.

Tibaski allowed himself a smile as the shells, designed for high explosive rather than armour-piercing, exploded within the city. The defences, never strong, began to collapse; the NKVD occupation troops had done a good job of exterminating the remains of the Polish aristocracy



that had prevented their people from embracing the glories of communism; without their knowledge, the defenders knew little of the art of defence. Being amateurs, they'd piled the defences up; single shells were having radical effects.

He chuckled, ignoring the sidelong looks of his subordinates. The commanders who'd failed so badly in the series of exercises had also been sent to the gulag; there, they would serve the motherland far better than they had in their undeserved positions. The radio, apparently bought from the Germans, buzzed one long sequence; the Poles were offering a surrender.

"I have my orders," Tibaski muttered to himself, and turned to the radio. "No mercy!"

\*\*\*

From their vantage point high above the Soviet formation, the four-man SAS team watched the carnage, cursing their ill fortune. Their mission, to make contact with the known – and apparently undiscovered – centre of Polish anti-Soviet resistance in Brest had apparently failed, for no reason of their own. The communications officer, Corporal Boris, worked on his tactical radio, transmitting a burst signal to an orbiting drone, high over Germany, while the rest of the team recorded the atrocity.

"Shit," Captain Lewis muttered. Their insertion from a minisub had been routine; nothing had led them to believe that the Soviets were slaughtering everyone. Instead of the encounter they had expected, they were bearing witness to a mass slaughter. As he watched, the Poles were lined up and shot; the young, the old and those in between. The strong men were rounded up and tied to trucks specially designed for prisoners; they, Lewis suspected, would be working as slave labour. The young women...

A scream rose up from a corner of the village and he squeezed his weapon tightly. A young man leapt up and ran towards the scream; the Russian shot him neatly once in the back. The girl, hardly in her teens, was being brutally raped; Lewis could see blood everywhere.

"We've got to do something, man," Corporal Tamlin said. The Welshman sounded horrified; the girl's screams cut off as the Russian sliced her throat. "Please..."

"What can we do?" Lewis asked him, ensuring that he had a recording of the Russian faces and their uniforms; green shoulder tabs meant NKVD, he suspected. "There are four of us. We have four M-16s and a handful of grenades. What do you think we can accomplish that's worth our deaths?"

Tamlin's gaze dropped. "Sir, I know the risks, but we could..."

"There are over a thousand Russians down there, slaughtering the entire town," Lewis snapped. "The people we came to meet are *gone*; there's nothing for us now, but to leave."

"Orders from command," Corporal Boris said. "They want us out of Poland in a week; they're sending the submarine to meet us."

"Can you ask them to do something?" Tamlin pleaded. He'd passed selection, but Poland was his first real SAS mission. Lewis felt for him; the young man who hadn't seen all the horror of life yet. "Surely they could slip a fully-armed team in here, behind enemy ranks..."

“There are too many other things to do,” Lewis said. He took one last look at the burning town. “It’s time to go.”

\*\*\*

Tibaski pulled himself out of the Polish tart – she’d clearly been no virgin – and slit her throat with one slash of the knife. The NKVD troops had divided into formations; one group was completing the kill-sweep, one group was guarding the prisoners, and one group was...enjoying the spoils of war.

“Excellent work, Colonel,” the commanding general said. He’d served the great Stalin during the last purge; he seemed to take an ungodly delight in purging Poles who would one day rise up against Russia. Their apostry, or so the rumours had said, would threaten the Soviet Union – and so they had to be killed. “Have your men finish the women off, and then we can pull out.”

Tibaski snickered dutifully at the weak joke. “Yes, Comrade General,” he said. “We’ll finish them all off for you.”

The General smiled. “The great Stalin has commanded that we purge every last Pole,” he said. “How long do you think it will take us?”

Tibaski cupped his balls. “A lot of fun,” he said. “Once this task is complete, the Poles will never threaten the *Rodina* again.”

### **The Kremlin Moscow 20<sup>th</sup> August 2004**

Stalin seemed almost like a happy man for once, rubbing his big hands together with glee. “A triumph,” he declared. “Would you not agree, Comrade?”

Molotov frowned. Stalin rarely called *anyone* ‘comrade.’ He was certain that it boded ill for him. “I think that a lot of progress has been made,” he said. Stalin’s orders, based upon the history files the Germans had made available to him, had been simple. *Exterminate* the Poles; *crush* their spirit. *Ensure* that they never dare to lift a hand against the Russians again. “We have crushed all organised sources of Polish resistance.”

“Splendid,” Stalin said. “The German ambassador, the fop with the stupid name, has protested at the millions of fleeing Poles, but the Germans are as eager as we to terminate the threat before it has even begun. They have even assisted us.”

Molotov nodded once, knowing he had to phase his concerns *just* right. “Comrade, we have destroyed most of their cities,” he said. “However, there are thousands of their people in the woods and in the hills, hiding from us. They’re fighting back.”

“We do not need to occupy them permanently,” Beria’s silky-sweet voice said. “Stage by stage, we destroy their food and fuel sources. Day by day, we weaken them further. Come the winter, how many of them will survive? Now we know better than to use a forward defence position, we will base our western defences on the Stalin Line, and let Poland die for two years.”

He smiled, a snake's smile. "In two years, most of them will have died out. We can then resettle Poland with loyal Russians; and we have a source of labour until they all die."

"Good," Stalin said, his smile growing. "Comrade, what news from our greatest general?"

Molotov smiled at the weak joke. Zhokov had always been loyal. Even the history books said so. "He's working on the logistics now," he said. "Production of the T-34 will become a priority next month now the design has been finalised. When it comes to Iran, we can put around six divisions into the nation; the logistics won't allow any more. Still, the Iranians have almost nothing."

"Good," Stalin said again. "The fascists and the western imperialists can keep fighting, while we build ourselves into a position of power. Then, it will be our turn – and communism will finally encircle the world."

## Chapter Twenty-Two: Imperial Conference

Atlantic Ocean

Nr Britain

24<sup>th</sup> August 1940

It was a clear day, perfect flying weather. For once, the men and women of the squadron were having a peaceful flight; interception of the semi-V1s was being left to the reserve squadrons. The Germans had been getting more devious; several of the V1s had exploded in midair when fired upon, scattering shrapnel across the air. One Hawk had been lost to that trick. Several of the V1s had been noticed to explode in mid-air *without* being fired at, something that the boffins had blamed on faulty materials.

“Charlie-flight, you are cleared to approach the defence zone,” the AWACS operator said. Abernathy nodded and brought the Eurofighter in low, heading over the small collection of Contemporary ships. They were only partly British; they belonged to Canada, Australia, South Africa, India and New Zealand.

“They want an impressive display,” Abernathy reminded his fellow pilots. “On my mark, the Proud Formation...*mark!*”

On cue, the force split up, dropping coloured smoke through their jet streams. Seven coloured lines of light followed the planes as they moved through a complex, but straightforward formation.

“They seem to be impressed, Charlie-one,” the AWACS said. “Give them a second low pass, and then head back to the barn.”

“Understood,” Abernathy said. “Boys and girls, line up on me, and follow me in!”

\*\*\*

Prime Minister Sir Robert Gordon Menzies looked up from the deck of HMAS *Australia* as the strange aircraft flew overhead. Their presence was almost tangible; he could have sworn that he *felt* them screaming inside his head as they howled over the ship, vanishing into the distance before they could be seen clearly.

“The Eurofighter Typhoon,” Ambassador Atwell said calmly. The small boy beside him seemed awed; cheering the planes on. Menzies wasn’t sure what to make of it; the young boy was apparently Atwell’s father; his mother hadn’t been born yet. “It has a speed well above mach two, armed with cannons and guided missiles and can land on a dime – assuming a big enough dime, of course.”

“And some of those will go to Australia?” Menzies asked. If they did, it would be the proof that he needed to show that he’d been right to bank on the Empire as a whole, rather than changing tack and begging for American support. The new technologies Atwell had introduced would, given time, make Australia impregnable to a Japanese invasion.

“I imagine that some ships will be spared to assist you,” Atwell said. “You have to understand; *this* Britain is not the one that knew that it had a responsibility to help you out.”

“Us,” Menzies corrected.

“It’s a very different Australia,” Atwell said. “There are times that I feel a stranger in Canberra.”

Menzies nodded as the last of the jets vanished into the distance. “Tell me, what do they want in exchange for their help?”

“They want to try again,” Atwell said. “The end of the war that we – you – are currently fighting led to a disintegration of the global system. The one we have no cannot stand, even if it was possible to keep it without Britain, but we have to try to put something in its place.”

“So the price for Australia’s protection is us joining the new...whatever the organisation ends up being,” Menzies said. “I was always in favour of the empire.”

“Out of a desire to play a role on the world stage or out of a desire to keep the homeland safe?” Atwell enquired. “You did read the history brief?”

“Curtin is going to succeed me in 1941,” Menzies said. He scowled. “We’ll see about that.”

“Perhaps,” Atwell said. “History never said anything about a successful invasion of Lybya and then French North Africa, so perhaps you can prove your point.”

\*\*\*

Menzies hadn’t exactly disbelieved. The handful of modern technology and the plans for new weapons – Australian armament factories hoped to be turning out their first AK-47s in a month and new tanks in three months – had been very convincing. The DVD of his own speeches before Parliament, years in the future, had been stunning; the details of Australia’s future astonishing.

Still, nothing could have prepared him for the tour through London, once the *Australia* had docked at Plymouth. Apparently, the facilities needed for the Contemporary ship no longer existed – battleships and battlecruisers were apparently no longer part of modern war – and she had to wait at anchor. The crew, at least, were being well-treated.

“We hope to expand the facilities for Contemporary warships,” Admiral Grisham explained. The woman was First Sea Lord, something that Menzies had always understood came with a knighthood. “HMS *Warspite* and her contemporaries, once refitted with modern weapons such as Metalstorm, will be almost unstoppable. We could sail them into Tojo’s lake and sink his entire fleet.”

“Really,” Menzies said, looking out at the bastardised London he saw before him. It was astonishing; thousands of individuals of different races seemed to work together in harmony, with signs and parades greeting the guests. RETURN TO THE HOLY CITIES, one read, much to Menzies’ puzzlement.

“They’re Muslims,” Grisham explained. “They think that they can now snatch the Holy Cities of Islam back from the bastards who would have held them and use the oil money for good, rather than evil. I wouldn’t give them the time of day, but Prime Minister Hanover

seems to think that they might come in handy. We have to loan them a small force and crush the evil ones.”

“A waste of resources?” Menzies asked. Perhaps Grisham would be a good source of information. “Why not use them somewhere else?”

“We have far less shipping than we have in the original timeline,” Grisham said. “In truth, if it were not for the Contemporary ships, we’d be in worse trouble than we are. In some ways, Prime Minister, it’s a good thing; we can ship some of your divisions back to Australia and bolster your defences, but at the same time it limits what we can do elsewhere. Tying up a force of ships on this venture merely means that we cannot set up our own bases in the Far East.”

“Australia would be more than happy to host some of your ships,” Menzies said.

Grisham smiled wryly. “I’m sure you would be,” she said. “I keep having to remind myself that this is not 2015. The problem is that we have to establish stockpiles of weapons, fuel and repair components before we deploy any major units to you. I believe that the RAF is looking at ways to free up some anti-shipping configured aircraft; one way or the other we’re not going to be challenged *here* on the surface. U-boats, of course, are still a major problem.”

Menzies stared out of the window as they passed a soup kitchen. “What’s that?”

“We’re still on rationing here,” Grisham said grimly. “We now have a fairly decent supply of food from Ireland and America – paid for by some of our technology – and we’re improving our own production, but for the moment the Government has decreed that rationing will take the place of the welfare state.”

She grinned. “I quite approve of it myself,” she said. “The wastrels are starting to flow into the army, or into one of the expanding businesses, and even the navy is getting its share. Even criminals are contributing to the greater good, for once.”

Menzies kept his own counsel as the Rolls Royce – that wasn’t too different – drew up outside Ten Downing Street. The security guards checked their identities and welcomed them into the building, leading them into the meeting room.

Ten Downing Street  
**London, United Kingdom**  
**24<sup>th</sup> August 1940**

“Good afternoon, Gentlemen,” Hanover said. The men looking back at him seemed stunned; only a handful of them mumbled a greeting in return.

“I trust that you are now convinced that this is not some elaborate practical joke,” Hanover continued. “Quite apart from seeing our aircraft and our cities, you have also seen the future; histories of yourselves, your counties, and the world. Some of you developed into very different states, some of you became disaster areas, and some of you became...well, saints.”

He looked down at the small Indian man sitting next to Lord Linlithgow, who'd been horrified at the instruction to bring the three main leaders of India with him. Even at such an important meeting, Gandhi wore only a robe and loincloth, greeting all protests with a puckish smile.

"History has spoken on all of you," he continued. "It is up to you to see if you want it to speak well of you again, or if you want it to speak well of you in the new future created by our arrival. I won't lie to you; many dark and difficult days lie ahead, but if we work together we can create a better world for us all.

"The British Empire is dead," he said, and watched the reactions. The three Indians looked pleased, then worried, then concerned. The South African, Prime Minister Jan Smuts, looked as if he didn't care. News of the Apartheid Era and the collapse of South Africa in 2012 had hit him badly. The Canadian, Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, seemed unconcerned; his main interest had been in learning about the coming Quebecois Independence Movement. The Australian and the New Zealander, Peter Fraser, seemed almost panicked. The handful of Contemporary personnel in the room seemed shocked; few of them had understood the growing weakness of the empire.

"Your Congress Party wants independence," Hanover said, addressing the three Indians; Nehru, Jinnah and Gandhi. "If that's what you want, including the civil war that is bound to break out as soon as the troops are withdrawn, you can have it. However..."

"You would leave us at the mercy of Hindus forever?" Jinnah asked. He'd been a lawyer before taking up the cause of Muslim independence; he'd moved at once to the most important question. "While I support the creation of a Muslim nation, I cannot see one forming that is even as successful as this...Pakistan I seem to have created."

"Does that not prove our point; a united India is required?" Nehru asked. It was an old argument between the two parties. "Think of how much we could achieve together?"

"There are millions of your...descendents in Britain today who would be more than willing to help you fast-forward your own technology," Hanover said. "What you need is a constitution and a united army – and genuine rights for everyone, be they Hindu, Muslim, high-caste, low-caste, untouchable, whatever. We will try to help you, but that would rely upon you helping us as well."

"Ah, the empire returns," Gandhi said. His wry voice didn't quite hide the scorn. "You will give us formal independence, but pull the strings from behind?"

"No," Hanover said. "Quite frankly; I would prefer to let you go to heaven or hell without our involvement. I do, however, have to look to the future; a democratic India, united and strong, would be a strong ally. As a member of the British Commonwealth, you would enjoy equal voting rights with the other nations and..."

Smuts' clipped accent overrode him. "I cannot see my countrymen being too impressed with the version of the future when *kaffars* take control and ride the nation down into ruin," he said. "I fail to see why we should place our destiny in your hands."

“For a start, the British Commonwealth would primarily be a trading and mutual defence pact, nothing else,” Hanover said. “I would advise you to begin granting voting rights to educated black men, and at the same time prevent the shocking expansion of their population caused by poverty. The same applies to India; your population explodes – exploded - beyond your ability to absorb it.

“The first thing we can offer you is AS-01 and AS-02,” he said. “They are essentially permanent birth control drugs; one injection convinces the man’s body to stop producing sperm – although emission is still possible – and the other convinces a woman’s body to treat sperm as a hostile intruder and destroy it. Naturally, a counter-drug exists; it could be used if necessary.”

He smiled, noticing Smuts’ eager grin. The South African would probably act like the Chinese Government had done when they’d invented the drug; massive and forcible injection programs for all of their citizens. They’d actually managed to half the Chinese growth rate in three years.

“That is merely the tip of the iceberg,” he said calmly. “We can give you advanced nuclear power plants that will provide cheap, safe electricity for your counties. We can give you water-cracking plants that will provide an endless source of clean water for your farms; Australia could become the breadbasket of the Far East. We will give you hydrogen cars that will wipe out your dependence on oil forever and...

“There are so many things we can give you, should you join us,” he concluded. “We have reserved rooms for you in the Ritz; some of you will find it very different than it was in your time. You also have access to communications channels reaching all the way to your countries; use them to consult with your allies and governments if necessary. There is, however, one other thing I wish to show you.”

He picked up a remote control and flicked it once. The big screen flickered and activated, displaying a perfect movie. Some of the delegates retched as the images became clear; the Germans and Soviets were...exterminating the Poles.

“This image was recorded by an SAS team that had been inserted into Poland to contact the Polish Resistance,” Hanover said, his voice darkening. “As you can see, the resistance no longer exists; the Germans and Soviets have been engaged in rounding up, press-ganging and slaughtering the Poles. In the future, the Poles will rise against the Soviet Empire – and Stalin is clearly determined never to let that happen again.

“The Germans have already purged their own ranks of anyone with the courage, in the original timeline, to stand up against Hitler, sometimes even before they had doubts about the Nazi regime. For the moment, the war has stalemated, but we cannot allow it to remain that way indefinitely. Sooner or later, Hitler and his goons will develop a working atomic weapon, and then they might well be unbeatable.”

He ran the second video display. “This is the destruction of a Russian city, during the War on Terror,” he said. “The Chechens deployed a nuke into Volgograd – Stalingrad today – and destroyed the entire city. Nearly a million people died; tens of thousands of residents, Russian soldiers, tourists, reporters, what-have-you...they all died.”



He watched their paling faces. "Privately, and completely off the record, the War Cabinet has decided that in the event of Germany producing a nuclear weapon, Germany will be blown off the face of the Earth. Understand; the hatred of nuclear weapons in Britain is so strong that using even one will cause my Government to fall, but if its them or us..."

He smiled at them. "I'll see some of you individually over the next week," he said. "Others will discover that they have friends here who will be more than willing to suggest...new courses of action. If you want privacy, just ask the guards; if not...good day gentlemen."

"One question," Nehru said, as they rose to leave. "How long will it be before Germany completes an atomic bomb?"

"I wish I knew," Hanover admitted. "The worst-case scenario is that it will take them something between one year to two years to design and build a reactor – particularly concealing it from us – and then around six months to build the weapon itself. Even so, it will take them time to build one small enough – or a delivery system large enough – to transport the weapon over here. The Oversight Committee believes that they will reserve use of the weapon for a landing on the mainland from us. Hitler, of course, is not that rational.

"Another possibility is Stalin or Japan getting their hands on a weapon," he continued. "The Japanese might well be tempted to engage in nuclear blackmail; no one is quite certain how far they actually managed to get with a weapon in the original time line. Stalin, of course, got his in 1949."

\*\*\*

"So, what did you think?" Hanover asked afterwards. He sat neatly on the couch, sipping Scotch from a glass. "How do you think they reacted?"

"I think they were a little stunned," McLachlan said. "They just don't move with as much speed as the modern world did, before we left it. I don't suppose the physics team came up with anything?"

Hanover shook his head. "They're still arguing about possible causes," he said. "Of course, the religious fraternity has gotten the idea that it's a holy sign from God to begin changing the world for the better. Every Imam in the country is preaching about the JRHC and how it is going to recover the Holy Cities and give Islam back to itself. Speaking of which, how is the planning going?"

McLachlan sighed. "They have organised ten thousand of their original fighters, with some training from us – covertly, of course – and are preparing the plan for the occupation. They've not done too badly; they've purchased several solar-powered desalination plants and they're planning to build a major airport to link in with the chain we're planning to build.

"Of course, everything depends on us providing the transport, which is being prepared now," he continued. "I think that they should be ready to go in a couple of weeks or thereabouts; even with the weapons they do have they'll outgun the barbarians. Frankly, I give the invasion itself a ninety-percent chance of success, with nation-building a sixty-percent chance. Sean, to be fair, is very committed to the democratic ideal of Islam and they will

extend voting rights to anyone who speaks English and Arabic, as well as accepting their rules.”

Hanover smiled. “Well, we’ll see,” he said. “So, back to our new-old friends...?”

“I think that Australia and New Zealand will sign up at once,” McLachlan said, sipping his tea. “Canada might; South Africa might, provided we don’t interfere with the race issue. Of course, with a dose of AS-01, the problem might just...go away.”

“I think we’ll...suggest that they absorb the Italian prisoners from Libya,” Hanover said. “That and their families should give the white population a boost.” He scowled. “We might also want to suggest that they accept the Contemporaries; I don’t know if they’ll fit in here.”

McLachlan nodded grimly. There’d been several more race riots, some sexual incidents, and one nasty riot over the family silver. It had given the BBC quite a lot to talk about on the nightly news. “You don’t think that they’ll fit in here?”

“Too different,” Hanover said. “We can try to take a handful, but I don’t know if we can take them all.”

McLachlan laughed. “You want to hear about another problem?” He asked. Hanover shook his head, but McLachlan pressed ahead anyway. “You know all those children who were sent to America and Canada? All their families have disappeared; except in many cases...”

“Don’t tell me,” Hanover said. “Themselves.”

“Exactly,” McLachlan said. “Their legal guardians, for all intents and purposes, are older versions of themselves, who are in their eighties, at the very least.”

“Dear God,” Hanover said. “How the hell do we solve this one?”

“Legally, we have the precedent that a person from the original time line is not the same as the person from the new time line,” McLachlan said. “The Law Lords are still arguing, but I think we may have a lot of kids going up for adoption soon.”

“Bugger,” Hanover said. “You know; we have minor problems. It’s Hitler and his goons who have the worse problems.”

“Funny you should mention goons,” McLachlan said. The legal arguments over Spike Milligan’s right to Spike Milligan’s work were still raging.

“Oh, shut up,” Hanover said.

## Chapter Twenty-Three: Reflections on Evil

Undisclosed Location

**Berlin**

**29<sup>th</sup> August 1940**

Berlin was different, these days. SS men were on every street corner, looking around with fierce eyes. The citizens, those handful that remained after the mass call-ups and brutal purges, walked the streets with their heads lowered; dozens of those who would serve in the future government of West and East Germany had been simply...disappeared. Not all of it was Night and Fog; the corpse of Admiral Canaris had hung from the roof of a public centre before a British missile reduced it to its component atoms and the centre to rubble.

The purge and the call-ups had affected everywhere. All over the *Reich*, the menfolk had almost disappeared, forced into the army or the air force, even the navy. In their place, Speer had ordered the unmarried and single women into the factories, already producing vast improvements in all fields. Idly, Roth wondered what the future would hold, with the women working to support the men in the armed forces. What would happen when the *Reich* won the wars and the men came back to discover that they had been supplemented?

“Papers,” an *Unterscharfuhrer* demanded. Roth bit down all the comments that came to mind and passed over his identification. His SS identity card, his special permission card signed by Himmler himself, his access to Hitler’s headquarters, and several that the mere *Unterscharfuhrer* would never have seen in his life. What he did see was enough; he paled remarkably fast for someone of his bulk.

“*Herr Standartenfuhrer*,” he said, with a salute that was almost perfect. Roth glared at him and he pulled himself up into tight attention. “I’m sorry for interfering...”

“Never mind, *Unterscharfuhrer*,” Roth said in exasperation. The SS guards on the street were supposed to be watching for draft-dodgers. “You may go.”

“*Heil Hitler*,” the *Unterscharfuhrer* snapped, and left without waiting for Roth’s reply. Roth let him go, watching him as he marched on, and then headed for the current centre of the SS; the original headquarters having met a British missile. It still spooked Roth, to understand very suddenly that they were an open book to their enemies and their targeting systems. The British didn’t seem to have as many of the super-weapons as their allies of 2015, the United States, had, but they were just as good at careful targeting. The first surge of cruise missiles, so precise when compared to the primitive V1, had seriously damaged the *Reich*.

*If we hadn’t dispersed as much of possible of the government, they might have won in one blow*, Roth thought, and shivered. He slipped under the awing and pulled on a cloak, leaving his SS jacket and cap in the false front. Thus convinced that no high-flying British plane could mistake him for an SS officer, Roth went back onto the streets and wandered through several blocks before reaching the *real* headquarters, hidden in a meat-processing facility.

Roth sniggered. The irony had always appealed to him.

“Your papers, *Herr Standartenfuehrer*,” the guards said. Unlike the poor *Unterscharfuehrer* on the streets, they knew who he was, but Himmler would have had them both executed if they had failed to check his papers. Roth passed them over without protest, allowing them to check everything. The SS had been busy once the captured documents had revealed dozens of new ways to forge documents.

“You may pass,” the leader said finally. “The *Reichsfuehrer* will see you at once.”

Roth nodded and entered the facility. On the surface levels, it seemed just like a real facility, but once inside it changed dramatically. The basement, seven levels that had once held frozen meat, now held an entire SS command post. There were dozens more scattered through Germany, concealing the German command structure from the all-seeing British reconnaissance planes. Hitler himself had a fully refurbished bunker; the military had a deep series of rooms under Berlin, linked together by the landlines they’d thought to abandon.

“*Heil Hitler*,” Roth snapped, coming to attention. Himmler returned the salute, before waving Roth to a chair. “Reporting as ordered, *Herr Reichsfuehrer*.”

“*Heil*,” Himmler said. “How is your life?”

Such concern on the part of Himmler was unusual, to say the least. Roth managed a noncommittal grunt. “I have just been talking with Goring,” Himmler said, which explained his odd behaviour. “The fat fool wants to know why we can’t give him a million Me-200s or whatever they were called back in the Jewish history.”

Roth sighed. “*Herr Reichsfuehrer*, we have been given complete plans and diagrams for many aircraft, including the historical version of the jet plane we build before...well, you know.” *And of the reason for the plane’s uselessness*, he thought silently. “The problem is that we do not have the tools to make it, or in some cases the tools to make the tools that make the tools...and so on *ad infinitum*. For the Me-262, we require considerable advances in materials and production facilities; they are nowhere near as easy to build as a Me-109.

“In some cases, it was merely a matter of taking an idea from a book and copying it, such as the mobile launcher for the V1s. For the V1s themselves, we have something like a forty-percent launch failure rate, and pilots have observed them blowing up in mid-air. While we are hurting the British, I submit that that sort of failure rate would shortly wipe out the *Luffwaffe* more completely than even the British super-weapons could.”

He waved a hand absently at the laptop on Himmler’s desk. “That device, *Herr Reichsfuehrer*, is at least thirty years away, and probably longer. The...situation with the future British will have resolved itself by then, I fear. We have managed wonders, but some things require time and more time.”

Himmler glared at him. “And if I order you to produce a Me-262?”

Roth met his eyes without flinching. “Then I’m dead,” he said flatly. Himmler deserved the truth; he’d led the SS through the...difficulties without flinching. “*Herr Reichsfuehrer*, I cannot change natural law with a wave of my hand.”

Himmler nodded. “Tell me, what is the status of Project *Kern*?”

Roth took a moment to compose his thoughts before speaking. "We have gathered together the scientists in three different, heavily concealed locations," he said. "The German scientists, and the...other ones."

Both men knew he meant *Jewish*. "Research is proceeding, and we have a plan for a basic reactor," he said. "Unfortunately, building the reactor will take nearly a year, the more so because we dare not let the British get even a sniff of the location. They must know that we have one; the heavy water program in Norway was smashed beyond recovery. After that, they believe that we might have a working device in another year."

"So 1942 at the earliest," Himmler said. "There's no way to speed matters up?"

"None at all," Roth said. "Two years, *Herr Reichsführer*, is a very optimistic estimation."

"The *Führer* wants one as soon as possible," Himmler mused. "Is there any possibility that the Jews are sabotaging the project?"

"We believe not, *Herr Reichsführer*," Roth said. "Everything contributed by a Jew is examined by a review board of Aryan scientists. Basic theory is understood now, although the scientists want to continue research into some areas. The dangerous part is building the reactor, and the Jews will be watched very carefully."

"Good work," Himmler said. "The sooner we can get on with destroying the menace of Stalin, the better."

"*Jawohl, Herr Reichsführer*," Roth said, and left.

\*\*\*

*The principle reason that the Japanese lost the war was because of the sheer weight of power that the Americans could bring to bear against Japan. On a general estimation, America possessed close to nine times the total war-making potential of Japan, and included many hidden advantages. America could absorb the massive demands for material, and create huge armies and navies, without suffering economic ruin as the Japanese suffered in the closing years.*

*Bad strategic calculations made a difficult situation impossible. The Japanese were at war with too many different groups, including the British Empire, the Chinese, and dozens of little nationalist groups. This strategic dispersal reduced the chances of knocking out even one of the enemy to almost nothing; a concentration against India and/or Australia, ideally without involving America, would have made fighting the war further very difficult. The failure to appreciate the powers of the submarine, which would have disrupted American shipping...*

"I brought you a cup of...well, I think its tea," Jasmine said, passing Professor Horton a cup. He sipped it gratefully, feeling his wife's body pressed against his. Nearly two months of captivity – and being stuck in the small suite of rooms with the girls – was taking its toll on both of them.

"Thank you," he said grimly. "How are you?"

“Oh, I’m fine,” she said airily. She slammed her fist down on the table. “I’m just stuck in a *fucking* bunker with *fucking* Nazis watching us all the time!”

Horton reached out and held her, feeling tears flicker in his eyes. Jasmine was taking the pressure badly; she knew that the only thing keeping her children from the concentration camps, or death, was the work that her husband – who would be stuffed in a gas chamber – was doing for Himmler. She didn’t take their total helplessness well; she knew that they were watched all the time under the burning white lights.

She started to cry into his arms. Horton glared at where he was certain one of the cameras was; Himmler had shown no interest in Jasmine’s other fits. Her undressing under the covers was a source of some amusement to the guards, who’d been told by the scary *Standartenfuehrer* Roth that Jasmine was off-limits – as long as Horton kept producing. He’d become nothing, but an oracle for Himmler and his cohorts.

Worst of all was the knowledge of what he’d kept from Himmler’s cronies. If they’d suspected that his knowledge was more detailed than he himself knew, they would have done whatever they thought necessary to force him to talk.

“He wants a complete report on why Japan lost the war,” Horton said, as Jasmine started to pull at his clothes desperately. In bed, she could pretend that the world was normal, but Horton had no such luxury. Even as he started to undress her, abandoning the laptop and its document, his mind worked over what it meant. As Jasmine fell to her knees and took him in her mouth, he figured it out; Germany must have informed Japan of the coming war.

And then Jasmine began her desperate motion and he forgot everything, but his wife.

\*\*\*

“The accelerated training program for the workforce, including the two new additions to the workforce, proceeds apace,” Speer said. Sitting near Hitler, Himmler concealed his reaction; knowing that Speer would survive the war hadn’t strengthened his confidence in the man.

“The prisoners, who are being fed on a standard diet that feeds them enough to be useable, are being trained in basic manufacturing techniques. Quality control is improving and prisoner sabotage is down seventy percent.

“Matters are considerably better with the female cadre,” he said, flinching. Only the knowledge of the future had prevented Hitler from cancelling female conscription altogether. “Unlike the prisoners, they show no inclination to sabotage the designs and once the handful of shirkers were weeded out, production increased rapidly. We have continued the program of incentives for individual workers, with a three-fold increase in production. In addition, we have been looking for likely candidates to receive more training in specialised tasks; we believe that development of skilled engineers, as opposed to build-by-numbers, will also increase. Unfortunately, training women for such a task is a long-term effort.

“Production of the modified tanks, aircraft, u-boats and anti-tank weapons proceeds,” he continued. Himmler concealed his boredom; the SS were keeping him aware of all Speer had said and what he hadn’t said, including the little detail of some of the male workers abusing their female counterparts. The SS guards handled such matters with a ruthlessness that

shocked many; they cut the offender's balls off! It had proven quite popular with the female workers.

"The Panther, a tank designed to match the Soviet design created by renegade Germans from the SA"- a lie to hide Soviet supremacy in tank design, Himmler knew – "is in the final stages of design," Speer said. "Although it cannot match the tanks provisionally identified as Challenger-class, we are hopeful that sheer weight of numbers will prove decisive. Development of powerful anti-tank weapons proceeds apace; we hope that by the time they come to land in France, assuming that they do again, we will have a weapon capable of penetrating their hull."

"In the event that we don't, we have drawn up a contingency plan that will leave the tanks alone, and concentrate on their supply lines and support vehicles," Kesselring injected.

"Yes," Speer said, a little irritated. "Production of aircraft and pilot training continues, along with the development of jet aircraft. Unfortunately, a prototype jet of our own will be at least a year away; an aircraft that can match the British aircraft still further away. For the moment, General Galland assures me that with the improved training measures, we can swarm British targets and overwhelm them. In the Mediterranean, we have almost forced them out of the middle sea, and once Spain joins us..."

"Franco has finally gotten around to accepting that he has to declare war on the British," Hitler proclaimed. "If the ungrateful Spanish pudding had had the courage to declare war in June, we would have evicted them from the Mediterranean well before the future arrived!"

"That is true," Kesselring said. His new role as strategist was taking a toll upon his health. "For the moment, reducing Gibraltar will ensure that they cannot use the Mediterranean as a supply line to Egypt using their ships, although analysis suggests that they have fewer ships than they had anyway. Our use of French agents within French North Africa – now that Vichy has finally declared war on the British – suggests that they are concentrating on building a chain of airports across Africa, linking them with India. If they use aircraft like the one that crashed in France, we estimate that they could move troops back and forth within a couple of days."

"I trust that you have warned our allies?" The *Fuhrer* asked. "We need to learn to coordinate with them, while watching them carefully."

Everyone present knew that Hitler hadn't given up on his objective of securing Russian territory for further expansion. Even the need to maintain an alliance with Stalin – as recommended by Professor Horton – didn't distract from the overwhelming demand for living space.

"We have warned Stalin and the Japanese," Kesselring confirmed. He coughed. "For the moment, driving them out of the Mediterranean Sea itself seems to be our only offensive option; we cannot hope to invade Britain directly or to even transport troops to North Africa. Once Turkey falls into line, we can perhaps mount a joint attack on the Middle East and destroy their oil wells there, or even use them for ourselves."

Himmler nodded. Oil was the *Reich's* great weakness. Now that Romania had been forcibly assimilated by Germany and Russia, he expected missiles to be striking the oil wells at any

time. Still, research into synthetic oils was proceeding; much had been done before the future arrived and added its knowledge to the growing stockpile.

“Then we can proceed to ultimate victory,” Hitler said, and he smiled. The expression scared almost all of the grown men in the room. “Have no fear; destiny had allowed us a chance to change our path and walk towards total victory!”

## **Russian Army Headquarters**

### **Poland**

**1<sup>st</sup> September 1940**

Molotov disliked the army base in Poland, even though it had been constructed in a manor house that – he was certain – had once belonged to the Polish aristocracy. The NKVD had secured the building, checked it carefully for unpleasant surprises, and had kept the staff on to keep it tidy. Polish servants, one and all, they had been corralled without warning a week before Molotov arrived, just to ensure that there was no trace of Polish resistance anywhere near the meeting point.

Molotov studied the map. The base sat at the centre of an expanding empty zone; the residents forced into working on defence lines, marched off to Siberia, or simply shot. Stalin had ordered the Poles wiped out, along with numerous other minorities, and the NKVD had leapt to obey. The streets of Polish towns had run red with blood as the killing went on and on; food sources were steadily destroyed. In a year or so, maybe longer, Stalin would start to colonise the region, leaving only Russians in the Polish regions. The Poles would never have the chance to revolt against the Soviet Union.

His guest’s car, a massive German vehicle, drove up outside. Ribbentrop, like Molotov himself, hadn’t been keen on sleeping inside an NKVD stronghold. Unlike Molotov, he’d had a choice; he’d stayed at a German base on the other side of the border in Warsaw. Molotov waited throughout the lengthy security process, before a guard ushered him into the meeting room.

“Good afternoon,” Molotov said in English, and turned around. The sight of the un-uniformed SS officer – clearly an SS man, for he had the same...*tingle* as the NKVD men – was a surprise. Was he here to support the Ambassador, or was he here to keep an eye on him. Molotov smiled; no one in his right mind would trust Ribbentrop with anything important.

“A pleasure to meet you,” Ribbentrop said, in flawless English. He’d studied in England, hadn’t he? Molotov could not remember. “How is life in Comrade Stalin’s paradise?”

Molotov, as aware as Ribbentrop that the entire conversation was being recorded, smiled non-committal. “It proceeds well,” he said. “One long-term problem is being wiped out; another will never get the chance to become a problem.”

“Poland and Afghanistan,” Ribbentrop said. Molotov nodded; the news of the humiliating defeat in Afghanistan had shocked Stalin to the core. “And your procedures for handing the problem?”



“The Poles are already being punished for their future defiance,” Molotov said. “Our forces are preparing, even now, to crush Afghanistan before it can become a problem. And, of course, Iran – as I’m sure you are aware. We will crush Islamic Fundamentalism before it ever becomes a problem to the *Rodina*.”

“Excellent,” Ribbentrop said. “The *Fuhrer* has sent me to offer to coordinate our actions. The capitalist powers will oppose an invasion of Iran; coordinating our efforts would limit what they could do to us.”

Molotov lifted an eyebrow. Stalin had given him very specific instructions for this eventuality. “You wish us to share information with you?”

Ribbentrop nodded. “I am at leisure to inform you that Operation Spinet will begin in two weeks, barring unforeseen circumstances,” he said.

Molotov was astounded. Had Hitler *really* authorised such information, or was Ribbentrop trying to impress him? “Our invasion of Iran will begin somewhere around that date,” he said. “However, we require something from you.”

Ribbentrop blanched. The SS officer showed no reaction. “What would you like?” He asked. “The *Fuhrer* has ordered me to be generous.”

“One coming problem is Finland,” Molotov said. “We intend to finish it off.”

Ribbentrop laughed more than the weak pun deserved. “I would have to consult with the *Fuhrer*,” he said, “but I can see no problem with it. Our relations with Finland are cordial, and correct, but hardly important.”

“Of course,” Molotov mused. Ribbentrop ignored the sarcasm; perhaps he didn’t recognise it. The SS man’s face darkened with sudden anger; *he* had recognised it. “So, shall we meet again in a week?”

“Of course,” Ribbentrop said. “I’m sure that the *Fuhrer* will recognise the legitimate claims of the Soviet Union.”

Molotov bowed politely and the NKVD man showed the two Germans to their rooms. They had been invited to dinner, but Molotov suspected that they would not appear. The presence of the SS man had been annoying; he had intended to pry into atomic science during the meeting. Germany apparently had some of the future knowledge, but they’d been careful not to share *any* of that with the USSR. Ribbentrop might have been tricked into revealing more than he had intended, but with a watchdog even he might guard his words.

None of them showed on his famous immobile face. Picking up a sheet of paper, Molotov sat down to draft his report to Stalin. One way or the other, the Soviet Union would emerge triumphant from the war.

## Chapter Twenty-Four: The Holy Cities

*SS Rottenstall*

**Mediterranean Sea**

**1<sup>st</sup> September 1940**

Darkness cloaked the small convoy as it slipped through the inland sea, hidden from prowling German aircraft and Italian submarines. In theory, the two frigates escorting the force would be able to fend off any attack directed at the small fleet, but in practice – if the Germans continued to swarm the modern ships – they would be quickly sunk and lost.

“I imagine that you’re excited,” Father O’Reilly remarked, as Shahan McLachlan paced the deck. The freighter hadn’t been designed for passenger travel; many of the troops were travelling in unpleasant conditions. For the Catholic Priest, travelling to meet Pope Pius in Rome, the trip was proving fascinating.

“You have no idea,” Shahan said, examining the map. The Germans had established bases in Italy and were working on establishing them in Greece. The convoy had to reach Egypt in a day, before the Germans noticed them and tried to sink them. The remains of the Italian Navy had refused to fight for the Germans, but the German Air Force was proving a bitter foe.

“All my life, I’ve dreamed of an opportunity to snuff out Wahhabism in its lair before it could ever arise,” he continued, smiling. “Now I have it; the chance to establish a modern Muslim democracy in the Middle East and change the course of history.” He grinned. “What about you?”

“The Holy Father has not replied to our messages, or to messages from the Irish clergy,” Father O’Reilly replied grimly. “You know how some religions are taking the news of the future; not even De Valera could hide the truth about all the trials Catholicism will face in the future. The Holy Father could change all of them, if he bothered to see us.”

“I suppose being told that your power is on the verge of extinction is not good for anyone,” Shahan said. “You do realise that they might just burn you at the stake?”

“It’s been a while since that happened,” Father O’Reilly said, with a confidence that Shahan suspected he didn’t feel. “You know; in the original time line the Church refused to condemn the Holocaust, and I always felt that all the troubles we had stemmed from God as God’s punishment to us. So many people condemned the Church that we lost so much; in the 1960’s thousands of Americans used contraceptives without a care for the Vatican ruling in 1968. Your own growth might be because we had surrendered our moral authority and...”

“Without that ruling, you might have saved millions of lives in Africa,” Shahan said, without condemnation. “Has your council worked out what the Transition means for you yet?”

Father O’Reilly grinned. “No more than the Muslim Council of Britain has,” he said wryly. “Apart from you, of course; they were scared to oppose you. *Finally*, a cause that’s popular with the young, the converts and the government...and the only cost is the loss of some of their power.

“We’re still arguing,” he said. “I wish that the troublesome woman priest hadn’t given the Irish a list of known paedophiles among the Irish clergy. The revelations about the nunneries were bad enough; once the news spread, people started pulling their daughters out of them and what did *that* do for their faith?”

“I suppose they wanted to keep them safe,” Shahan said. “Are they the same people?”

“I wish I knew,” Father O’Reilly admitted. “The law has ruled that a Contemporary person is not the same as a 2015 person, at least when it comes to crimes they haven’t committed, yet. And, at the same time, are they in positions we would want them to be in, knowing what they might do?”

He shook his head. “Which leads to a second point; are souls being twinned? Did God create two separate versions of...that girl in America, whose closest relation is her own older self? Or are they the same soul, but different versions of it? If so, will one of them go to hell for the crimes of the other?”

“Allah knows and you do not,” Shahan quoted. “I don’t believe that they’re the same soul,” he said. “A soul is unique; they have to be different people who just happen to bear the same name, same DNA and same experiences until 1940. I can’t see a merciful God sending a small girl to hell, simply because her older self committed a crime.”

“And yet, it makes a mockery of predestination,” Father O’Reilly said calmly. “To be granted knowledge of the future is to change it, for you didn’t have that knowledge in the past. If you knew you would commit a grave sin, would you still do it?”

“I tend to assume that Allah knows what he’s doing,” Shahan said, after a moment’s thought. “It could be that we’ve been granted the chance to shape the world anew; me in Saudi Arabia, you with the Pope. Of course, the bastard hasn’t condemned the extermination of the Poles, has he?”

Father O’Reilly shook his head mournfully. “He has condemned the Soviet treatment,” he said. The USSR had seen no reason to keep them alive as slaves. “For Hitler, however, he has remained silent.”

“Father O’Reilly, it’s time to board the boat to Malta,” the Captain said.

Shahan embraced him once. “May Allah go with you,” he said, and waved the small boat off into the darkness.

\*\*\*

The Germans caught up with them near Suez, but, operating at the limits of their range, failed to do more than scare some of the troops, only a handful of which had seen fighting before. Some of them tried to close in to sink the freighters, but the radar-guided guns on the freighters swept them out of the sky.

“I’ll be a lot happier when we have those guns mounted everywhere, or the new Metalstorm systems deployed,” Major Bloodnok remarked. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry was accompanying the force, apparently to reinforce Egypt in the wake of the new agreement over Egypt. The Egyptian Government, almost completely anti-British, had been astonished to learn that all

the new British wanted was the canal – and they were more than willing to invest in airports and transportation systems. Indeed, once Egypt had gone through the same period of bloody purging that Russia and Germany had gone through, they were becoming a lot happier with their lot. Of course, the democracy was fragile – and there would be no excuse for intervening as had been done in Algeria – but they were on the right track.

“I suppose,” Shahan said absently. He stared up as the freighters began to enter the Suez Canal. Contemporary aircraft, old craft from the *Ark Royal I*, flew low to investigate, carrying 2015 torpedoes under their wings. “I’m just nervous.”

“So you should be,” Bloodnok said. “The man who does not feel fear when entering a combat zone is a fool.”

“So how do you do it?” Shahan asked. “You don’t seem bothered at all.”

Bloodnok laughed harshly. “According to the files you dug up, we’re facing several thousand horsemen with rifles, and we’re armed with machine guns, armoured cars, and body armour. If we lose the first fight, we’ll deserve to be court-martialed and shot.”

“I suppose you have a point,” Shahan said. The sun was beating down on them as they entered the Red Sea, passing Dhows and junks – and even a massive Contemporary liner – as they headed into Sudan. The better part of an Italian Army Group was trapped in Ethiopia and the surrounding counties, nations that would have been liberated by now in the original history.

“We don’t want to risk attack by the Italians,” Bloodnok said. “Their leadership is pretty bad, and their morale non-existent, but if they have good NCOs, that doesn’t matter so much.”

“Nuts,” Shahan said. The freighters were passing Saudi Arabia now, heading along the coastline down to Mecca. Securing the Holy Cities would lure Ibn Saud up for a fight, or they would chase him down to Riyadh. Absently, he wondered if the warlord would come to fight himself, or if he would flee back to his homeland.

“We attack at dawn?” Bloodnok asked. It was unnecessary; Shahan had been delighted to discuss the attack plan with an experienced officer. “Suppose we’d better tell everyone to get some sleep.”

“Thank you,” Shahan said. “Thank you for everything.”

**Near Mecca  
Saudi Arabia  
2<sup>nd</sup> September 1940**

Shahan had planned to give a speech as the five freighters, carrying nearly ten thousand men, landed on the shore. More accurately, the craft had been grounded; except for the army transport, which was using LSTs to deliver the British regiment to the shore. Shahan watched the confusion and was silently relieved that the enemy did not materialise; if the regiment hadn’t been there, he was certain that they would have been overwhelmed.

Finally, the trained NCOs, and the loaned officers, managed to get some order into the chaos. The armoured cars would probe ahead, towards the city, while the army would march behind. As he should have expected, the disciplined marching order fell apart within ten minutes of the beginning; men were suffering from the heat, or was simply un-used to the marching on the desert. Still, they were armed and reasonably well-trained, and the lure of the holy city was ahead of them.

“Commander, we have a patrol of mounted men ahead of us,” the armoured car signalled. “They seem to want to parley. Their leader swears on the holy book that he will talk to us under flag of truce.”

“Understood,” Shahan said. He thought quickly for a moment. “Have him brought to me,” he said. “Company...halt!”

As the army stopped its march, Shahan and his personal bodyguard moved forward, spying the lead armoured car and a mounted rider. Shahan shivered; the rider reminded him of nothing more than a figure out of legend, a rider sweeping across the desert coming to loot, rape and burn wherever he pleased.

“This is Ahmed,” the driver said. Shahan noted that his hand never left his sidearm. “He wants to talk to our commander, you.”

“*Salaam Alyikum*,” Shahan said, in careful Arabic. It was supposed to be a *linga Franca* in the Middle East. The man – Ahmed - blinked at him, and then began a long and complicated speech.

“And so, the Holy Cities are in the palm of the hands of my master,” he concluded. “If you take one step nearer, you will be wiped out and even Allah will forget you exist.”

It was the blasphemy that annoyed the army; several hundred AK-47s were suddenly pointed at Ahmed. The Arab flinched back, but rallied himself with considerable courage. “You will leave, or we will kill you all and take your women as our prizes.”

Shahan smiled. It was a toothy smile; inviting nothing, but death. “You have taken what rightfully belongs to the entire Muslim world and made it your own,” he said. “If you surrender now, we will permit you to live and teach you to follow Islam as it should be taught.”

A scornful laugh was his only reply. Shahan made his decision. “In that case, I invite you to embrace Allah and his faith, Islam as revealed by the Prophet Mohammad, peace be upon him, and submit yourself to his judgement.”

He’d underestimated Ahmed. The moment the rider realised what he’d said – the traditional offer of Islam to a non-Muslim who was about to die facing Muslims – the man grabbed his pistol and lifted it. Shahan froze, watching the motion with a strange fascination, until a shot rang out.

“Well done for not flinching,” Major Bloodnok said calmly, blowing the smoke off his pistol. Shahan wanted to fall to the ground in prayer, but resisted the temptation; there was too much to do. “I’d recommend deploying the army now.”

Stepping around the corpse that had once been a rider of the Saudi forces, Shahan began to issue orders; slowly the army advanced towards Mecca.

\*\*\*

“Here they come,” he muttered, as the gates of the city opened. Other riders flowed in from tents, but most of them seemed to be living in the city. Despite their primitiveness, he reminded himself that one of their carbines – Bloodnok had openly wondered if they dated from Victorian times - could kill as well as one of the AK-47s the army possessed.

For a wonder, every man in the army was falling into a skirmish line, standing out of range of the riders. The riders made a fearsome sight; skulls and human hair streaming away from their saddles. Unlike the even more barbaric Taliban, they advanced without order, firing without discipline, and bellowing loudly.

“*Allah Ackbar*,” they screamed, the evidence of how far they’d fallen all around them. *How can anyone mistake them for Muslims?* Shahan wondered, wondering also why he was so calm. He watched dispassionately as the riders swooped forward – was that the feared cousin of Ibn Saud leading them? – And waited for the right moment.

“*Allah Ackbar*,” the riders howled, and Shahan smiled suddenly.

“Fire,” he shouted, and fired the first shot himself. A torrent of flame poured out of the skirmish line, blasting through horses and men alike, tearing their bodies apart as they impaled themselves upon his guns. They died by the hundreds as they came on, bravely wading into the storm of fire.

And then it was all over. The armoured cars advanced forward, machine guns spitting as the infantry reloaded their weapons with new clips, but there was no need. The handful of observing horsemen were already running, but it was too late; sniper fire from the British troops brought them down in seconds. For all intents and purposes, the army that had crushed the Hashimites had been destroyed.

“This won’t be the last battle,” Bloodnok said. “The problem with tribes like this is that when the controlling tribe is gone, the others will take it as an incitement to riot.”

“You seem to know a lot about this,” Shahan observed. “How did I do?”

“I’d say...not too badly,” Bloodnok said. “Of course, if you were facing my people, the tactic you used would have been suicidal. We would have shot you down from outside your own range, which is what you did to them, or driven forward with tanks.”

“I know,” Shahan said, “Still, how did you know all about this?”

“I served in Nigeria during the peacekeeping operation,” Bloodnok said. “Bloody silly fucked-up thing. We have French on the left of us, Italians on the right of us, and a know-it-all American commander who seemed to think that if they would all get along, there would be no need for fighting. And then we had Pakistani and Russian troops deployed before us, and they abused the locals terribly, and so we were targets for their snipers as well.”

He scowled. “Bastards committed more rapes and murders than half the people we were meant to be keeping apart.” He glared in the direction of the city. “That’s how those things happen; some egghead at the United Nation decides that we have to keep the peace, but seeing no major country can be arsed to do it, they have to summon little counties with piss-ant armies and a serious discipline problem. *They*, of course, saw the entire mission as a chance for looting, and to rape, and to do things that they would never be allowed to do in their own countries. So children and women and young girls are suddenly fair game – and these are the people who are supposed to be protecting them!

“And then some rat-bastard from a terror group comes along and distributes weapons to all of the people who now hate the west – with good reason - and the whole sorry cycle starts all over again, and again, and again.”

“Not this time,” Shahan said. “I won’t let it happen. This place will become the garden of Eden instead of the horror zone it was before the war.”

“You didn’t do badly,” Bloodnok said. “I’ve served under worse. Look, a delegation from the city is coming out; they want to meet the new masters.”

\*\*\*

In the end, it hadn’t been anything like as bad as Shahan had feared. The city leaders, men who’d remained underground for nearly ten years, had emerged. A quick revolution – half of the remaining Saudis had been killed by their sex-slaves – and the city was ready to welcome its new masters.

Explaining what was happening proved harder. The Royal Family, the one that had nearly been crushed by Ibn Saud, had been expecting to become the new rulers again. To be told that they would not be rulers, but equal partners had shocked them, the more so because of the new civil code that Shahan had instituted at once. The new army didn’t loot or rape, something that the rulers were grateful for, but their insistence on personal liberty was almost as shocking.

Still, the remains of the Saudis regrouped at Riyadh. Shahan had secured his rear area by distributing land and property to the new city council, and sent his mobile force on ahead. It failed to catch Ibn Saud; the master of the desert had blended back into the desert, perhaps heading back to his homeland. Patrols were a waste of time, he discovered; Ibn Saud was a master at hiding from hostile patrols. Discovering his harem, with all the women raped and murdered, had shocked the Muslims to the core; several of the new Imams were all for pronouncing a *Jihad* there and then.

“I suspect that you will have to guard the new buildings for some time,” Bloodnok observed, as the newcomers began to work. The water-cleansing factory was a wonder to the Arabs; they watched it at work with glee. Indoor plumbing, teaching, and basic science – and the death penalty for selling daughters – was slowly changing them. As time passed, the new system became larger and larger; newcomers from Britain were changing the shape of the nation.

“I think that we might have made a difference,” Shahan observed, as another evening drew to a close. There was fighting all over the world, in many different places, but, for once, there was peace in the holy land.

## Chapter Twenty-Five: Culture Shock

Diogenes Club

London, United Kingdom

2<sup>nd</sup> September 1940

The Diogenes Club, Somerville knew, had been founded as a semi-serious joke by a man in 1920, apparently with the wholehearted support of the young Winston Churchill. Silence was golden within the club; anyone who spoke outside the Speaking Room would be evicted. Multiple offences would see the culprit barred from the club for life. Somerville had been astonished – and then delighted – to learn that it still existed in the brave new world.

He touched his mobile phone that hung by his belt. His minder had explained that it used a special government-issue SIM card, one that automatically encrypted his words so eavesdroppers could not intercept what he said. Long words like ‘quantum encryption’ and ‘limited array signals’ had slipped past Somerville’s comprehension; it was enough to know that he could be reached any time by anyone with his number.

*I hate this fucking thing*, he thought. The Royal Navy had suffered, badly, from the Admiralty trying to direct operations at long distance; the *Goeben* fiasco had been caused by the commanding officer being given several different sets of contradictory orders. Now...he wasn’t certain that even Admiral Turtledove, a man he had come to respect, had any freedom to set his own orders. Didn’t the modern world understand that the man on the spot knew what was happening with far more understanding than men in distant offices?

The car drew up in the small parking lot and Somerville climbed out, waving his minder goodbye. “I’ll be back for you as soon as you call,” the minder said, and drove off. He’d wanted to accompany Somerville, but the Admiral had insisted – quite firmly – on going alone.

He stepped into the lobby and was greeted by a statue of a portly man; the impressively stout – and non-existent – Mycroft Holmes. Behind the old statue, which had been new the last time Somerville had entered the club, a second statue, of Lord Mycroft, had been added. Apart from the second statue, the club was exactly as he remembered it; neat and tastefully decorated.

An old man creaked up to him. He was dressed in the neat dark uniform of the club. Somerville found his eyes following the sharp cheekbones; could it really be...?

The man held out a small computer. LORD LINLITHGOW IS IN THE SPEAKING ROOM, the screen read. Somerville nodded politely and followed the man through corridors that had been unchanged in eighty years. They passed through a corridor displaying pictures of famous club members; Churchill, Jellicoe...and his blood ran cold as he saw an older version of himself, dressed in the uniform of a full Admiral. His promotion to Admiral had come later; Hanover had promoted him only a month ago.

He smiled suddenly as he saw a picture draped in black. Few people remembered that Kaiser Wilhelm had once been a member. Club rules forbade removing a picture, so when the Great War had broken out, his photograph had been covered in black. Lost in his thoughts, he was



led into the Speaking Room and through an airlock far more complex than the hatch of a submarine.

“In here, sir,” the man said. “It’s a pleasure to see you again, Admiral.”

“Wilkins?” Somerville asked. The old man had been a young apprentice to the head butler, the feared Barker.

“Yes, sir,” Wilkins said. “Lord Linlithgow is inside, waiting.”

“I hope to talk to you later,” Somerville said, suddenly uncertain of his ground. What did one say to a boy who’d lived his entire life in the space of a second? Wilkins had been a young child, nervous and sickly, and now he was a confident man, clearly every bit as much the master of the club as Barker had been. A thought struck him. “What happened to Barker?”

“He retired in 1970,” Wilkins said. “He died the year afterwards; we all attended his funeral and the club had a day of mourning.”

“How apt,” Somerville said, and shook Wilkins’ hand, before entering the speaking room. It had changed little; the only addition was a series of small partitioned rooms added to one end of the living room.

“Somerville,” Lord Linlithgow said. “I trust that you had a pleasant journey?”

The dignified viceroy sounded sour. Somerville didn’t blame him; Linlithgow had confidently stated that the Raj would last until 1980, learning that it would not have lasted past 1947 – and that it would now not last past 1941 – had been a shock.

“I suppose it was an interesting journey,” Somerville conceded. “I have been slated to command the Mediterranean Fleet, again. *Our* ships are tougher than theirs.”

“And they were the subject of this meeting,” Linlithgow said. “I dare say that you had hoped that this was all a practical joke?”

Somerville nodded. “Your Excellency, I feared that the Germans had invaded Britain when we lost contact, but when...”

“I am not certain that that would not have been preferable,” Linlithgow interrupted. “I have been busy, the past week, exploring the brave new world.” He spat once. “What sort of world is it where the Empire no longer exists, where we suck up to the Americans and where we give away jewels like Hong Kong?”

“A very different one,” Somerville said. “Things will be different, this time around.”

“Will they?” Linlithgow asked. “Look at their histories; India will be sundered into three components, South Africa will grant self-determination to niggers, and look how they bring Africa into a collapse. Colonists who have risked their lives in pursuit of the white man’s burden abandoned to the mercies of savages who know nothing about how to make a country grow. Hong Kong will be ruthlessly purged by China in 2010; far too much democracy for

them. Even America will stagger under attacks by ragged sand-niggers. What sort of world is it for us?"

"The future?" Somerville suggested. "We have begun work on integrating the former French colonies into a trading empire that will be stronger than the old empire, we have begun to offer the Indians a chance to..."

"Destroy themselves," Linlithgow snapped. "There are far more factions within India than the ones invited to the Imperial Conference *Pah!* What about the Sikhs, or the Jain, or the different groups within the princely states? This is going to be a complete disaster, I know it, but do they listen to the man with the most experience? Of course not!"

"And what about your people? Will the ordinary seamen fit in here? How many incidents have we had already; men clashing with wogs and niggers, who seem to think that they have a right to live here? What about the army; will General Wavell's men be happy living here? What can they do? How many skills do they have? Many of them have lost wives and sweethearts – and then they're coming home to a Britain that has no use for them!"

"I understand your point," Somerville said carefully. A servant arrived with a tray of bone china teacups and a pot of tea. The servant was Indian; he departed as silently as he arrived, after pouring the tea for the two men. "Still, what can we do about it?"

"The Monarch no longer holds the respect of his people or the government," Linlithgow said. "I have read the histories of King Charles; stupid life, stupid wife and stupid second marriage. The heir shows promise, but has publicly threatened to leave; the second in line disgraced the country by wearing a Nazi armband! That *fool* Hanover is running the country, and taking us down the path to ruin!"

Somerville sipped his tea. It was as fine as he remembered. "Unfortunately, this is not a cheap novel, with a handful of people moving in time," he said. "This is an entire nation; the effects are profound. Already, we have forced the Germans from North Africa; we are in a position to affect the entire history of the continent for the better."

"Indeed," Linlithgow said. "I have spent the week examining the histories and consulting with...people. I do not intend to return to India; I imagine that Hanover will appoint some kind of...commissioner or Governor-General to oversee the transition to independence. Of course, with a possible threat from Japan, they will have to defend the nation; there is no way that an independent India can gain control of its army in time to protect the nation, should the Japanese attack. I have been talking to Prime Minister Menzies, of Australia; they are terrified at the possibility of a Japanese invasion, particularly with the revolts on the Dutch East Indies."

Somerville nodded. The Dutch Government-In-Exile had vanished along with Britain, and they had left the East Indies up for grabs. Already, local factions were advancing their claims, the Japanese were moving in for the kill, and Menzies was demanding a pre-emptive occupation. The Japanese conquest – there really was no other term – of French Indochina, despite American protests, placed them far too close to Singapore for comfort. Fortunately, General Percival had been removed, along with a large number of Japanese spies.

“I have also been talking to Prime Minister Smuts,” he continued. “He was less than happy to know the future of South Africa, despite the delegation of niggers from here that went to see him. He was in fact looking for new immigrants, and I suggested that he might offer good terms to our *Contemporary* personnel, as is my duty as the senior surviving person.”

Somerville narrowed his eyes. He supposed that Linlithgow was correct – with the possible exception of Lord Lothian he was the senior British government official – but he seemed to be moving far too quickly for Somerville’s tastes.

“Not all of them will want to move to South Africa,” he said finally. “They’ll want to go home...”

“And with the exception of places like this, how much of *home* is left?” Linlithgow asked. “So far, how many of them will be offered a home in this...pathetic excuse for Britain?” He smiled. “Menzie’s was also interested in recruiting army soldiers, even common infantry, and is calling his regiments home. General Wavell wasn’t happy, but the newcomers don’t mind; and they are confident that they can hold North Africa.”

Somerville shook his head. “I’m supposed to be going back there myself,” he said. “What else can we do?”

Linlithgow shrugged. “We have to adapt to the new world order,” he said. “If that means moving to South Africa, along with all the Italian prisoners we took in North Africa, then we go there.” He smiled. “Even if the commoners don’t want to go, we’ll take them anyway; they are all we have to bargain with. Perhaps...perhaps we can build a new England in the heart of Africa.”

**Foreign Office  
Whitehall, United Kingdom  
2<sup>nd</sup> September 1940**

Like everyone else on Britain when the Transition happened, the Swedish Ambassador had vanished into the mists of time. To add to the general confusion, the 2015 Ambassador had been in transit back to Sweden when the Transition happened and his aircraft had not been picked up by whatever force had knocked Britain back in time. The cables that linked Sweden with Britain, of course, had been cut, and so the Swedes had only the rumours from Germany as a source of information. The grim suspicion that Britain had been invaded persisted until missiles started slamming into Kiel, in full view of Swedish observers.

Finally, the truth made its way up to Sweden, passing from Ireland to Spain, and then transported across Germany in a diplomatic bag. The Swedes, aware of the *Altmark* Incident, had been astonished, but the rubble of Kiel and the reports of massive u-boat losses had convinced at least some of them to send a mission back to Britain via Ireland. Fortunately, the Germans were still respecting the neutrality of the Swedes – and so were the future British. The paranoia of the Nazi Regime had increased a thousand-fold – they had purged their own army ruthlessly – but they were still respectful of neutrality.

Ambassador Christiansen was shown into the Foreign Office with a feeling of unreality. The quick meeting with a handful of Scandinavians in London – a city that had been vastly changed from how he remembered it – had been shocking, and the tour of ‘Little Sweden’

had been astonishing. He'd been delighted to learn that his nation would remain out of the war, but the treatment of Italy and Poland suggested that nothing could be counted on any more. He felt the shame of learning that his nation had done nothing to help the Finns during the second war with Russia, and the shame of helplessness when he learnt that the Swedes had walked a tight line between NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

"A pleasure to meet you," the new Foreign Secretary said. Christiansen had once advantage; he'd never met Eden, who'd held the post before Britain...vanished. "We hope that we will have good relations with your country."

It was standard diplomatic-speak, carefully organised to avoid offending anyone. Christiansen found it depressing; he hoped that Sweden would benefit from any relations with the future British.

"I hope so too," he said finally, taking the offered seat. "I must ask your permission to speak bluntly."

"Of course," McLachlan said. He smiled. "Blunt speaking will make a change, of course."

"Your arrival has disrupted events, even according to your own histories," Christiansen said. "In Germany, they have purged the army and forced most of the Poles into brutal slavery. In Finland, a growing Soviet army is building outside their borders, preparing to launch a second invasion."

"Makes sense, I suppose," McLachlan mused. "They would be eager to avoid Finland seeking revenge for the Winter War."

"That is intolerable," Christiansen said. "The Finns are already preparing to resist, but they cannot hold out for long. We believe, from our...ah, agents in Moscow, that the Soviets intend to move onto us afterwards, or that the Germans will. We will resist, but they have so much more power than we do."

"That is...unfortunate," McLachlan said, after a moment. "You do realise, of course, that as a supplier of strategic materials to the Germans, you are not top of the list for our help?"

Christiansen nodded. "The choice, Mr McLachlan, is to either send them the materials, or they will take them. We are already getting an influx of refugees from Norway as the Germans exterminate the core of the resistance movement there, using knowledge that *you* allowed them to take."

"I sympathise with your plight," McLachlan said finally. "I will have to consult with the Prime Minister, but I feel that there is very little we can do to support you. We do not have enough arms for our current...commitments, and even if we did we would be unable to send them to you. The Germans will insist on inspecting any ships we sent to you, and discovering weapons might just provoke the attack you fear."

"Finland is an even more troublesome problem," he continued. "Even more so than yourself, we would have difficulties in supplying them with anything. There are some possibilities, but the Germans would know what we were doing, and then they would come for you."

Christiansen felt his face fall. “There is nothing you can do?”

“Nothing, I think,” McLachlan said. “I can have the Oversight Committee look into it, but the blunt truth of the matter is that we are not at war with the Soviet Union. Even with our advanced weapons, we would have difficulties in fighting both enemies at the same time.”

He coughed. “I need, however, to ask you for a favour. A particularly stupid reporter would like to interview *Herr* Hitler. Would it be possible for you to make contact with the Germans and arrange safe-conduct?”

“I will of course try,” Christiansen said. “I don’t know how the Germans would react.”

“If we’re lucky, they’ll say no,” McLachlan muttered. “I’m sorry about being unable to help out.”

\*\*\*

Unbeknownst to any of the Swedish delegation, one of the military attachés who’d accompanied Christiansen had been working for the *Abwehr* for several years. His position had never been unmasked and he’d supplied the Germans with considerable amounts of data, before manoeuvring for the position in the embassy in Britain. He’d been refused the first position, but with the disappearance of the original Ambassador and his staff, he’d been permitted to go as a roving assistant to the Ambassador. As it happened, the Swedish Government had instructed him to gather as much information on the future military as he could – in hopes of joint operations – and he was delighted. There would be no protests to reveal his...other masters.

Absently, he wandered though London, watching carefully as he passed streets that glowed with power. Even the poor had better homes than the poor in Sweden, equipped with televisions and radios and home cookers. He stopped at a street kitchen and was given something called a kebab to eat; it was hot and spicy, but quite tasty. The blending of the different sauces gave it quite a kick.

Thus refreshed, he wandered into the local library, and started his investigations. The librarian was quite helpful and he studied the war – World War Two – with care. He chuckled; all the priceless information and she’d put it on display!

“Everyone wants to know what happened these days,” she explained, when he asked. “The Guild of Historians is tickled pink.”

“Indeed,” he said gravely, and wandered away from the World War section, moving into the military section. There was a small guide to the Swedish Armed Forces of 2015; the Swedes were apparently heavy contributors to something called EUROFOR after a nasty terrorist incident. He read about immigration, and of Islamic pressure, and shuddered, making notes for his Government.

All the section on nuclear science had been removed, a wise precaution. The librarian explained that the Government had been quite firm on the issue; there were too many foreigners wandering around and there was no point in putting temptation in their way. Instead, he researched the current armed forces; discovering that there were only *three* fast-jet fighter bases was astonishing, even though he supposed that the RAF could operate from

other bases if necessary. There was so much data that he was overwhelmed; he made copies and scribbled away in his notebook, wondering how either of his masters would use the information. Finally, as it was getting dark, he left the library and wandered back to the embassy.

“Hey, you,” a man called. He turned around and ducked as a fist shot towards his face, slamming him to the ground. The man kicked him as he fell, before snatching up his wallet and running away. Lying on the ground, gasping in pain, darkness came for him. By the time the police found his body, it was too late; he had already slipped into a coma.

## Chapter Twenty-Six: Incorporation

Whitfield Estate

**Edinburgh, United Kingdom**

**3<sup>rd</sup> September 1940**

Jim Oliver allowed himself a moment of quiet relief – the contact with the German submarine had gone perfectly – before drawing the Mr Bracken personality around him. Mr Bracken had no existence in reality; he was just another false name for Oliver. A reclusive businessman, a shareholder in many companies, a man of vast wealth and discretion – and his privacy was assured. There was even an actor who played him; it was a common joke that there were several, just to hide a man from the effects of his wealth.

Oliver smiled. He'd thought up the joke and told the first ones himself. It was amazing how quickly they'd spread, but then; people always took an undue interest in the affairs of the rich and famous. Like the American author who went around with his head under a paper bag, Mr Bracken rapidly became famous, and the world conspired to keep the secret of what he looked like.

"Your car, sir," the Chauffer said. Oliver smiled as the man opened the door; the combination of manservant and bodyguard was exactly what people expected from him. "We're parked right outside the AIMworks."

Oliver smiled up at him. Normally, no one would *dream* of parking outside the building, but people made exceptions for Mr Bracken, or his chosen representative. "Thank you, Jeeves," he said, and climbed out. All of the trained menservants were called Jeeves; an individual name would have distinguished them. Jeeves fell into step with him, even as he checked the telecommunications system that would have once allowed him to talk to someone on the other side of the world, but for the moment was only good for Britain. People had to believe in the Bracken Myth; they would assume that Oliver was just another actor, one in close contact with Bracken himself.

"A pleasant morning, Mr Bracken," the doorman said. He stared at Bracken with undisguised curiosity; Oliver smiled back at him. "They're waiting for you in the lobby."

"Thank you," Oliver said, and tipped him twenty pounds. Having contributed to the myth – and bought some insurance against the doorman calling the local press – he headed into the lobby, where he met three men.

"Good morning, Mr Bracken," the leader said. Oliver knew of him by reputation; Jack Thane. Founder of one of what Kasper had called the 'whingeing liberal sops to the poor bastards who won't work for themselves', one of the laptop for all projects. Given how he'd come to the attention of the Germans, Oliver found it more than a little ironic.

"A pleasure to meet you at last," Oliver said. "I have followed your work with great interest."

It was only halfway true. He had become interested when Kasper had ordered him to find other ways of making money out of the time-slip. Of course, everyone agreed that the government had acted promptly and correctly in taking actions designed to defend Britain

against German attacks, but for many companies on Britain it spelt disaster. The freezing of the stock market had saved them from collapsing at once, but all of them knew that once the market was reopened, they were doomed. AIMworks was one of those; it was a semi-charitable organisation that funded the development of cheap laptops that could be used anywhere, intended for the third world.

Oliver shrugged as Thane led him into the meeting room, passing around the table with a handful of introductions. The idea was stupid, he thought; what good would a laptop do a kid in Bangladesh? Except Bangladesh no longer existed, and might never exist, and the conversion works had ground to a halt. AIMworks was doomed – unless ‘Mr Bracken’ could pull off a miracle.

“Thank you for having me,” he said finally, as Thane finished the introductions. Jeeves took a place at the rear of the room; it was all part of the Bracken mystique. “I believe that you have a problem,” he said finally. “I shall be blunt; you are over-extended, in serious danger of not pleasing your creditors, and you no longer have a reason for existence.”

“That is accurate,” Thane said dispassionately. “I was led to believe that you have a solution for us?”

“Indeed,” Oliver said. “I am offering to buy your company outright.”

Thane blinked; the other men in the room started to chatter at high speed. “Mr Bracken,” Thane said finally, “we are a charity, of sorts, and not a business.”

Oliver smiled. “I assure you that that will not matter one jot to your creditors,” he said. “You owe money; quite a bit of money. Now, in a reasonable and fair world, they would recognise that you are no longer able to pay and let the debt slide. This is not a reasonable world, Mr Thane, and they have their own...investors to consider. It would be considered criminal negligence for them to simply...let you off, and I assure you that no CEO wants a second Mowley suit on their hands.”

They nodded. Bert Mowley had been sued by his stockholders for criminal negligence; failing to ensure that precautions were taken to upgrade the computers of the corporation. Despite a chain of reports and warnings, Mowley did nothing, the system collapsed, and hundreds of people found themselves out of pocket. The resultant legal battle had seen Mowley in jail, and the company destroyed.

“I appreciate that you are a charity,” he continued, “and there is no reason why the original ‘laptops for all’ project cannot be continued at some later date. However, for the moment, your choice is between joining me, or being sold off to pay your creditors.”

Thane nodded slowly. The burble of conversation creased. “If we accept your offer,” he said coldly, “what would you do with our...systems?”

“As you know, a small private coalition of businesses has been formed to sell advanced technology to America and the British Commonwealth,” Oliver said. “My...companies have been invited to partake, in accordance with the new regulations on technology transference.” He smiled; the laws had been lifted from US Pentagon and State Department regulations, the



same ones that had held up the British Nuclear Program in the original time line. “Your laptops would make excellent trade goods.”

“I see,” Thane said. “So, perhaps...”

“What’s to stop us just selling them ourselves, or even sending them for free?” A man demanded. He was fat and greedy; the type of person who had been born to wealth, rather than earned it. Oliver despised him on sight. Such people talked for years about the hardships of being poor, and gave away their money to every charity they saw; completely unaware of what it was like to be poor.

“That would be a very stupid move,” Oliver said calmly. “For a start, you left it too late to join the coalition, and, as a charity and multinational organisation, you would not be eligible to take part. Secondly, if you *give* away the laptops you will face even angrier creditors and even more laptops. Thirdly, trade unauthorised by the Home Office is an offence and you would be tossed in jail. Does that answer your question?”

“I believe that it does,” Thane said. His eyes were cool, calculating. “We would like to discuss the proposal alone.”

“Of course,” Oliver said, rising from the table. “I’ll be waiting outside.”

It took nearly an hour before they called him back. Jeeves paced impatiently; Oliver himself waited calmly. He’d spent time in a Gestapo jail; waiting in a comfortable foyer was hardly a challenge.

“We have come to a decision,” Thane said finally. “We will sell you a controlling interest in AIMworks. However, we have conditions.” Oliver lifted an eyebrow. “We want you to agree that you will continue the laptop for all program once the restrictions are released.”

“I had something like that in mind,” Oliver admitted. “I trust that that’s the only condition?”

Thane nodded. Oliver passed over the contract. The committee read it quickly, and then signed in one quick motion each. “Thank you,” Oliver said, as he made to leave. “A pleasure doing business with you.”

\*\*\*

The car pulled out of the estate and set out along the motorway, heading back towards Glasgow. Jeeves flipped through the radio, checking for raid warnings, but there were none; the Germans were concentrating on the other end of the country. Oliver smiled; the Germans were working hard to adapt what he’d given them, but not all of it was useful.

He checked the list of companies on his lap. Selling advanced technology to America, for example, would bring in enough money to establish a covert – and commanding – position within the new global structure. Someone like Bill Gates, who became involved early enough to have an interest in all of the developments, would stand to make a fortune. Mr Bracken, the enigmatic figure, could be the figurehead.

The list was clear. Several companies stockpiled old mobile phones, ones that had been designed while they were in fashion, and then headed out of fashion and into recycling. What

sort of effect would releasing thousands of them have on the global market? The Americans wouldn't care if they were 'old;' the black market would be grateful for as many as they could get.

Grinning, Oliver worked through the list. The only problem was to ensure that Britain continued to benefit; it would discourage investigations from taking place. By the time that his people were building factories in America, well away from German bombs, they would be untouchable...

**Metropolitan Police Headquarters**  
**London, United Kingdom**  
**4<sup>th</sup> September 1940**

"His name is Olaf Stevenson," the coroner said. From his corner, Home Secretary and Leader of the Opposition Kenneth Barton retched; the body was black and blue. "He's a Contemporary, one of the Swedish delegation."

"I see," Barton said. "What the hell was he doing?"

He scowled. He'd half-expected Hanover to have pushed him aside, but instead he'd been given very real responsibility. As the former Home Secretary, Hanover kept a close interest in the works of the department, but he didn't meddle. For once, Barton was regretful; *Hanover* would have had more ability to make his displeasure at being summoned out of bed known.

"I don't know," the coroner said. She was a pretty Chinese woman; her nametag read REIKO. "I do know that he was mugged, severely beaten, and transported to hospital while in a coma. He never recovered; despite some attempts to awaken him he remained asleep, and died this morning. Preliminary examination suggests that the beating was the source of death."

Barton studied the corpse. "I would have thought that that was obvious," he said. "Why was the Code Red system activated?"

"Because of these," the MI5 duty officer said. Barton hadn't been introduced to him. "These documents contain a summary and details of our defences, with special attention to airbases and navy ports."

"I...see," Barton said grimly. Code Red was only used when a possible spy, or intelligence agent, was injured on British soil – carrying implicating evidence. "Who was he working for?"

"Impossible to say with any accuracy," the MI5 officer said. "Unfortunately, I asked the MI5 history department to look him up – and his name turned up on a list of German spies within Sweden."

"Fuck," Barton swore. "He was here to spy on us?"

"Given what he was carrying, I don't think that there's any other possibility," the MI5 officer said. "Which leaves us in a bit of a pickle."

“What a charmingly understated way of putting it,” Barton said. “Has anyone informed his embassy?”

“Not yet,” the officer said. “Do you think we should?”

“I’m going to put this in front of the war cabinet,” Barton said. “I want you to sit on this until I call, understand?”

\*\*\*

“Now that’s a problem,” Hanover said, once the new Home Secretary had finished detailing the problem. “Was he working for the Germans at the time?”

Stirling, who’d been ordered to find out as much as he could in an hour, shrugged. “I don’t know,” he admitted. “That particular spy ring was only discovered in 1970; the East Germans apparently took up the controls and threatened exposure if the stream of information was not continued. In 1970, the Swedes stumbled over it – and the truth came out. Quite when the Germans recruited him...”

“You’d think that seventy-five years worth of history books would have conferred upon us some advantages,” Hanover muttered.

“Most of the source materials, science-fiction novels, have something a little...smaller than the entire nation going back in time,” Stirling said. “My...second cousin wrote a book about something similar, and the problems that they faced. Our problems are worse; the Germans read English better than most of our citizens. Any of our books, such as the late Stevenson proved, can be used by the Germans; I suspect that they’re learning more and more from their prisoners – we teach World War Two in our schools.”

“A good thing that history was reduced to an elective,” Hanover said, who’d voted against that. The irony of the situation didn’t escape him. “Still, when you think about what the average citizen must know, and of how many ideas it would give to the Germans and...”

“So, what do we do about it?” McLachlan asked. “Do we tell the Swedes about the spy ring, and for good measure about the other Soviet ones? Coming to think of it, should we try to assist the Finns?”

Hanover, who’d been thinking about it, shook his head. “Whatever the...virtues, from the moral point of view, of assisting the Finns, we simply don’t have the resources. *How* do we slip them weapons without the Germans noticing?”

McLachlan nodded. “It’ll look bad on history’s rewritten books,” he said, “but I take your point.”

Hanover gazed at the global map. It was the original one that had been used by Churchill himself, replaced in its position. “It’s awesome, when you think about it,” he said. “We’ve dropped one hell of a pebble into history, and the ripples are still flowing around the world. In one month, Roosevelt is going to be elected...”

“We hope,” McLachlan said. “I read the report from Ambassador Quinn; the contest is undecided. Many Americans are undecided, particularly with the revelations about Soviet and German activity. They find our presence rather...unnerving, some of them are worrying about us using our sudden advantage to enforce our own will, and others want to remain in isolation. Many others think that we can win the war on our own, and then there are those who were always pro-German, and those who supported the Poles and the Jews.

“All in all, it’s a right mess,” he concluded. “I wish I could promise you a Roosevelt victory, but there’s no way to be certain. All the damage caused by the knowledge of the future is disrupting things; Southern Democrats are placing their support to the candidate who promises to limit Black influence and power, which of course loses black votes, and there have been a series of race riots in the south, and...”

“I take your meaning,” Hanover said. “I’m due to meet the Australian in the afternoon, so I’ll discuss fighting the war without American support with him. In the meantime, tell the Swedes about Mr Severson’s other masters; they can decide for themselves how to react.”

\*\*\*

Menzies was grudgingly impressed by the quality of the history books available to him. His own memoirs, lovingly detailed, had been a chilling read, as had the other books about him. Learning about his career gave him some pride and more concern; his attempts to build a global coalition out of the British Empire had ended in failure. Or, at least, they had ended in failure in the original history. In the new history, they might bear impressive fruit indeed.

“I’m sorry about the delay,” Hanover said, as he led Menzies into the small coffee room. A cup of the steaming drink was already waiting for them. “An important matter came up and I had to deal with it.”

“That’s quite all right,” Menzies assured him. “I’ve been learning about your world. It’s an interesting place, but I’m not sure I want to live there.”

Hanover chuckled harshly. “Me neither,” he said. He sipped his coffee carefully. “You know; the price of coffee – good coffee, or expensive coffee, which amounts to the same thing – has gone through the roof. We might be keeping people alive, but all the people who enjoyed their luxuries have discovered that prices are even beyond their resources.”

“I suppose that being dislocated in time will do that to you,” Menzies said absently. “I, however, have a problem.”

“The Japanese,” Hanover said. “They must know what’s happened now; they have spies and agents in America, and our possessions. Ambassador Yurina Sako wanted to return, so I let her, sending her the long way around.”

Menzies stared at him. “Are you out of your mind?” He snapped. “It’s bad enough the Germans having some of your people, but to send an enemy person *back* into the nest of vipers...”

Hanover smiled. “She knows just how much ruin the Japanese caused,” he said. “She wants to convince them to be peaceful instead.” He shrugged. “It’s not going to work out that way, of course.”

“Of course not,” Menzies said, with all the grim certainty of a person who had watched the ‘Yellow Peril’ expanding in his direction. “So, what are you going to do about it?”

“The problem is that deploying asserts to Australia will take time,” Hanover said. “We’ve been working on dispatching your units from the Middle East, and on reinforcing Singapore – and improving the defences as well.”

“Yes, that *would* be a good idea,” Menzies said dryly. The report on how the fortress had fallen had been shocking. “Anything else?”

“Hopefully, we should have a handful of submarines in the region in a week,” Hanover said. “We’re also dispatching some fleet support units, and once we have an air bridge we can move in more weapons. The problem, of course, is that the Japanese might strike now, before we are ready to meet them.

“We have dispatched, on freighters, a number of radar-guided weapons, which can be used to swat Zeros from the sky,” Hanover continued. “The problem, however, is that our asserts have been stripped to the bone – and you don’t have the ability to support our ships.”

“So we’re on our own,” Menzies said bitterly. “All the effort that I put in to...”

“Never,” Hanover said cheerfully. “We can and will send some of our army units, and more as they become available. We can also spare a single AWACS aircraft, which can track Japanese aircraft at very long distances, and some Sea Shadow missiles, which can be coordinated with the AWACS to strike at Japanese ships over the horizon.”

He sobered. “A lot depends on the Japanese,” he said. “If they strike now, we would face a long hard fight before they could be defeated.”

## Chapter Twenty-Seven: Rising Sun

IJS *Yamato*

Nr Japan

7<sup>th</sup> September, 1940

Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, Commander-In-Chief of the Japanese Combined Fleet, stared at the map on the wall with a deep sense of despair. It was against *bushido*, against every manner in which Yamamoto had been brought up, to scream, or to show emotion. He wanted to scream, he wanted to curse uncaring fate, but what good would it have done? Japan's fate was set...and even an Admiral could do nothing.

He hadn't believed the Germans when they'd told him of the future Britain. The news about the destruction of the German and Italian fleets had been alarming, but, frankly, neither of them were good seamen. Indeed, the reports suggested sabotage, rather than mythical missiles from far beyond the German range. Had Yamamoto himself not claimed credit for a similar plan, in the event of the American fleet daring to challenge the shining sword of *kido bunto*? Surely the Germans were telling lies to excuse their own failures.

And then the laptop had arrived, directly through the shocking allies of the Germans, the Soviets, and then the Ambassador had arrived. He examined the compact machine and its damning files, and then turned his attention to the transcript. Ambassador Yurina Sako had been convincing proof that *something* had gone very wrong in history; a woman's place was to support her husband, not to put on airs and graces. Yamamoto's own wife was a tower of strength to him and to their children, but he would never have dreamed of trusting her with such an important position.

The secret police, the dreaded *Kenphei*, had insisted on having a chance to interrogate Yurina properly. Yamamoto, already reeling from the impact of the books with her – the stupid unpatriotic bitch hadn't even brought any useful technological data – had countermanded the order, which had provoked yet another assassination attempt. His moderate approach to the issue of relations with America, specifically over the issue of declaring war over the new – and apparently not in the history books – embargos and the growing disgraceful treatment of Japanese-ethnic citizens in America and Australia.

Of course, such people were little better than traitors, fleeing their homeland for an enemy state, but they were still Japanese. Dozens of them had opened new channels of communication with the Japanese agents where they lived, supplying the Japanese with new information. Yamamoto shrugged; did it matter what the Japanese knew of the convulsions occupying the attentions of America?

He returned his attention to the history book, *A Just and Necessary War*. Its author took a very pro-American viewpoint, attacking the Japanese at every opportunity – surely even the army would not put Americans through a thousand mile march of death – but there was too much in the tome for Yamamoto to dismiss it out of hand. Of particular interest was the conclusion, written in 2010.

*In hindsight, Japan was doomed by the mere act of going to war against one superpower and several powers that, while weak, still possessed considerable opportunity to inflict pain upon the Japanese. Although the Japanese concluded – incorrectly – that the destruction of the*

*American fleet at Midway would secure victory, it should have been clear that Japan had no real way of forcing the war to its conclusion. The industries of almost all of the enemy powers were well outside Japan's reach – and the Japanese lacked the ability to defeat the enemies without destroying their industries.*

*Although Japanese politicians spoke of the need for a decisive engagement, the Kessen Kantai, the outcome of one such battle, or even a score such battles, would not have altered the outcome. In order to win, Japanese warriors would have to defeat American forces at least nine times their own strength, repeatedly. Japanese superiority in training did not – could not – compensate for sheer weight of numbers, and as American experience grew, the Japanese edge faded rapidly. By 1945, Japan was sending empty carriers and untrained pilots against a massive American force that was preparing the invasion of Japan itself.*

*The atomic bomb has often been called the weapon that ended the war, but in effect Japan had lost from day one. Once Admiral Yamamoto, one of the greatest strategic minds in World War Two, had been killed...*

Yamamoto slammed the book closed. Reading about his own death was grotesquely fascinating, even as the implications rolled out through his mind. The report from Himmler's oracle, including the little detail that Japanese navy codes could be read by the Americans, washed through his mind. The final implication was clear; Japan could not – dared not – go to war against the Western Powers.

Unfortunately, the Japanese War Cabinet had ordered precisely that.

\*\*\*

The meeting had been brutal. The 'doves,' the faction that wanted to avoid a war, were weakening. The Japanese had been subjected to intolerable provocation over the last month, from embargos on trade goods to attacks on its citizens. No Japanese vessel was allowed within one hundred miles of Pearl Harbour, and Japanese ships visiting the Philippines and Australia were thoroughly and humiliatingly searched. Already, the Japanese economy was in serious trouble; the constant war with China and the need to get the Navy reorganised was draining resources.

The 'hawks,' on the other hand, were growing stronger, swaying the Emperor to their views. Even if the Japanese conceded the American demands – which would be difficult as the Americans themselves weren't certain what they wanted the Japanese to do – the Americans had offered no guarantee of resuming trade. Indeed, they claimed, the American President might find it hard to resume trade, given that the election in under three weeks would determine if he would serve again. If he won, he might be more flexible, but the history documents meditated against it; Roosevelt had clearly prepared to fight a war with Japan.

Yamamoto had attempted to convince Premier Konoe Fumimaro that the war was suicide. "I have currently six fleet carriers and I may have the next two in service by early next year," he'd said. "I may be able to defeat the Americans in a stand-up battle, in fact I am certain that we can do that, but they will rebuild and rebuild again until they grind us down."

He quoted himself; the irony was not lost on him. "If I am told to fight," he said, "I shall run wild for the first six months... but I have utterly no confidence for the second or third year.

By then, the British will have moved more of their superweapons into the Pacific, and the Americans will have built the ships to carry them. At that point...the matter will be decided.”

He'd meant that Japan would lose. The War Cabinet hadn't been convinced, and he had to admit that all the options were bad. Strike north, against the USSR, and be defeated. Strike west, into China, and use up scarce resources fighting a slippery foe. Strike east, or south, and be crushed by the monstrous American industry, or British superweapons.

And, if they surrendered, if they begged for mercy, Japan's attempt to prove that yellow men were as good as white men would be doomed forever. How much more would they have to give up, if they surrendered now, if they proved that squeezing Japan's lifeline of vital resources would force them to change their behaviour? Yamamoto thought of the new brigades, dispatched to Formosa and half a dozen other little islands, and shuddered. The Chinese would never have a chance to revolt against the Japanese in the new future.

Yamamoto felt his hand gently. He'd lost two fingers and it still troubled him, but in that war Japan had taken on a vastly superior foe and won. The precedent had been discussed openly by the hawks; Japanese military skill would defeat the West, particularly with the offers from Germany, who had taught the Army its trade. Other information had been helpful; the future ships were powerful, but they were also weak; a single well-placed bomb or torpedo could destroy one when its defences were swarmed. The future Britain had only two observed carriers – although some British prisoners had spoken of *three* carriers – and apparently a limited number of freighters. They had some of the older Britain's ships, but only a handful – and history said that they were doomed to be sunk anyway.

The genesis of an idea began to swarm through Yamamoto's mind, even as he listened to Ambassador Yurina Sako. The woman was shamefully dressed, in a low-cut blouse and skirt that showed off her legs to best advantage. Some of the hawks were eyeing her, perhaps wondering what she would be like in the bedchamber, and others had already dismissed her as a whore.

“This war is folly,” she said, and the men glared at her. Even the Crown Prince seemed astonished; people *didn't* speak like that to the Japanese Cabinet. “We lost the war and suffered the impact of two nuclear weapons on our soil, and now...”

“And now you had the opportunity to bring us the information on how to win the war, and didn't,” an Army officer said. The Army Minister didn't react; the surest sign that he agreed with his subordinate. “You have failed in your duty to His Majesty and...”

“I'm trying to save you from repeating a mistake,” Yurina snapped. “The Emperor doesn't even understand what's happening and...”

There was uproar. Three of the army officers reached for their swords, preparing to cut Yurina down for imprudence. No one questioned the Emperor; at least where anyone else could hear. Yamamoto used all of his prestige to hold them back, warning them that she would be needed, before ordering one of his subordinates to take Yurina out of the room and to the *Yamato*. The battleship would be the only safe place for her.

After the confusion had died down, the vote for war had passed by a wide margin. Japan had no other choice, they reasoned, and the only hope was to seize the resources of the Dutch



East Indies before any new superweapons could arrive. Yamamoto headed back to his ship and summoned Minoru Genda. They had a war to plan.

\*\*\*

Minoru Genda smiled cheerfully as he picked up the reports that his commanding officer had sent him. Ten minutes later, he was no longer smiling. His career as one of the newest strategists of the Japanese Navy was in danger; the new threat was completely unprecedented. If the reports from Germany were true, ships in 'secured' harbours were anything, but safe. Japan, like Britain, depended on her navy far more than Germany; Germany could survive without her navy, Japan could not. Without her trading fleet, Japan was doomed.

"We cannot go to war against America," Genda said finally. Yamamoto relaxed slightly; had he suspected that Genda, who'd planned a number of strikes against the Americans, would insist on such a strike? "With this...information, we know that it would be suicide."

"I agree with your conclusions," Yamamoto said finally, after a pause, just long enough to make Genda uncomfortable. "Carry on."

Genda took a breath. "We also cannot go to war against the Russians," he said, gathering his confidence. Yamamoto wasn't like other admirals; Yamamoto *listened*. "Even if we won, a doubtful proposition..."

Yamamoto nodded; the Army had tried hard to cover up the disaster at Nomonhan, but the future history books revealed it in all its gruesome glory. Nearly ten thousand Japanese dead, wounded or imprisoned in *Gulags*.

"Even if we won, we would gain nothing, but empty territory. According to this summery of the war, the Germans would have attacked the Soviets in the front, but we can no longer count on that happening. Waging war against the Soviets would lead to our defeat; I'm certain of it."

"And," Yamamoto purred, "what do you propose?"

Genda fought hard to keep any trace of his feelings from his face. He understood Yamamoto's concerns, but it had only been ten minutes since he had started to read. "We need the resources of the south," he said. "At the moment, the cornerstone of the British Empire is gone, replaced by this...otherworldly nation that apparently abandoned the Empire. Will they leap to the defence of their former dominions? Without their support, neither India nor Australia can hope to withstand us laying claim to the Dutch East Indies, or the handful of French territory in Tahiti. Indeed, we could take Australia and have unlimited living room and resources for a very long time indeed, enough, perhaps, to match the Americans.

"But what if they do intervene?" He continued. "How much can they ship here quickly? They are ten thousand miles away; their ships will have to pass though hostile waters to reach us. Should they intervene, we would have a good chance of securing footholds on Australia, as well as the main targets of Singapore, Malaya, Burma and even India itself. Will the Raj resist the knock we will give it?"

He smiled. "They have wonder-weapons," he said. "The Germans have already detailed ways of circumventing their effectiveness; they have low numbers and a reluctance to cause

civilian casualties. How many of their planes can operate without preparation first; how many missiles can they carry on each ship? If we have to, we can force them to expand their weapons and then close in to finish them off.”

Yamamoto was silent for a long moment, studying the map. “It is a remarkable plan,” he said finally. “The one flaw I see is that the Americans will probably supply the British with materials.”

“Irrelevant,” Genda said. “The Americans cannot supply weapons to non-existent troops. They will also have to worry about their colonies in the Philippines; *we* won’t go after them, but *they* don’t know that.”

“They could slice us in half if they mounted an attack from the Philippines,” Yamamoto said softly. “Still, they will be reluctant to start a fight, and we will be careful to avoid...provoking them. We will not issue further protests over the treatment of Japanese in America; we will even avoid interdicting their shipping.” He smiled. “I think that this plan offers us the last best chance for victory.”

Genda bowed. “I am pleased that you consider my humble words worth listening to,” he said.

Yamamoto picked up the laptop, the one that Ambassador Yurina had brought with her, along with an advanced power converter. “You will take this,” he said, passing over the laptop and the instruction manual. “Go back to the office onshore and start drawing up a deployment plan for implementing the strike plan at the soonest possible date. Once you have done so, have it copied and sent to me by hand-courier, not by radio, understand?”

Genda bowed. “In addition, I want you to go through the files and highlight *anything*, no matter the ramifications, that might affect our ability to fight the war,” Yamamoto continued thoughtfully. “Brave personnel, incompetent personnel, any new tactics...anything that might be helpful. You will discuss that with no one, but myself. Understand?”

“*Hai*,” Genda said, bowed again, and took his leave. Despite the sudden shock of knowing the future, there was something about the chance to change the course of history that appealed to him. He loved challenges by nature, and changing history was the greatest challenge of all.

\*\*\*

Ambassador Yurina Sako felt like crying, but she refused to cry, summoning up all the determination of thirty-seven years in the diplomatic service to hold back the tears. She rubbed the side of her body, sore where one of the *barbarians* had hit her, and winced; she knew now that she’d made a mistake.

All of her life, she’d watched as Japan had had to eat humble pie for its actions, seventy-five years ago. She hadn’t been born in the war years, like some of the British; she’d been born into a world where Japan was starting to chafe at some of the restrictions placed upon it following the humiliating defeat of 1945. Slowly, steadily, the Japanese were starting to question the American view of the war – *Yurina* herself had questioned it.

She understood now. She hadn't expected to be received with any eagerness – she was a woman in an era where Japanese women had no public role – but to have been dismissed so cavalierly had been a shock. *These* Japanese didn't know, or didn't care, about the future; one of them was even talking about deploying biological weapons against the Chinese, wiping them out before they became a problem. After all, Yurina's own history notes had included details of a successful germ warfare attack in 2009 – on *Japan*.

She felt a sense of gratitude to the little Admiral, the man who many Japanese still revered. He was both a war hero, and a man who'd opposed the war with America. She knew that if he hadn't intervened she would have been murdered outright, or raped and *then* murdered. She cursed her decision to wear the clothes she had; she'd noticed some of the men looking at her with lust in their eyes.

*They deserved what they got*, Yurina thought, and shuddered. The Japanese would discover how badly their leadership had misjudged the situation in 1945, but now, with her knowledge of the future, they might well escape the war – and learn nothing from it. She knew little of the effects on the United States, but if Roosevelt lost the war for re-election, would his successor still attempt to fight the war?

There was a knock on the door. Yurina froze; she half-expected it to be one of the guards, coming to have a little fun with her. "Come in," she called, and the door opened. Yamamoto stepped through.

"I apologise for disturbing you," he said, as calmly as he could. "I trust that your accommodations are acceptable?"

Yurina laughed. "Admiral, I know the future," she said. "You and yours will lead Japan on the path to ruin. What is there to be happy about?"

Yamamoto took a seat on the bed. She took the chair. Yamamoto's eyes didn't follow her legs; he seemed to be looking into her very soul. "The War Cabinet has voted to attack the British Empire," he said finally.

Yurina laughed again, bitterly. "And so it begins," she said. "This war will destroy Japan."

"I have my orders," Yamamoto said. "Orders have to be obeyed."

"Obeying them will lead to Japan's destruction," Yurina said. She giggled, faintly aware of her strange behaviour. "So, are you going to open the attack on Pearl Harbour again, or are you going to do something else equally stupid?"

Yamamoto ignored her sally. "With your help, we could defeat them," he said. "Ambassador" – she blinked as he granted her the title she'd earned – "will the British assist their empire?"

"I have no idea," Yurina said. "They might just want to be rid of it. However, they will want to resist *you*; the militarists who have taken control of Japan."

Yamamoto nodded. "Then it's war to the knife," he said, and left the room. Yurina felt puzzled; if she hadn't known better, she would have said that he'd *fled* the room.

## Chapter Twenty-Eight: Council of War

10 Downing Street  
London, United Kingdom  
12<sup>th</sup> September 1940

On the wall of the conference room there hung a chart; British aircraft lost placed next to German aircraft lost. As he had every day for the past month, Hanover studied it grimly, and swore. The RAF had begun the sudden unexpected war with five hundred front-line jets, many of which could not have taken part in an all-out 2015 air war. No one, however, had *anticipated* an all-out war in 2015; only the Chinese posed a possible conventional threat to global peace – and the aerial defences had been stripped to the bone. Hanover cursed twenty years of peace; the RAF could not have stood off a conventional threat, should one have appeared.

*If the Germans ever get aircraft equal to ours, we might be in trouble*, Hanover thought grimly. As it happened, the RAF had held, barely. Nearly a quarter of the current pilot strength had been killed – and the remainder were nearing exhaustion – but they'd held. The German losses weren't precise – even 2015 radar had difficulty identifying who'd killed what – but somewhere around one thousand German planes had been destroyed.

Hanover shook his head and cursed the German who'd proven adaptable enough to force forward the V1 concept. It was worse than hunting Scud missiles, something that had proven futile in the Gulf War and the Syrian Conflict. A handful of SAS commando groups had been covertly inserted into France, looking for launching vehicles, but it had proven as futile at it had been ten years ago and sixty-five years in the future. The Germans didn't know it, but they'd come close to destroying RAF Neatishead, and had managed to seriously damage the civilian radars in London, Dover and Southampton.

He paced around the room until he was standing by his seat at the head of the table. The...incident with the German spy had worried the police – one German pilot remained unaccounted for, despite a massive search – and Hanover had endured a grim meeting with the Chief Constable in which he explained why total border security could not be guaranteed. After decades of European integration, the nation no longer had the ability to patrol its coastline effectively – and the Germans could insert their own commando teams into Britain. Other than tightening security as far as they could, and recruiting new Police officers, there simply wasn't much that they could do.

Not for the first time, Hanover considered releasing the ban on use of nuclear weapons. There had been enough anger after the bombing of Dover, to say nothing of the 'doodlebugs' hovering in from France, to justify it, but there were other considerations. After all, once the war ended, elections would have to be held – and his own position could be threatened.

He glanced down at his watch; it was almost time for the Council of War. Taking his chair, he waited patiently for the others; there were decisions to be made, and Hanover was looking forward to making them.

\*\*\*

Major – the rank having now been confirmed directly by Prime Minister Hanover – Stirling entered the conference room with more confidence than he had felt before during high-level

briefings. He'd dreaded the meetings at first; his low rank made him very much the junior member, just below the coffee boy. Hanover, at least, seemed to appreciate his services, sounding him out on all manner of subjects.

"This meeting of the War Cabinet is hereby called to order," Hanover said, and the doors were shut. Stirling looked up with undisguised fascination; apart from the regular attendees, there were three Contemporary personnel as well. Admiral Somerville, Prime Minister Menzies and General Wavell. "Before we proceed with the agenda, are there any issues of vital importance?"

Menzies nodded. He'd been in communication with Australia. "If I may interpose," he said, "my Government has received a communication from the Japanese. In essence, they are formally informing us that they intend to occupy the Dutch East Indies and the remainder of French territory for, quote, 'the preservation of Japanese lives and property during the unrest,' unquote. They are demanding that we recognise their right to do so and refrain from causing any...interruption in the flow of vital supplies to the Japanese economy. Any attempt to interfere will be considered an act of war and treated accordingly. They also demand that we use our good offices to prevent any...unfortunate American overreaction.

"My Government, including the commanders of our armed forces, consider this as nothing more than a preliminary for an attack upon Australia," he continued. "Japanese bases within the Dutch East Indies would make our defence difficult, particularly if we cannot rely on assistance from outside. Quite frankly, even with the designs you've sent us, the generals are uncertain about our ability to hold."

He looked across the table at Hanover. "At the risk of seeming rude," he said, "I need something I can take back home. What are you going to do about it?"

Hanover nodded at the First Sea Lord, Admiral Grisham. "We have completed preparations for the dispatch of a task force, under Admiral Turtledove," she said. "The task force will take a minimum of two weeks to reach Australia, and for various reasons the RFAs will have to travel with the main fleet, but we hope to be able to amass at least twenty-five front line warships near Australia. For the moment, four SSNs have been dispatched to the region, but it will be a week before they can arrive.

"Unfortunately our logistics are going to be very bad," she said. "We will have to start using freighters to transport war stocks to the region, and attacking them will prove an effective way to wear us down. We can use the planned air bridge, which *should* be beyond the ability of the Japanese to interfere with, but the amount that can be lifted, even on converted jumbo jets, is limited."

She nodded across at General Chapman. "We hope to be able to dispatch forty front-line aircraft, mainly Harriers and Jaguars, to the region. Once armed with Sea Shadows and the latest in weapons technology – and an AWACS that will be carried on a freighter..."

"Over my dead body," the Chief of the Air Staff snapped. "We have nine AWACS, two of which desperately require refurbishment and a third which is *hors de combat*. We cannot risk the Germans obtaining plans of our air defences – such as they came close to doing before – and successfully shutting down our radar. In that case..."

“In that case, we would still have four AWACS,” Hanover said. “Unfortunately, short of *our* Australia turning up on the sea of time, we have to enhance their radar by whatever means are necessary.” He looked around the room; Stirling thought his eyes lingered on him for a long moment. “We have a commitment to assist the Australians against the Japanese, and we will do what we have to in order to keep that commitment.”

“Thank you,” Menzies said.

Grisham nodded. “We will also be sending Contemporary units and a handful of our own forces to India and Singapore. While the Indian Provisional Government has agreed to cooperate with us, its authority is far from total. The Princes, for example, are refusing to recognise their authority, and are in a position to throw India into chaos.”

Hanover snorted. “It isn’t already?”

McLachlan coughed. “For the moment, we are working out a power-sharing scheme for India, one that will hopefully introduce a form of democracy and give the Princes some stake in the new system. While this is a far from ideal situation, and Gandhi has inveigled against it, the only other option is to...ah, take out the Princes, and we don’t have the forces in place to accomplish that. For the moment, the Indian Army is loyal – between the Contemporary British and the IPG they have a focus of loyalty, but its badly equipped.”

“On the other hand,” General Chapman injected, “we can be fairly certain of holding Singapore this time around, even with the handful of our own forces that were inserted into the region. And, of course, the Japanese will be weaker than they were the first time around.”

Hanover looked thoughtful. “And how strong are they?”

Stirling coughed, feeling more confident than he had the first time he’d summarized the reports of the Oversight Committee. “The Japanese, at the moment, are building up their fleet,” he said. “If the worst-case is to be believed, they have four fleet carrier currently active and two more that will be fitting out at the moment. They also have a serious number of smaller carriers that we can probably dismiss unless they serve as part of the Combined Fleet; they simply don’t carry enough aircraft to be a threat.”

Mildly amused by the look on Admiral Somerville’s face, he continued. “The massive *Yamato* is in the process of being fitted out at the moment,” he continued. “That ship represents a serious threat; in the original time line it took hundreds of bombs to destroy. Hopefully, we can get most of the fleet with missiles, but I shudder to think what would happen if one of the Japanese battlewagons got within firing range of one of our ships.

“Apart from the *Yamato*, which might or might not be *ready* to move, the Japanese have a number of other battleships and a large smaller force, including cruisers, destroyers and submarines. Their main weakness is oil; if we strike against their tankers they will be quickly paralysed, and then we can stave them out if we have to.”

Stirling adjusted the display. “In Australia, the units from North Africa have already returned home, along with a selection of goods from RAF stockpiles. The RAAF is weaker than I’d prefer, but we’ve sent almost half of the tanks and crew from the Contemporary forces in North Africa there. Under Australian command, there are roughly 30’000 British troops, and

the 7<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division (Contemporary) will be dispatched as soon as they have finished training on the Chieftain tanks.

“In essence, the Oversight Committee is certain that we can defeat the Japanese, but at considerable cost,” Stirling concluded.

“Thank you,” Hanover said. “Now, the recent developments in Spain...John?”

McLachlan picked up the control and flipped through the stored – and secure – PowerPoint files, finally displaying the brief from the Foreign Office. After the shock of their arrival had worn off, the Foreign Office had managed to come to grips with most of its new responsibilities, mainly thanks to McLachlan. Commenters were already talking about him as a possible Prime Minister in the future.

“Unfortunately, General Franco has yielded to pressure from *Herr Hitler* and begun preparations for war against us,” he said. A low murmur ran through the table. “As far as can be determined, the Transition seriously damaged the Spanish economy, as the Spaniards were dependent on materials from the Contemporary Britain. Of course, we didn’t know about that and we probably could not have handled the matter if we had known.”

Hanover chuckled harshly. “I suspect it went something like this,” he said. “Hitler; join us. Franco; hell, no. Hitler; join us, or we will do unto you as we did to the Poles. Franco; *Jawohl, Mein Fuhrer.*”

“Quite possibly,” McLachlan agreed. “At the moment, the Germans are moving heavy guns into Spain, and positioning them near Gibraltar. We believe that they will attempt to take the Fortress – and that they will succeed.”

Hanover scowled. “What will that do to our logistics?”

“Damage them,” McLachlan said. “This is coordinated action; if Admiral Turtledove’s fleet can’t pass through the Mediterranean, they will have to go the long way around. The German guns can really damage our ships. In the long term, it won’t matter that much; I don’t see any way in which Franco can hold his country together under bombardment, but of course we don’t have enough cruise missiles to really fuck up even the battered Spanish road network. The air bridge uses airports in Morocco, which are out of range of the German guns, so *that* won’t be affected.”

Hanover scowled. “Have the RAF stand by to strike against the German guns as soon as possible,” he said. “In the meantime, what about war production?”

Armin Prushank, the Minister for War Production, a recreated post, stood up and coughed. He’d once been a schoolteacher and it showed; Smith had made him a Minister and he’d proved himself in revamping the NHS. When the War Production post had been recreated, Hanover had offered him the post.

“Following advice from pilots who have encountered German aircraft, missile production priorities were given to short-range ASRAAMS,” he said. It was a stiff, scholarly delivery; Stirling hid a smile behind his hand. “A Eurofighter can carry eight of the missiles, which

provide a powerful force multiplier. Production of cannon shells remains at a suitable level, sufficient for both fighter jet requirements and ground-based anti-aircraft weapons.

“Longer-ranged cruise missiles and precision weapons are proving harder to re-supply,” he continued. “Although we maintained a plant for their construction if necessary, a number of the components were outsourced from America, mainly Tomahawk missiles. Developing our own production has proceeded slower than I would have wished; we have had to find the materials and proceed, in many ways, almost from scratch.”

“Blasted Gordon Brown,” Hanover muttered. “How long until we can start replacing our losses in aircraft?”

“Two more months,” Prushank said. “Unfortunately, Eurofighters were built in components, which were then placed together at a central location. While we have the plans and a stockpile of strategic materials, we are short on experienced staff. Harriers, on the other hand, can be assembled fairly quickly; we hope to have the first new Harrier in two months.”

Barton coughed. “What about building something more...ah, primitive?” He asked. “A Lightning, for example, or a Meteor?”

“We don’t have the plants to build them anymore,” Prushank explained. “Ironically, it would take longer to build them than it would to build something more advanced. Unfortunately...”

“I’m getting sick of that word,” someone muttered.

“*Unfortunately*,” Prushank snapped, “the Ministry is forced to compete with commercial interests, all determined to sabotage British production and our chances of survival.”

Stirling took a breath. It was a sore point and much discussed on the Internet and by the Oversight Committee. The need to construct new ‘toys’ for America and the nations in the British Commonwealth was diverting resources from the war. On one hand, the British needed the dollar income; on the other, it would cripple their ability to make war.

“It was a Cabinet decision,” McLachlan said. “We have to balance priorities...”

“I ordered it,” Hanover said. “I understand your concerns; Major Stirling was very clear on the subject. On the other hand, we need to be able to buy American resources, and we need to provide jobs for the workers who would otherwise suddenly become unemployed. Now, is there any other matter before we move onto the final item?”

“I believe that this is a new first for a Liberal Democrat,” Barton said, “but why not just drop the bomb?”

Stirling lifted an eyebrow. “We seem to have this argument from time to time,” Hanover said. “If we blast Germany now, we will have uprisings, counter-uprisings and God only knows what else in Europe, Stalin will roll over the border, and we might have to face a communist Europe. Now, I will not permit their use.”

“There is also the danger of German biological weapons being used against us,” Barton said. “Can we handle such an attack?”



Hanover nodded to Stirling. “The research establishment at Porton Down, which as you know handles pre-emptive biological weapons counter-research, is confident that we can handle an outbreak,” Stirling said. “The sudden loss of most of the fuel supply from the Middle East has limited population movement, so a panic would not be as fatal as the worst-case scenarios suggested. In addition, we have details of the German research and curing infected people would not be a supremely difficult task.

“The Oversight Committee, however, believes that we should quietly warn the Germans – they must know about our nukes – that we will employ the nukes if they attempt to use biological weapons against us. This has a precedent in 1991; President Bush and Prime Minister Thatcher warned Saddam Hussian that any use of biological weapons would draw a nuclear response. President Bush II later warned Iran and North Korea that they would suffer a similar fate if they attempted to use Weapons of Mass Destruction against allied forces.”

Stirling coughed. “We cannot be certain that Hitler will be deterred, but perhaps we can appeal to the rational elements of the German Armed Forces.”

“A sensible idea,” Hanover said. “Perhaps Ernst Schulze can work it into his propaganda speeches.” He scowled. “Which brings us nicely to the final matter; that damned reporter.”

“Unfortunately, Baron Edmund has worked up a lot of support from the press establishment,” the Press Secretary said. “Although it is sheer lunacy...”

“Quite so,” Hanover snapped.

“They are unwilling to let this opportunity go past without a fight,” the Press Secretary said. “A chance to interview Adolf Hitler would make someone’s career.”

“And cost them their life,” Hanover said. He grinned. “A neat way to improve the race, I fear.”

Stirling winced. “I must protest,” he said, knowing that he was talking way above his pay grade. “If she should be captured, her producers would put pressure on us to rescue her, and her equipment could be of inestimable value to the Germans.”

“They have agreed to waive any question of legal responsibility,” the Press Secretary said. “The Germans have agreed, I suspect reluctantly, and all she needs is our permission.”

Hanover glared down at his hands. “There are conditions,” he said finally. “The equipment she takes with her – and that of any assistants – is to be rigged with a self-destruct system, and some handy spyware. She is to be inserted into Sweden and the Germans can pick her up from there. *Nothing* is to fall into German hands. Finally, I want it clearly understood, and publicly stated, that there is no guarantee of a rescue mission if everything goes pear-shaped. If she gets killed on German soil, its her problem.”

“I believe that they understand that,” the Press Secretary said.

“Make certain of it,” Hanover said.

Stirling's pager buzzed and he glanced down at the message. "Sir, please could I display a picture from the SAS recon unit in France?"

Hanover nodded; Stirling displayed a picture of an instantly-recognisable man from history, standing in a French garden. He was clearly a prisoner; SS troops followed him everywhere.

"Is that...?" Hanover asked. "Could it really be him?"

"It seems so," Stirling said. "They're requesting permission to perform an extraction."

Hanover grinned. "See to it," he said. "This could be the break we've been waiting for."

## Chapter Twenty-Nine: Vatican Rocked

The Vatican

Rome

12<sup>th</sup> September 1940

Father O'Reilly paced the luxurious rooms that he'd been given and wondered when the Holy Father would accede to his request for a personal meeting. He'd taken five days to reach Rome, passing through countless German checkpoints with the help of a friendly – and *very* - anti-German – Italian priest, but, once he'd explained his mission, the Vatican had given him the rooms, and left him to cool his heels for five days.

*At least they took the material*, Father O'Reilly thought, and wondered if it had been a bad idea to bring it. Pope Pius didn't have the best of reputations; history had judged him as the man who could have averted the Holocaust with a word, and he'd done almost nothing. Absently, he tapped the sophisticated communications system he'd brought with him; he was still in communication with the Emergency Catholic Council in Britain. It had taken nearly a week for some of the implications to sink in – *and, unlike the Muslims, we lacked an up-and-coming young man willing to beard the lion in his den*, he thought sourly.

The basic problem facing the Emergency Catholic Council had been simple. Quite apart from the basic questions of original sins that had never been committed by a person alive in 1940, there were questions of Church doctrine at stake. The good news about the Transition, as Shahan McLachlan had discovered, was that it put more bums on pews. The bad news was that differences between the 1940 Church and the 2015 Church were pronounced – and Father O'Reilly was from a very different Church. Indeed, one suggestion – from a Protestant – was that the entire 2015 Church would be excommunicated at once the very moment the Pope heard what had happened.

Father O'Reilly shook his head and wandered over to the windows. The hand of Germany was light upon most of Rome, but the Vatican was always guarded by a group of SS troopers. How would they react to the news of thousands of scandals in the Church's later history? What would the population of Europe say to the abusive priests? Would the Church survive the loss of a large portion of its believers?

Like many other religious people, Father O'Reilly had confronted inner demons and doubts, emerging stronger than he had been before. That was an individual action, however; how would Pius react to the news of the future changes in the Church? No one in the Vatican had ever heard of the Vatican II rulings, let alone the Vatican III declaration of 2010. In Britain – and to a far greater extent in the future America – Mass was no longer given in Latin, and there were subtle differences in many other aspects. Vatican III, furthermore, had authorised the use of contraceptives, passed under the force of many non-governmental organisations demanding change in Africa.

And, of course, many people considered the Pope an irrelevance, at best.

Father O'Reilly understood, as well as anyone could, the stakes involved for the Church. The Pope could declare Vatican II and Vatican III to be hearsay, threatening anyone who refused to return to the old ways with excommunication. The result, Father O'Reilly suspected,

would be a sudden and alarming drop in Church attendance, and perhaps even a demand for independence from the Pope.

*How the Protestants would laugh*, Father O'Reilly thought bitterly. The Emergency Catholic Council had been divided; a number had wanted to stick to the new-old ways, others had been certain that Pius would see the logic of their case, and still others thought that Pius should be removed at once as a threat to the Church. Finally, they'd agreed to send a representative to Rome, and to wait. For the moment, Priests were ordered to stay with the 2015 version – and wait for Pius to have his say.

A door opened soundlessly behind him; a white-haired man dressed in the garments of a priest stepped through. When he spoke, he spoke in a German accent; a priest on the run from the Gestapo perhaps. Father O'Reilly knew that a number of refugees had been given sanctuary in the Vatican, before the Germans sealed it off.

"The Holy Father will see you now," he said finally. Father O'Reilly took a deep breath and followed him, walking into the private audience chamber. Pope Pius XII, former Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, stood there, waiting for him.

"Greetings in Christ," he said, as Father O'Reilly knelt to kiss his ring. He'd met Pope John before the Transition; he could not help, but think that Pius cut a far less impressive picture. "You have brought us a fascinating puzzle."

"I wish I could claim that I understood what had happened," Father O'Reilly said, taking the preferred seat. A private meeting was more than he had dared hope for. "You see that there are many issues at hand."

"The authority of the Church must remain unquestioned," Pius said, and Father O'Reilly felt his heart sink. "You must understand that the Pope is Christ's vicar on Earth."

Father O'Reilly found himself lost for words. With a silent prayer, he pressed on. "Holy Father, we have a serious question of dogma," he said grimly. "As you may have observed in the documents we brought, the power and authority of the Church has been much reduced."

"I read the documents," Pius said. Father O'Reilly was reminded uncomfortably of a schoolmaster. "Part of the problem seems to have been concessions made by my...successors, on ill-judged issues."

Father O'Reilly scowled. "I believe the problem began when the Vatican failed to act against the destruction of the Jews, Holy Father," he said. "You were willing to work with Hitler and..."

"Had we failed to agree to strict terms of conduct, and to have our authority over Church matters stated clearly, we would be in a far worse position," Pius said. "Hitler may be bad, but Stalin is hell incarnate."

"Hitler has begun...exterminating the Poles, many of whom are Catholics," Father O'Reilly said. "Holy Father, the most famous pope of recent years my have been killed before even being *born*!"

“We cannot proceed on the assumption that a soul is already damned or saved,” Pius said. “We have the assurance that that, at least, is a mortal sin. The events in Ireland are deeply distressing.”

“With all due respect, the Irish are reacting to the news of horrors that will be committed, either in secret now, or in the future,” Father O’Reilly said softly. “Holy Father, are you going to act to prevent the genocide?”

“The preservation of the Church’s authority is paramount,” Pius said. “If we take an open stand against Hitler, we will face destruction. Hitler has...crossed the lines of his *Reichskonkordat* already; how much more will he do if we provoke him? We have a duty to minister to the members of the Church, which we cannot do if Hitler prevents us from operating...”

“Some of your members are being massacred,” Father O’Reilly snapped. “The *Reichskonkordat* tells Hitler that you will support him!” He knew that it was an exaggeration, legally speaking, but *Hitler* considered it as such. “Hitler has already begun to weaken you still further; you know how much of your power has been removed, and priests have been thrown in jail...”

“Something that your information has aided,” Pius said. “We have formally protested to Prime Minister De Valera.”

“Did Hitler himself not say that ‘*The Third Reich does not desire a modus vivendi with the Catholic Church, but rather its destruction with lies and dishonour, in order to make room for a German Church in which the German race will be glorified?*’” Father O’Reilly asked. “Holy Father, the Church *must* confront the evil openly and wholeheartedly...”

“We cannot,” Pius said. “We are vulnerable here; the Germans will intervene and burn the Holy See to the ground if we oppose them openly.”

Father O’Reilly felt dismay and a cold sense of resolution. “Holy Father, have you no faith in your lord?”

“You overstep yourself,” Pius snapped, showing the first trace of anger. “I have to preserve the Church itself for the ages, something my successors clearly failed to do. By making concessions to demands, they fatally weakened the Church’s authority.”

It was on the tip of Father O’Reilly’s tongue to expose the hypocrisy. He held himself back, barely, from bursting out with anger. “I cannot make the same mistakes, again,” Pius said. “I must issue a formal dogmatic definition, one ordering the Catholics on Britain and Ireland to return to the...standard conventions of this time, and to cease persecuting priests...”

“If you had been more careful in your supervision of the priests, there would have been no scandal,” Father O’Reilly snapped. “The Church resisted the temptation to confront evil until it was almost too late...”

“The Church is the supreme arbiter of who serves it or not,” Pius said, gently, as if he wasn’t inclined to argue at all. “As thou well knowst, my son.”

“I know no such thing,” Father O’Reilly said sadly. “Holy Father...”

“You will take my decision, made with the authority vested in me, back to Britain,” Pius said. “The Vatican Council will review the history texts you brought with you; they will recommend further steps to avoid the disasters we would have suffered. Your arrival may be a gift from God, a way to correct mistakes before they were ever made.”

\*\*\*

As soon as he had been dismissed, Father O’Reilly made his way back to his apartment. He felt dreadfully cold inside; the Pope refused to recognise the seriousness of the situation. He didn’t know why it had been a surprise, or why it hurt so much; historically the Church had been unwilling to recognise problems until it had been – almost – too late. The attempt to exterminate the Jews, the certainty of destruction at the hands of Stalin and his communist state – although no one knew in what respect it was a union, soviet, socialist or a republic, the growing number of exposed paedophilic priests...the Church had staggered from disaster to disaster, often refusing to admit that a problem existed.

“God help me,” he said aloud, and lay on the bed. He prayed silently, wishing that he had someone else to take the burden from him. Pius had promised transport back to Britain, but Father O’Reilly rather expected that the Germans would object, or try to slip an agent in with the Papal mission. The promise of a direct representative didn’t bode well; Pius clearly wanted to supervise proceedings directly.

“Perhaps the money-changers are really within the temple after all,” he said. Intellectually, he could sympathise with the Pope’s problems, the need to walk a fine line between doing what was right and doing what was expedient, but the world needed better. *Catholicism* deserved better. The Pope had a duty to the Poles, to the thousands of millions threatened by the Germans, and he had no right to shirk that duty.

Grimly, before his memory faded, he went back to his laptop and typed up a full account of the meeting. The Emergency Catholic Council would have to know what had happened here, before the Pope’s representative could arrive. They had to decide what to do, before Pius could force the issue.

**Undisclosed Location**  
**Berlin, Germany**  
**12<sup>th</sup> September 1940**

“Come with us,” the SS guard snapped. Professor Horton kissed Jasmine once, then rose and followed the two guards. Despite his aging body and limited stamina, they insisted on treating him as if he was armed and dangerous; a Mauser was pointed at his chest at all times. Feeling nervous, he followed the guards through the corridors of the massive underground complex, wondering if he’d be allowed out this time. He hadn’t seen the light of day for a long time; he’d lost track of time underground. The primitive lights, always glowing a steady bright glow, burned away, hurting his head. The painkillers the Germans had supplied really didn’t help much; he’d run out of the ones salvaged from the crashed plane.

“In here,” the guard said, and waved him into an office. Horton looked inside and found himself looking into the eyes of *Reichsführer-SS* Heinrich Himmler. He flinched back; he could have sworn he saw the glinting of a snake’s eyes behind the little pair of spectacles.

“A very good evening to you, Professor Horton,” Himmler said cheerfully. “I need your information again, I fear.”

The warm tone only chilled Horton more. Himmler had worked away on his memories until he’d built up a reasonably clear picture of his own future. Whatever his strange beliefs in supernatural entities – which had allowed him to come to grips with the situation far quicker than Horton would have preferred - he was also a careful and intelligent person.

“General Franco has finally, under heavy pressure, agreed to join us,” Himmler said calmly, as always. “What are his chances of taking Gibraltar, with or without our help?”

Horton considered. The presence of him alone altered history, placing him inside the event sequence and rendering his knowledge of less use in an active setting than putting words to paper. The presence of all of Britain, as incredible as that sounded, altered events beyond recognition; Himmler had allowed him to read the classified *Luffwaffe* and *Wehrmacht* reports that proved that history had been altered beyond recognition.

“I imagine that he could shut the fortress down,” Horton said finally. “The Rock’s main vulnerability was always in its food and water supply; if the sea lanes can be closed down by shelling and the water cisterns can be broken open, then the Governor would have the choice of surrendering or dying of thirst.” He shrugged. “I’m no tactical expert, but I think that a frontal attack would be very dangerous.”

“So the *Wehrmacht* insists,” Himmler said. “They are obedient to the *Fuhrer*, of course, and he has ordered the Rock to be taken, but they have warned that losses will be severe. Fortunately, the priority is to shut the place down, rather than take it intact.” Himmler smiled softly; the expression was chilling. “How will Franco’s position be affected by this?”

Horton shivered. He knew a great deal about the events leading up to World War Two, but British historians hadn’t concentrated much on post-civil war Spain. He knew enough, he hoped, to satisfy Himmler, but what if he was wrong?

“If I recall correctly,” he said finally, “Franco possessed no power base equivalent to Hitler, Stalin or Mussolini’s. In fact...”

“The fat spaghetti-eater’s power base deserted him rather quickly,” Himmler observed. “Do carry on.”

“Franco holds his position by virtue of playing the forces of Army, Church and...upper classes against one another,” Horton said, hoping to God that he remembered correctly. “If the balance is tilted in one direction, it could unbalance Spain and start a second civil war.”

“How interesting,” Himmler said. “Carry on.”

Horton winced. “If Spain takes possession of Gibraltar,” he said, “they will probably be quite pleased about it, and it will give Franco a boost, particularly if there are no other demands on them. If the attack is a bloody failure, he won’t be boosted, and if he appears to be under your control, he will be treated the same way as Napoleon’s puppet king.”

“We have no intention of dispatching major *Wehrmacht* units to Spain,” Himmler assured him. “The priority is to close the sea lanes, nothing else.” He smiled at Horton. “Now, what about the Turks?”

“I don’t think that they will cooperate,” Horton said. Himmler lifted an eyebrow. “You’re working with the Russians,” Horton said, “and they fear and hate the Russians. They would probably be delighted to be able to lay claim to parts of Iraq, but they would be very reluctant to get involved – hell, they *were* very reluctant – to get involved with Britain. Given the chaos in Syria, they would be worried about problems coming from that region.”

Himmler nodded slowly, unpleasantly. French-controlled Syria had not been attacked by the British, but its government had collapsed anyway under a revolution by some army officials who believed that the only way to avoid Syria being given to its own people was to throw out the German-dominated Vichy French government. In the many-sided fighting the state had collapsed into anarchy.

“As always, you give good advice,” Himmler said. “Tell me, why would a news reporter wish to interview the *Fuhrer*?”

Horton blinked. “A news reporter wishes to interview the *Fuhrer*?”

“Yes,” Himmler said. “She has requested permission to visit Berlin to conduct such an interview, with a view to remaining in Berlin as a correspondent, along with the handful of American reporters who remain in the city.”

“I wonder if William Shirer is still here,” Horton said, without thinking.

“The American reporter?” Himmler purred. “How did he enter the history books?”

“He wrote a book on Germany after the war,” Horton said, choosing his words carefully. “I never read it; it wasn’t considered very...ah, accurate, and was considered too pro-Nazi.”

Himmler smiled. Horton realised that his careful lie had pleased Himmler. “Perhaps we’ll find a role for him,” he said. “However, what about the reporter?”

“I expect that the stupid girl thinks that you will extend the same respect to reporters that all the little tyrants will in the future,” Horton said. “The reports from the reporters can influence policy.”

“Oh?” Himmler asked. “Elaborate.”

Horton winced. “In the Gulf War, there was an accident that hit a market place and killed a lot of citizens,” he said. “The bombing program was suspended and it was restricted in the future for the end of the war. Since then, all targets were chosen to avoid civilian casualties.”

Himmler smiled. “I *had* wondered why the dams hadn’t been struck,” he said. “They certainly could smash them down, but the cost to civilian life would be awesome.” He leered; it was an alarming expression. “We could move the concentration camps to under the dams or near high-value targets, and *dare* them to fire.



“So, what about the reporter?”

Horton realised that Himmler would not be distracted. “She will come into Berlin and demand an interview,” he said. “Whatever she records will be broadcast back to Britain and shown to everyone with a TV set.”

Himmler considered it. “How interesting,” he said. “Now, I have one final piece of information for you.” He leered again. “As you know, your existence within the bunker has been watched.”

“Yes,” Horton said, with a sinking feeling.

“The assistant matron, Irma Grese, brought it to my attention,” Himmler said. Horton shuddered; the sixteen-year-old girl combined a devotion to Nazism with a devotion to the *Bund Deutscher Mädel*, the League of German Girls. The name had sounded familiar, but it had taken a week to remember *where* he’d heard it. Irma Grese had, or would have, been an *Oberaufseherin* at Auschwitz. Himmler, he suspected, had combed the files for loyal people and snapped them up earlier.

*I knew there was a reason why Jasmine doesn’t like her*, he thought, even though Irma had taken good care of the children.

“Your wife...ah, has not had her...ah, period for two months,” Himmler said. Horton realised with a sudden flicker of amusement, and then cold horror, that Himmler was actually *blushing*. “You know what that means?”

Horton felt his blood run cold, but he pasted a smile on his face. “I’m going to be a father again,” he said, and knew that Himmler now had another hold on him.

## Chapter Thirty: Rommel

Chateau Lafayette  
Nr Reims, France  
12<sup>th</sup> September 1940

The SAS team was bored. The Germans, admittedly, were more careful about perimeter security than the *Jihadis* that the SAS had been fighting in the early years of the new century, but they lacked any real comprehension of the SAS's capabilities. France might be new and strange, but the SAS teams had little difficulty in inserting and moving through the country. It was far less dangerous than Poland, which was having its population steadily removed or killed, and now that the war had slowed down, they were bored.

Captain Dwynn checked the GPS system and smiled to himself. They no longer had the American or European satellites that had guided them in the deserts of Syria or Saudi Arabia, but they had transponders and navigation beacons on Britain itself. Finding their position was easy; making their way to their target was even easier. The Germans seemed to have missed the SAS teams altogether; laser-guided weapons were not part of their experiences. Dwynn had hidden near a German airbase, pointed the laser-targeting device on the location of the planes, and watched as a Tomahawk slammed into the base. As the stock of missiles had dwindled, Dwynn and his team had been given new orders; check suspicious locations for any of the missing passengers from the lost jumbo jet.

"Sergeant Yates, stay back with the team," he subvocalised into his throat mike. The SAS had been re-equipped with the American-made devices just before the Transition and had been delighted with the results. There was little point in bothering this far from the target location – the Germans hadn't invented directional mikes or remote sensors – but Dwynn knew better than to become complacent. "Benton, you're with me."

Yates signalled his assent with his hands, using sign language to acknowledge. Dwynn nodded and slipped through the woodland, wishing that he had the automatic chameleon uniforms that the Americans had been talking about. The rocky woods would become a holiday resort in the future, but for the moment there were only a handful of paths.

"That way," he subvocalised, after checking his GPS again. A Eurofighter recon mission three days ago had spotted the isolated Chateau and the PJHQ analysts had noticed that an entire SS guard seemed to be keeping someone prisoner. As the most important prisoners in Germany were the airline passengers, the Oversight Committee had asked for the Chateau to be covertly examined.

Benton nodded and followed him, slipping low through the trees. Dwynn slipped through a small stream and reached a rocky knoll, pausing to check the GPS. The Chateau should be just over the knoll. Carefully, he slipped out the microcam and poked it over the knoll.

"Bugger me," Benton subvocalised, as the image became clear. The Chateau, almost a small castle, sat squarely in the middle of a clearer region, surrounded by an iron fence and patrolled by armed SS guards with dogs. "All this for one little civilian?"

Dwynn ignored him, examining the defences. The Germans had done well, he supposed, there were armed guards everywhere, but as a defence it needed work. Half of the guards

seemed to be living in a small barracks with a large heat signature; a single precision weapon would take out the entire barracks and its inhabitants. And then he saw the man being exercised by the guards, and he knew that it was not a little civilian after all.

"I know that man," he breathed. He'd been briefed on famous Germans, including the ones who had dared to try to end the Nazi regime, and this one was still famous, one of the handful with no stain to his name. Light brown hair, thinning on top, sharp clear eyes and a carefully-worn uniform...there really was no mistaking him.

"Sir, that's Erwin Rommel," Benton muttered. He tapped at the communications system, sending the report to PJHQ. "What are they doing; keeping him as a prisoner?"

Dwynn nodded. Rommel wore a uniform, but no sidearm or rank tabs. The guns were not *quite* pointed at him, but he was clearly being escorted. The man who would become the Desert Fox was walking briskly around the building, followed by his guards.

"Tell PJHQ that we can get him out with a little help," Dwynn said. "We can hit them this evening, if they agree."

\*\*\*

*Generalmajor* Erwin Rommel, former commander of the 7<sup>th</sup> *Panzer* and very temporary commander of Operation Tempest, paced through the woods of France with his escort, wondering again what had happened. He'd been ordered to prepare the 7<sup>th</sup> *Panzer* for the occupation of the Balkan states when the SS had turned up and arrested him at gunpoint, apparently on the *Fuhrer's* orders. Since then, he'd been kept prisoner in the French house, wondering why he had been removed from command.

*I'm loyal*, he thought, and wondered. It had been Hitler who'd given him his command, Hitler who'd trusted him, and he'd repaid that trust. He'd expected to continue his career – he'd even been pushed into thinking about an invasion of Britain – but then the war had changed, and then the future British had attacked.

"They said that you would betray the *Fuhrer*," the SS commander, Otto Skorzeny, had said. The elite group treated him with respect; according to Skorzeny Hitler hadn't decided what to do about him. Simply purging him, as so many other officers had been purged, would have cast doubt on the *Fuhrer's* infallibility, so he'd been simply left in France.

He shook his head sadly. His wife, son, and bastard daughter were still in Germany. Skorzeny didn't know what had happened to his wife and son; no one knew about his daughter. France was warm, even in September, but he shivered; what had happened to the *Reich*? What future knowledge had scared the SS so much that they'd been ceded control over so much? How many other innocents had been purged?

"Time to go back in," Skorzeny said. His voice was oddly respectful; Skorzeny respected men with military genius. Rommel had taken a *Panzer* division and used it as an oversized infantry formation, winning the battle of France. Of course, that had been against the French, who had some good tanks and fighting men, but their leaders...

*Pah*, Rommel thought, and followed the massive SS man back into the Chateau. He suspected that Skorzeny was as bored as he was, the man had been in *Das Reich*, one of the

new SS divisions, before being transferred to guard one inconvenient prisoner. Inaction sat as well with him as it did with Rommel; not very well. Skorzeny wanted to be in the thick of battle, particularly with the war with the future British...not going as well as it should have been.

\*\*\*

Darkness fell over the Chateau and the SAS men prepared themselves for battle. Dwynn had led them some distance away from the enemy, after leaving a small collection of microcams, so they could rest up without risking discovery by an enemy patrol. The data being fed freely through the air – the Germans being unable to detect it, let alone triangulate its source – was fed directly to Britain and then back to the SAS team.

“Here’s the plan,” Dwynn said, examining the chart of the Chateau. The PJHQ had finally managed to locate a plan of the Chateau, which had been destroyed by fire during the Uprising of 2010. It had once hosted a British Prime Minister. “Assuming that nothing changes, Sergeant Yates and his team will take up commanding positions around the Chateau, sniping any of the SS who move. In the meantime, Benton and I will take my team and snatch Rommel out of his rooms.”

He tapped the chart thoughtfully. “Unfortunately, we don’t know for certain which room he’s in,” he said. “I *guess* that he’s in the main room, here, but the guard commander might have taken that for himself. In that case, the five of us will sweep the entire Chateau for him, and kill any SS we meet, understand?”

They nodded. “Good,” he said. “The SS won’t have NVGs, so we’ll go in when its dark. Keep the automated settings on; the RAF is going to take out the barracks for us in” – he checked his watch quickly – “thirty minutes, and then hit several other targets nearby. Once the strike goes in, we follow, understand?”

“Yes, sir,” Yates said.

“Good,” Dwynn said. “Now, let’s get into position.”

\*\*\*

The RAF had been getting used to making high attitude precision raids on German targets, once the air war over England had slowed down to just V1s and the occasional fighter raid. The pilot grapevine argued back and forth over the possible reasons, ranging from the Germans having run out of pilots, to them having decided on other missions. Now that the RAF was receiving a steady supply of ASRAAMs, many German pilots had been proving reluctant to engage the Eurofighters one on one; the RAF might well have crossed the hump.

For his part, Flying Officer Victor Abernathy was glad of the rest. He knew that it probably meant that the Germans were plotting something, but the RAF needed the rest. With the sudden need to send some aircraft to the Far East, the RAF was overstretched. If the Germans had ever managed to figure out where the RAF was based, the losses might have become appalling. As it was, the Germans were bombing cities, ports – and a handful of disused airfields from the last war.

*We usually end up training for the last war,* Abernathy thought absently, as the Eurofighter crossed the coast of France, already kicking up to Mach Three. The Germans had nothing

that could hope to intercept it; the Eurofighter was outrunning the warning of its presence. *Now we have a chance to fight it – and at least we're doing better this time around.*

The night sky was empty. The Germans hadn't even begun to develop a proper nightfighter, and their experiments with AWACS aircraft had become targets for the RAF as soon as they realised what the Germans were trying to do. In the dark, the RAF's advanced radars made it as clear as day, and the Germans blinder than bats. After a handful of quick and sharp defeats, the Germans had conceded the night sky to the RAF.

"This is Charlie-one, heading for new target," he said, and brought the Eurofighter into a tight turn. His ECM was reporting the existence of German radars, trying to track the supersonic aircraft, but they would do the Germans no good. The Germans had been experimenting with slaving their anti-aircraft guns to radar, but as yet they hadn't developed a proper proximity fuse.

"Acknowledged, Charlie-one," the AWACS said. "Your targeting should pick up the laser point at any second."

Abernathy smiled, and pulled the Eurofighter up into a tight climb, wondering if the Germans were still trying to track him. The AWACS was pumping out jamming signals now, crippling the entire network by providing thousands of false returns. If the Germans could still see him, they had other problems to worry about as the Eurofighter topped out at nearly its maximum height.

"Beginning run," he said, and set course. The targeting sensor picked up the pinpoint of laser light with ease – 1940s France didn't have the thousands of possible sources that had so confused the USAF over Syria – and provided a lock-on at once. "Releasing weapon now."

The Eurofighter shuddered as the bomb fell from its wings, falling down towards the ground, its tiny rockets guiding it towards the pinpoint of laser light on the ground. Abernathy watched as a pinprick of light blossomed for a long moment, a tiny flash of light that meant hellfire for the men and women on the ground, and shrugged. The RAF intranet was overflowing with complaints about the targeting restrictions from the MOD; the Germans dams had been left untouched despite the fact that destroying them would cripple Germany's power supply.

"Mission accomplished," Abernathy said. "Requesting permission to return to the barn."

"Negative, Charlie-one," the AWACS said. "Remain on station; your support might be needed again."

\*\*\*

Slowly, like ghosts in the night, the SAS men spread out around the Chateau and waited. Their watches provided them with the time, but time always seemed to slow down when they were on patrol. Half the team split up, targeting the German guards with their sniper rifles, the other half waited in position to charge the gates.

*We should do one of the stunts that rat bastard put us on film doing,* Dwynn thought grimly. *Abseiling ninja-style into the compound and kidnapping him without anyone any the wiser. Against stoned-out ragheads I might have tried, but the SS is way too disciplined for that to...*

Even the SAS team was stunned by the sudden and violent explosion as the barracks blew apart. A hail of shots rang out in the night as the snipers fired, hunting down the SS men in the open and slaughtering them before they could react. Dwynn picked up the Stinger missile and fired; directly at the gates. A second explosion blossomed in the night, the five team members ran forward, covered by the snipers. A German jumped up and aimed his rifle; he was dead before he could squeeze the trigger.

“Now,” Dwynn subvocalised, as they quickly checked the grounds. Yates launched a second Stinger, targeted on the main door. The explosion shattered the door and Dwynn ran up, pausing only to toss a tear gas grenade through the hole. An SS man stumbled, coughing in sudden panic, and Dwynn shot him quickly, before running in.

“Secure the door,” he snapped, and ran down the corridor, trusting Benton to follow him. A form leapt up in front of him and he fired without thinking; a pyjama-clad SS man fell over backwards, missing half of his head. He kicked down the door to the main bedroom and jumped through, scanning the room. It seemed to be empty, but an infrared scan revealed the form hiding at the end of the room, in the shadows.

“We’ve come to get you out,” he called, in his bad German. Before beginning his SAS training, it had been worse. “Field Marshall, stand up please.”

\*\*\*

*The condemned man gets a good bed*, Rommel thought wryly, as he turned in for the night. It was a good bed, nice and soft in all the right places, designed subtly to roll to bodies together in the night. He missed his wife, or even his temporary mistress; the room was just *made* for romance. Skorzeny had thought that it was soft, but until the *Fuhrer* passed judgement on him it would be well to avoid cold cells and torture.

The explosions shattered the peace of the night and Rommel was instantly awake. He was no longer a young man, but his body remembered the lessons from the trenches of the Great War; in event of attack, get down and stay down. Reaching instinctively for his weapon – he’d been denied a personal sidearm – he rolled out of bed and crouched at the side of the bed as the entire building shook. Dimly, he heard shouts in German; the SS team attempting to repel the attack. From the screams, it didn’t sound as if they were succeeding; a thousand orders came to his lips.

He thrust them down as the door was kicked in. He lay still as...someone, a man dressed in a strange black outfit and weird helmet entered, swinging a rifle that was of a *very* strange design around the room. He listened as the man called for him, rifle not quite pointed in his direction.

“I surrender,” he said wryly, rising to his feet. Up close, he could see closely; the man wasn’t one of the 7<sup>th</sup> *Panzer* attempting a rescue, as he’d half-hoped and half-feared. “Who *are* you?”

“Captain Dwynn, SAS A Troop, Field Marshall,” the man said. Rommel blinked; he wasn’t a Field Marshall and didn’t seem ever likely to become one. “It’s a honour to make your acquaintance, sir, but we must be going before the bastard SS react.”

Rommel was used to making quick decisions, but this one stunned him. The monumental feeling of relief was...new, to say the least. "I'm coming," he said.

"Good," Dwyinn said. "Follow me and stay low."

Rommel said nothing as they retraced their steps and left the Chateau. Dead bodies, dressed in black, lay around the ruins; the barracks were a burning mess. There was something...unwholesome about such destruction; the entire SS force had been slaughtered without a care in the world. He didn't see Skorzeny; the big SS man seemed to have vanished. He didn't think that he had been killed; the big man was too mean to die.

"Excuse me," Dwyinn muttered, and lifted an earphone to his head. Three more men, dressed in the same black outfit, materialised out of the darkness, their weapons on alert. A shot rang out; Rommel spun around to see an SS man falling over backwards, half of his head missing.

"They're going to pick us up from here," he said. "The SS regiment nearby, ah..."

"*SS Deutschland*," Rommel murmured. Skorzeny had hoped for a transfer to the combat formation, one slated to move into the Balkans.

"Has been diverted," Dwyinn said. "The RAF struck it several times and then took out a bridge. They'll be rather late for the party."

Rommel blinked. "There's no airstrip here."

Dwyinn grinned. "We don't need one," he said, and pointed. Rommel could hear a throbbing in the air, and then a strange black autogiro *floated* into view and down to the ground. "Come on," he said. "There's a lot of people who want to talk to you."

"My wife," Rommel said. "What about her?"

Dwyinn ignored him. "I'm calling the RAF," he said. "They'll destroy the remains of the Chateau. Hopefully, the SS will think you were assassinated directly."

Rommel doubted it, but climbed into the strange aircraft anyway. Already, his mind could see interesting possibilities for employing them in the service of 7<sup>th</sup> *Panzer*, before his mind reminded him that there would never be another combat command. The strange aircraft shuddered and lifted off the ground into the darkness, and Rommel closed his eyes. There was nothing he could do, so he slept. There would be time for action later.

\*\*\*

Skorzeny pulled himself up from the ground, feeling once again the pain of the broken leg. Only his dogged determination not to faint had kept him conscious against the pain, dragging himself along the ground. He looked up as the aircraft landed and saw Rommel step into it, and then a stream of other men flowing into the aircraft. Skorzeny felt envy; he *wanted* to be like them.

*Himmler said I would be*, he thought absently. Himmler had called him into his office and shown him documents of the future, proving that he would become a commando leader. He'd been promised a chance to form his own unit, but first he had to guard Rommel. Now,

there was no doubt; the man he'd admired was nothing, but a traitor. He reached for his sidearm with his damaged hand, his rifle having long since vanished, and cursed; the weapon had been crushed by something.

He giggled, trying to find some method for standing up as the aircraft took over, and then a scream split the sky as one of the super-fast aircraft swooped overhead. He looked up, trying to see it, and then the remains of the Chateau exploded in a blast of fire. The blast picked him up and tossed him into the woods; Skorzeny screamed and passed out, hoping that reinforcements would arrive before he died. The *Fuhrer* had to be warned; the SS had to take action.

Darkness...



## Chapter Thirty-One: Alliances

RAF Lyneham

Wiltshire, United Kingdom

13<sup>th</sup> September 1940

Erwin Rommel opened his eyes and gazed up at a clean white ceiling, lit by a glowing strip of light. Wonderingly, he sat up and reeled; his body felt as if he'd been drinking the night before, except for the missing hangover. Carefully, he glanced around, examining the room that he found himself suddenly inhabiting. It was small and neat, a small typewriter-like device sat on one table. Swinging his legs over and out of the bed, he noticed that he'd been undressed and then dressed in striped pyjamas.

"Where the hell am I?" He asked, as he stood up. The room spun around him – he wondered suddenly if he'd been drugged – and he grabbed onto the table to steady himself. Staggering over to the sink, he turned on the tap and drank a sip of lukewarm water. It reminded him that he was thirsty and he sipped more, discovering that the other tap poured cold water.

As soon as he had quenched his thirst, he tried the door. Not entirely to his surprise, it was locked; banging produced no results. Quickly searching the rest of the room, he found a full set of clothes – although civilian rather than army – and a small bookshelf. Studying the selection of books, he was astonished to note that one of them was called *Rommel*, with a publication date of 2001.

*They are from the future*, he thought, as he skimmed through it. Up to a point, it was accurate; his service in the Great War – referred to as World War One – and his married life were covered in detail. He blushed to realise that the men of the future knew about his affair; he smiled with pride to realise that his son had made him proud. Then it changed, and he read on, growing more and more puzzled.

His career in France was as he remembered, but then it changed. Instead of the war with the suddenly super-powerful Britain, he went to Africa, aiding the Italians and coming to the gates of Egypt. He waged war until two German armies were lost, one in Russia, one in North Africa. He commanded the defence of France, hampered by the *Fuhrer*, and then he gave support to a plan to remove the *Fuhrer*. His role in the plan was discovered, he was offered a fatal choice...and then he was dead.

For a long moment, Rommel howled in pain. The book continued, praising him and warning of Germany's future, a long period spent under Soviet dominance. It spoke about the holocaust, and about the deaths of thousands of millions of people, all at the command of one man; *Fuhrer* Adolf Hitler.

"But it didn't happen that way," he protested.

"It did the first time around," a voice said from behind him. Rommel spun around, cursing his lack of awareness; the door had opened and he hadn't noticed. The man wore a British uniform, but different from the one that the Tommies normally wore. "Field Marshall Erwin Rommel, that was your life."

Rommel stared at him. "Sorry, bad joke, I know," the man said. His English was oddly accented; there were hints of American phrases and strange concepts. "If you read, you must understand that we are from the future."

"The rumours said you were," Rommel said finally, feeling the room spinning again. "I'm not a Field Marshall."

"You *were*, in the other universe," the man said. "Of course, that was before you were offered the choice between suicide and disgrace."

Rommel sat down hard on the bed; the man took the chair opposite him. "I'm Major Stirling," the man said, extending a hand. Rommel took it and shook hands. "I'm sorry for the somewhat... abrupt manner of making your acquaintance, sir, but we were running out of time. There is no doubt that Hitler would have ordered you killed, or Himmler would have taken the matter into his own hands. You see, some future information reached the SS, and everyone who would have plotted against Hitler has been removed, removed before they ever had a chance to even begin to plot"

"Why?" Rommel asked. "What happens?"

Stirling shrugged; Rommel had the impression that he was being watched very carefully. "Different reasons for different people," he said. "Some knew that the war was lost after an entire army group was smashed in Russia, others knew that Germany would be buried under a tidal wave of American production. Some just disliked Hitler, some believed that a peace could be worked out without Hitler – and some knew of the holocaust and how the allies would react. They said 'enjoy the war, because the peace will be terrible,' and it was."

He picked up a book and passed it over. Rommel looked down at the picture and was nearly sick. "Germany is a civilised nation," he said finally. "We won't, we don't..."

Stirling looked sympathetic. "It's already begun," he said. "In many ways, its worse than in our time; Poles and Greeks are being enslaved, it's like the Draka out there. All of them are being pressed into building German production, while your new ally Stalin is exterminating the Poles. General, of all the resistance that won't be here, you're the only one we were able to find in time."

"What happens to us?" Rommel asked finally. He felt a deep despair. "Why did this happen?"

"We don't know," Stirling said. "One option, one that is discussed more and more now, is destroying Germany outright." He shook his head. "Ambassador Ernst Schulze has a few ideas to prevent that; I'll send him in."

He left through the door. Rommel watched him go, his mind reeling, staring down at the pictures. The list of names that would become infamous in the future; concentration camps, SS guards and finally the fate of Germany itself.

\*\*\*

Ambassador Ernst Schulze hesitated before entering the room. He'd been on the strange airbase before, to visit Hans Meyer, but this was different. Rommel was one of the few

Germans from the World War Two era to be well spoken of; one of the few who it was permitted to speak openly about. Everyone *knew* about the others, but no one discussed them in public.

Rommel looked up as Schulze entered. He seemed younger than his pictures suggested, the ones that had not been taken yet. He was still older than many *Wehrmacht* officers, still dignified, but his eyes were dim. The *Pictures of Hell* was open in front of him; the record of what the allied troops had found in 1945.

“*Guten Tag*,” Schulze said. What did one say to a legend? “How are you this morning?”

Rommel laughed bitterly. “My nation, the great shining women, has committed terrible crimes and I have been a part of those crimes,” he said. “How do you expect me to feel?”

Schulze nodded. “I am the German ambassador to the United Kingdom,” he said. “I wasn’t exactly expecting a trip back in time.”

Rommel snorted. “I wasn’t expecting to be condemned for something I hadn’t done yet,” he said. “Ambassador, what is the point?”

Schulze nodded sadly. “General, there is a chance that everything can be altered,” he said. “Will you help me?”

Rommel shrugged. “To do what?”

Schulze smiled, understanding Rommel’s feelings. “The problem isn’t just defeating Germany, as Major Stirling said the nation can be destroyed, but in building a new and better world. You see, we have an opportunity to ensure that democracy flourishes within Germany earlier, if you will help me.”

Schulze took a breath. “You are the only German of any statue to be still considered a hero,” he said. “If you broadcast to Germany, to convince them to give up the Nazis, they will...”

“Do nothing,” Rommel said. Schulze blinked. “They don’t know about all of this, they don’t know about the horror; they will only know that Hitler has made them powerful again. We can’t talk them into overthrowing the Nazis, we can only defeat them on the field.”

“An army is being prepared,” Schulze said. “The problem is that it’s a British army...”

“And you want me to lead a German army,” Rommel said. He seemed to find the concept amusing. “Ambassador, I have no troops or weapons.”

“They can be provided,” Schulze said. “If we can build a Free German Army, will you command it?”

Rommel tapped the picture book. “I don’t see that I have a choice,” he said. “I want to do more research on the new military capabilities and I want to talk to the British first. I have no interest in building a puppet state.”

Schulze smiled. "Me neither," he said. "Don't worry; we'll build a strong, democratic and independent Germany."

\*\*\*

The RAF base commandant had been more than happy to give up his office for the meeting, but Hanover felt uncomfortable within the room. He knew that it was foolish, but he was uncomfortable. There were such high stakes, and he was balancing too many different items in the air.

He glared down at the text of a Parliamentary Question. Later that day, he was supposed to go in front of the House of Commons and answer the question. He read it again and swore; it was simple and clear. 'To ask the honourable member if the rumours of the Polish genocide are true and what he intends to do about them?'

Hanover scowled. On his insistence, the RAF had struck at train locomotives and some SS camps in Poland, pushing the RAF to its limits. Unfortunately, short of using nuclear missiles, the Soviet Union was outside his range; the RAF no longer had units based in Germany. Until the new army regiments were ready, and the growing threat from Japan dealt with, there was nothing he could do.

He shook his head and checked his watch. London hadn't seen a pro-nuclear demonstration – ever – before yesterday and the anti-nuclear protesters were as violent and irrational as ever. The Poles, demanding that Germany and Russia be nuked before all the Poles were exterminated, had clashed badly with the usual crowd of people who were opposed to the use of nukes under any circumstances. Japanese, some of the German residents and even some Russians had joined in the fun, and the riot had taken hours to suppress. The Police had thousands of people in jail under the DORA powers, trying to sort out who'd done what.

*There's always Ploesti*, he thought, and scowled. Wrecking the place with a nuclear warhead would short-circuit the German war machine, at least for a while, but it would unbalance the balance of power, tipping it firmly in Stalin's direction. Hanover shook his head; for the moment the war had to go on.

There was a knock at the door. "Come in," Hanover snapped, and stood up. Major Stirling came in, leading a man who was taller than Hanover had expected. Rommel was impressive, Hanover supposed; he walked with a genuine aristocratic bearing that so many of the House of Lords had forgotten in the years since the war. *Too busy scrogng off the NHS*, Hanover thought. *Damn Blair for hacking away without leaving anything to take the weight.*

"Erwin Rommel, Prime Minister," Major Stirling said, and left the room. Hanover considered Rommel; Rommel considered him back.

"It's a pleasure to meet you," Hanover said, aware that conversational inanities would be useless with this man. "I assume that you have been briefed on the situation?"

"As unbelievable as it is," Rommel said. "How did you come back in time?"

Hanover shook his head, waving Rommel to a chair. "I wish I knew," he said. "We've been hunting for a solution, and there are people who think it happened deliberately, but...hell, we might as well blame God! We don't know and we can't go back!"

“I think a lot of people will be grateful,” Rommel said. “Your major and the ambassador told me about what would have happened.”

Hanover snorted, recognising Rommel’s expression. “My dear fellow, it’s already happening.”

“I know,” Rommel said. “What do you intend to do about it?”

Hanover waved a hand at the map on the wall. “I have problems,” he said. “Yes, as you may have heard, as a final resort we can burn Germany off the face of the Earth, slaughtering the entire population.” He met Rommel’s eyes. “As God is my witness, if Hitler develops nuclear weapons, I will do that.”

Rommel paled. “At the same time, devastating Germany would invite Stalin to invade, and force us to force him out,” Hanover continued. He scowled. “I have to hold a balance; build up our own forces to invade Germany – and incidentally to destroy the Vichy Government – and at the same time permitting Hitler to continue to rule Germany.”

“You can’t,” Rommel said. “You have to stop him.”

Hanover smiled. “Until now, I didn’t have an alternative,” he said. “Tell me, would you be interested in leading a new Germany?”

Rommel narrowed his eyes. “You want me to be *Chancellor*?”

Hanover nodded. “You see, we want a strong Germany, one that will resist the economic policies that nearly destroyed the European Union, but we want – must have – a democratic state. We need an ally, General Rommel, one that will be strong and democratic, one that will assist us in rolling back communism. Stalin is just as great a threat to us as Hitler, perhaps greater in the long term.”

Rommel hesitated. “I have conditions,” he said finally. “I have no intention of running a puppet state. If I agree to do this, I want freedom of action.”

Hanover considered. “As long as you stick with the democracy, then fine; I agree. There is one caveat; no nuclear weapons, not now, not for a long time. The fewer there are of them, the better.”

“And if you have them, you make certain that no one else has them,” Rommel said wryly. “Secondly, you recruit a German army, one to take the field against Hitler’s legions. This has to be done by Germans; *we* have to burn the monsters out of our nation.”

Hanover nodded slowly. “I agree in principle,” he said. “However, we don’t have many German prisoners, and we don’t have a large German population. We could try to recruit from the states, but...”

“There’ll be enough in German for a battalion or two,” Rommel said. “So, what now?”

“At the moment, we’re preparing to fend off an attack on Gibraltar,” Hanover said. “Unfortunately, we will fail; I don’t suppose that you have a miracle tactic up your sleeve?”

Rommel shook his head. “The problems of attacking a fortress are well understood now,” he said.

Hanover smiled wryly. *This* Rommel, of course, had never heard of Tobruk. “Thanks anyway,” he said. “If you’ll excuse me, Ambassador Schulze will help you become accustomed to the new Britain, and then we can give you a medical check.”

“One final matter,” Rommel said. “My family.”

Hanover hesitated. “We’ll do what we can,” he said. “I won’t lie to you; Hitler will lose no sleep over turning them into dogmeat. We’ll see what the SAS can do, if we can find them, but most of our ways of gathering information are useless in the new situation.”

### **Undisclosed Location**

#### **Berlin, Germany**

**13<sup>th</sup> September 1940**

Himmler studied the report from the SS team with mounting dissatisfaction. The loss of Skorpany – his dead body having been discovered by the investigators – was annoying; the files had talked about him as some kind of superman, the sort of person whom Himmler needed for his long-term plans. More annoying was the attack itself; the British had attacked a SS-held location and had wiped out a fifty-man team, without suffering any losses at all. Himmler clicked his teeth; or, of course, they’d taken away any bodies. If it hadn’t been for the bullets in the dead bodies, now being moved to the SS burial ground, they would never have known that there’d been a ground attack at all.

*What were you doing?* Himmler asked himself, turning a recovered bullet over and over in his hands. *Why did you attack the building holding the Fuhrer’s former favourite? Why? What did you think you were doing?*

Himmler’s lips opened wide in a smile that would have sickened any onlooker. It was obvious; they had to have thought that they were recovering one of the handful of people from the crashed jet, back at the beginning. It made sense, with only one exception; why destroy the building? Had they taken Rommel? If not, had he escaped or had he been killed when the building itself had been destroyed? Himmler shook his head; there was no way to be certain, the handful of SS agents who’d been sent into the future Britain had just disappeared, and the Irish were much less obliging these days.

He pounded on the table, careful not to dialogue the laptop, and his secretary ran in. A tall thin man with a face like a pinched grape, his servility would have been sickening to anyone with any sense of fairness. Himmler, who knew he was loyal, kept him around because of that loyalty; the man would be completely alone if anything happened to Himmler.

“Pieter,” he snapped, and the secretary saluted. “You are to go at once to the troop headquarters and arrange extra protection around all of the prisoners,” he said. “I want them surrounded by another ring of armed guards, living in the same buildings as them.”

“*Jawohl, Herr Reichsführer,*” Pieter snapped, saluting again. His weak eyes blinked at Himmler. “I will do as you command.”

“Oh, and you had better see to it that *Herr* Rommel’s family get tossed into one of the worker camps,” Himmler said. “One way or the other, now that he’s dead, they won’t be needed any longer, will they?”

“*Jawohl, Herr Reichsführer,*” Pieter snapped. “Should we give him a state funeral?”

Himmler considered. Rommel had been given one in the first history, the Jewish one. “Yes,” he said. “We’ll give him a proper funeral and make him into a martyr.”

“*Jawohl, Herr Reichsführer,*” Pieter snapped.

## Chapter Thirty-Two: Rock of Ages

### Undisclosed Location

#### Berlin, Germany

15<sup>th</sup> September 1940

The funeral procession wove its way through the Berlin streets, hidden below clouds as the first rain of the autumn hit Berlin. From his place atop the stand, Himmler watched as Hitler saluted the marching *Wehrmacht* troopers, before retreating from the rain and heading back down to the bunker. Himmler let out a breath he hadn't known he was holding; had the RAF attacked, they would have stood a good chance of wiping out the German High Command.

He followed the *Fuhrer* through the winding corridors, still being dug ever deeper by slave labour, until they reached the main briefing room. Hitler's female secretary had done her best to make him comfortable, but the room was still cold, even with the heater. Himmler shivered and drew his dress uniform around his body; Hitler didn't seem to feel the cold.

"We have just buried a fine man and a loyal servant," Hitler said. There was a long moment of silence; almost all of the room had believed the statement. Himmler, who knew better, smiled inside. "The war must proceed. Field Marshal?"

Field Marshal Walter Von Brauchitsch jumped. A competent officer, he was entirely dominated by Hitler. "*Mein Fuhrer*," he said, saluting.

Hitler smiled. "What is the current status of Operation Rommel?"

Brauchitsch scowled; Himmler sympathised, although for different reasons. Hitler had changed the name of the operation five times so far. "We have moved up the heavy guns, under General Karl Becker, with the exception of the big rail gun, which suffered an...ah, accident."

Hitler's face clenched with fury. A roving RAF plane had spotted the big gun on its tracks and bombed it, destroying both the gun and the rail tracks below. Several other planes had snarled up the rail network completely, although not in time to prevent Becker from concentrating most of his force.

"The Spanish have refused to accept large numbers of ground troops from us," Brauchitsch continued. "They have provided the Blue Division, under General Julio Cordoba, a hero of their recent war. Franco insists on taking the fortress himself, and only accepted our guns under heavy pressure."

"Excellent," Hitler said. Brauchitsch looked nervous. "It matters not *who* holds the fortress, so long as the sea lanes are closed." He looked over at Ribbentrop, who smiled confidently. "And our partners?"

"The Soviets inform us that their attack on Iran will be launched in five days," Ribbentrop said confidently. Himmler met his eyes and was pleased to see the incompetent man flinch. "The Japanese are still making preparations, but we expect them to launch in another week or so."



Himmler frowned. "Could the little yellow men be planning to betray us?"

Ribbentrop hesitated. "Of course not," Hitler thundered. "This is their one opportunity to break loose from the shackles of the mongrel nation of half-bloods," he pronounced. "They will follow their own interests; have we not given them enough information to ensure their success?"

*Just the information guarantees nothing*, Himmler thought. "They have also requested access to information on the nuclear program," he said. "Is it your wish that we share the information?"

Hitler considered, but not for long. "The secrets are not secret to the enemy," he said. "As long as they share with us, and not with Stalin, then we will share what we have."

"General Becker reports that he can launch the attack at any moment," Brauchitsch said. "Should it be launched tomorrow?"

"Yes," Hitler said. "Once it is done, then we will be able to begin rolling up Africa and then the Middle East."

**Gibraltar**  
**Mediterranean Sea**  
**16<sup>th</sup> September 1940**

General Robert Flynn lifted his binoculars and gazed across the border into Spain, knowing that there was no way that the fortress could be held. As soon as Franco's wavering became known, the fortress had been sealed off and the population, all those who would go, had been removed to Saudi. The provisional government there had been delighted to see experienced ports men to assist in the rebuilding, and guards to guard the new farms and desalination plants. A great deal had been achieved in twelve days and Flynn would have liked to have seen it, just once.

*Perhaps I will*, he thought, and winced. Honour demanded that they made a fight for Gibraltar, but he was too much a professional to have any hope of victory. The War Cabinet had been undecided, until Hanover had ruled in favour of making a token defence. All of the previous administration had been removed; there were only one hundred men and the residents who had refused to leave.

He lowered his binoculars, watching as the sun slowly appeared over the horizon. It wouldn't be long now. He smiled; he was almost looking forward to it. The British Army of 2015 had never had to hold a fortress; the Germans – or more likely their Spanish allies – had no idea what was waiting for them. With modern weapons, his tiny force could have held, but that wasn't the point. The point was to make the Spanish *hurt*.

His radio buzzed. "General?"

"Yes, Tom," he said. The young civilian had been seconded to his force, one of the thousands who had volunteered for service. "What's happening?"

“Perimeter sensors are reporting advancing figures, across the border,” Tom said. he held no military rank; Flynn had brevetted him as a Private in order to convince the PJHQ that he could join the defence force.

“They have to be mad,” Flynn said, running down to the command centre. The defenders had strung communication cables all over the fortress, multiplying their forces tenfold. The Contemporaries had dug deep into the rock; the civilians who had refused to leave were already down in the bunkers. He glanced at the report; at least sixty figures were moving across the neutral territory between Gibraltar and Spain.

“It seems that way,” Tom said. He tapped the control for the remote machine guns, newly manufactured in Britain. “Permission to open fire.”

“Fire,” Flynn said.

\*\*\*

General Karl Becker was not an easy man to love. His obsession with having everything exactly in its place annoyed his men, who respected rather than loved him. His obvious competency and heroism in the battles in France won him respect from the Germans, but not from his Spanish allies. General Julio Cordoba was many things, but diplomatic was not one of them. He’d already clashed with Becker on many occasions, from strategy to command supremacy. Franco’s insistence on Cordoba holding overall command was...galling; the Spanish believed *way* too much in *élan*, in launching bold stokes against overwhelming odds.

“What are those bloody troops doing?” He snapped, as the African forces advanced. Recruited from Spain’s former possessions, they had been imbrued with a hatred of the British. “We haven’t softened them up yet!”

Cordoba’s German was spoken with a strong accent; Becker, who found it infuriating, suspected that the Spaniard did it on purpose. “We have to recover the fortress,” he said. “They have volunteered to accomplish Spain’s destiny.”

Given that Spain had been very quiet on the subject until Germany turned the screws, Becker glared at him. “They’ll be shot to bits,” Becker snapped, as the forces entered the neutral ground. “They’ll be wiped out for nothing.”

Cordoba shrugged. Becker suddenly realised that that was the point; the Africans had proven less and less tractable when Morocco had fallen to the British, and, unlike the Germans or even the French, the Spanish feared their servants as much as they loved them, perhaps more. The Africans had terrorised the Republicans; it was irony indeed that they were now terrorising their masters.

“Make a note of the enemy gun position,” Becker muttered to his aide. There had been so much movement over Gibraltar in the last week – Becker cursed the person who had kept putting back the attack – that it was impossible to tell where the defences were. Apart from a handful of air raids, there had been no attempt to interfere with the German build up.

“*Jawohl, Herr General*,” the aide muttered back.

A tongue of fire lashed out, slashing across the African troops. There was a long terrifying noise, worse than the machine guns of the Great War. The African troops were slaughtered; only two survived to crawl back to the Spanish lines.

"I told you so," Becker muttered. Cordoba ignored him. "May I open fire, Sir Don?"

Cordoba glared at him. "Pound them into the dirt," he demanded. "We must recover the fortress!"

Becker lifted his flare gun and fired a red flare into the air. There was a long pause, and then the guns fired as one. There was a half-second pause, and then explosions blossomed on the side of the rock.

"How long will it take?" Cordoba demanded. "How long until we should attack again?"

It was on the tip of Becker's tongue to tell him to lead the attack in person. "Wait a while," he said finally. "We have to soften them up first."

\*\*\*

The shockwaves ran through the rock, shells falling without precision. General Flynn nearly fell as a shell landed nearby; nothing in his life had prepared him for the intensity of such a bombardment. The shells that the Royal Artillery deployed were precision weapons; nothing like the semi-random shooting from the German guns.

"The towns on fire," Tom reported. "We're triggering the smoke bombs now."

Flynn nodded. "Do we have good locations on their weapons now?"

Tom tapped the computer. "Yes, sir," he said. "They're bunched up, firing in groups."

Flynn scowled. It was a pity that he had only a handful of precision shells; he could have really messed up the attacking force. "Transmit the location to the guns and order them to open fire."

"Yes, sir," Tom said. "They're firing now." The rock shuddered again. "Sir, we just lost the automated machine guns."

"So my opposite number isn't a total idiot," Flynn said. "Fortunately, we left mines there as well."

\*\*\*

The explosion shattered a concentration of Bruno heavy guns, and then splashed molten metal onto a Spanish position. Becker threw himself to the ground as three more shells landed neatly on other positions, concentrating on the German guns. The Spanish guns kept firing, but they were older Italian weapons, not modern German guns.

"They're shooting back," Cordoba shouted. Becker glared at him. "They don't have guns facing this way!"

“And you’re surprised?” Becker asked. “Did you think that they would sit back and wait for you to slit their throats?” He waved a hand at the guns. “Keep firing!”

“I’m calling the air force,” Cordoba said. “They can bomb the guns like we did in Madrid.”

“Suicide,” Becker snapped, and gave up. The Spanish could do what they liked. “Spread the guns out,” he shouted at his remaining gunners. “Then start firing again!”

He lifted his binoculars and stared across at the rock. The town was on fire and the airstrip had been heavily hit. The slopes that had hidden the guns that had slaughtered the African troopers were burning; hopefully the dreaded weapons had been killed. The Spanish, wonder of wonders, were concentrating their fire there; hopefully there were too many Spanish guns for the British to kill.

An explosion blasted a Spanish position apart, and Becker started to wonder. Could the British hold the fortress, or not? Did they intend to hold it?

\*\*\*

Flying Officer Mick Eccleston wasn’t fond of the Harrier. While Harrier units had performed well in the Battles over Britain, possessing a manoeuvrability that the faster Eurofighter lacked, they were only just capable of outrunning a German aircraft. Several Harriers had been swarmed by German attackers, their pilots torn to shreds by German bullets before they could escape or blast their way through the German formation.

Still, the Harrier had one great advantage; it could be flown from almost anywhere. The Spanish air force in Morocco had been destroyed on the ground, although a handful of German-built planes had fled to Spain, and the Harriers had moved in. The RAF understood Harrier tactics; the planes had been flown in off a converted Contemporary aircraft carrier and landed at the shack-like airfield.

Eccleston grinned suddenly. You would never see a high-class dame like the Eurofighter slumming it on the airfield, which had been barely capable of handling the World War One-era junk that the Spanish had used to patrol their colonies, but the Harrier wasn’t proud. At a pinch, the ground crew could take over a clearing and convert it into a miniature airport.

Still, the Eurofighter would have been at Gibraltar by now, and the Harrier was still lumbering its way over the sea. Ahead, smoke was rising, and the squadron adjusted its course to avoid the smog and the shells that were raining down on Gibraltar, close-in support would have been difficult under the circumstances. The squadron had its own orders, and Eccleston jinked west as they came in over the mainland.

“Hawk-one, we have Spanish fighters,” the AWACS controller said. The RAF had flatly refused to base an AWACS in Morocco – they’d made enough of a fuss about the one that was currently en route to Australia – but one was orbiting near Spain’s west coast, supported by tankers and a swarm of Eurofighters. Its orders were to cut and run if the Spanish detected it, which was supposed to be impossible.

“Acknowledged,” Eccleston said, checking the telemetry. The Spanish flying death traps were trying to intercept them without the benefit of radar, spreading out in hopes of catching sight of the Harriers. He considered; a gun engagement could save weapons, but they

Harriers were weighed down by the other weapons they were carrying, and the Spanish might manage to hit them.

“Hawk-one, they’re altering course,” the AWACS said. Eccleston swore to himself; the Spanish had guessed their target and were moving to cover it. That was bad; even the SAS team nearby would be unable to save them, should they have to land in Spain. All of the pilots had been issued suicide pills, a quiet acknowledgement that rescue was unlikely.

“Hawks, choose your partners, and prepare to dump them,” he said. He glanced down once at the display, checking to ensure that there were no duplications. “Fox two!”

The Harrier shuddered once as it released an ASRAAM missile. In the growing light, the stream of fire behind the missile seemed somehow eerie, streaming out towards the enemy planes, which had no idea what was coming. The other planes fired, launching missiles that followed Eccleston’s missile, carrying death ahead of them. Eccleston watched dispassionately as the Spanish planes vanished from the radar, never knowing up until the end of their approaching doom.

“We confirm a total victory,” the AWACS said. Eccleston ignored him as Cadiz came in over the horizon, the Spanish Navy’s main port. The targeting sensor began to blink, reporting that it was detecting the pinpoint of laser light on the Spanish cruiser *El Cid*. The other Harriers followed, locating their individual targets and jinking as bursts of anti-aircraft fire began to explode near them.

“Bombs away,” Eccleston called, and released the bombs. The American-designed weapons were designed to penetrate bunkers armoured with techniques that would not be invented for years to come. They would make short work of the Spanish cruisers. An explosion blossomed upwards as a cruiser was torn apart, another followed, and another. Systematically, the entire Spanish navy and merchant marine was being destroyed, shattered beyond repair.

“Time to go home, boys and girls,” he said, as the Harriers retreated, leaving behind burning ships and oil dumps. The radar reported more Spanish fighters and he considered staying to fight, but changed his mind. The mission had been accomplished, completely without loss.

“I wonder what dad – my dads – would say,” he thought. Discovering that his father had a duplicate, a young man who’d served in North Africa, had been astonishing. He glanced down at the radar again and smiled; the Spanish were keeping their distance.

\*\*\*

Private Harry Adama ducked low in the trench as the shells slammed into the rock, spreading tremors through the rock. Half of the bunkers had already been destroyed; the airstrip had been smashed beyond repair, including the helicopter that was supposed to be carrying some of the defenders out.

“They’re advancing again,” he muttered into his radio, subvocalising out of habit and training. Under the noise of the bombardment, the Spanish would be unlikely to notice if he’d shouted it.

“Understood,” General Flynn said. “Can you trigger the mines?”

Adama looked down at the small console in his hand. “Yes, sir,” he said. “Time detonation?”

“Yes, please,” Flynn said. Adama hit the button and for good measure stamped on the console. Its automated system took over and it burst into flames. As Adama slipped through the trench, more explosions blasted out, slaughtering Spanish soldiers with ease.

“The mines are detonating,” Adama began, and then the shells started to land again. The Germans were walking the shells over the minefield, triggering or destroying the mines as the Spanish advanced forward. Adama cowered in the trench, wondering if it would end, when it did. Picking himself up, he started to climb up, and then fell down.

*Shit*, he thought, as he saw the advancing Spaniard. The soldier swept round, lifting a rifle, and Adama shot him between the eyes. A second Spaniard appeared, tossing an old style grenade towards Adama, and he winced, slamming a hand down on the detonation pack in his bag. *Goodbye*, he thought, and then the darkness claimed him.

\*\*\*

Cordoba gabbled in Spanish, but Becker ignored him, staring at the explosion that had devastated the entire prow of the rock. The fifth attempt to take the fortress by storm had failed; the explosion had just wiped out five hundred Spanish troopers, all of whom had been on the brink of success. If the British had deployed more of their miracle shells, the battle might have been lost.

“Continue firing,” he said, and glared at the collection of ammunition. The British hadn’t targeted his bunkers, which at least had kept his ammunition supplies intact, and there were fewer guns to pound the fortress, but he knew that he would soon run out of shells. The Spanish air force had tried to attack, but they had just been hacked out of the sky, and the news from Cadiz had been terrifying. Dozens of targets across Spain had been hit, snarling the Spanish transport and communications network, despite the best that the Spanish could do.

“Launch another attack,” Cordoba howled, as news of yet another air strike came though. Cordoba was desperate; Spain had to get *something* from the war, or there would be a second uprising. “Onwards to glory.”

*Poor brave stupid idiots*, Becker thought, as the Spanish ranks reformed and plunged into the maelstrom. A black-robed Spanish priest was with them, trying to rouse tempers for a holy war, but the sullen attitude of the troops was depressing. *They* knew the odds, even if their leader refused to accept them.

\*\*\*

Flynn had lost track of time, lost track of anything, but the advancing Spanish over the isthmus. The devastated town could not put up a fight, but the Spanish were advancing carefully, blasting anywhere that looked suspicious. The Germans were howling at them to take the dockyards – carefully ruined and sabotaged – but the Spanish ignored them. The special detachment might not be quite SAS-grade, but the experience of ten years fighting fanatical enemies had trained them well for copying their techniques.

“We could have made a real fight for this place,” he said, and shook his head. He understood the logic, understood that Britain could not risk a constant running sore, but it galled him to surrender, even temporarily. Franco had already been punished; the rock would become British again, but for the moment...

“It’s time to leave,” he said. The staff didn’t argue, they closed the computers and headed for the egress shaft. In 2015, there was a tunnel to Morocco, but that didn’t exist in 1940. Instead, a submarine would pick them up from the docks.

“The self-destruct system is activated and awaits your command code,” Tom said, before he headed out. Flynn nodded and headed over to the final console; the prompt was already blinking. Quickly, he typed in the code and ran for the shaft. Behind him, a series of explosions shattered all of the 2015 technology, keeping its secrets safe from the Germans.

\*\*\*

It was 2023hrs. Becker was surprised; he’d expected a more lengthy siege. Already, the final positions on the Rock were being taken, overrun by the Spanish troopers. Franco, on Radio Madrid, was already proclaiming a great victory, notwithstanding the nearly five thousand soldiers and the complete destruction of the Spanish Navy. The entire battle had lasted less than a day.

“Oh, shit,” someone said. Becker looked up; a final round of explosions were blossoming on the Rock, destroying anything that might have been useful, including the technology he’d been ordered to capture. For a crazy moment, the blasts grew so large he wondered if the entire rock was going to be destroyed, before they finally faded.

“The Rock is ours,” Cordoba said. “The General will be pleased.”

Becker stared at the ruined town. “I hope he’s happy with it,” he said finally.

## Chapter Thirty-Three: American Pie

National Cinema

Washington DC, USA

15<sup>th</sup> September 1940

Colonel Palter would normally have given the task to an enlisted man, but this was too important to mess up. The British ruling hadn't any validity in America – as thousands of Hollywood producers and lawyers were pointing out – but it had proven so popular with the singers and performers that they'd almost surrendered. Not quite, because a night like this was difficult enough, but the thought of the royalties from Britain alone making all of the singers independent had prompted their surrender. Singers were exploited, and now those who would be great singers, or performers, would have an independent source of income.

Palter shook his head. The 2015 United States hadn't been able to handle the developments in wireless and broadband Internet transmissions very well, particularly the shared files, including illegal copies of songs and films. With the British starting to sell a \$100 laptop, one that was almost as capable as a modern laptop, Hollywood would start losing sales very rapidly.

*And the British make one hell of a lot of money*, he thought. He'd been forced to assist the army, the navy and the army air force – the USAF hadn't been created yet – to improve their doctrine, and they weren't listening. They'd started to prepare to build the Firefly, but they wanted an American design, not the British design. Palter scowled; he'd suspected that the Firefly bore only a tiny relationship to the *real* Firefly, but it was ludicrous. The only real improvement that the navy had made was forcing forward the development of radar and air defence for Pearl Harbour, and developing a Philippine Army.

His mobile phone, now using the scratched-together network that the British had set up, buzzed. "Are you ready?" Ambassador King asked. "The politicians are getting impatient."

"I ought to show them snuff videos or porno movies," Palter replied wryly, thinking how conservative 1940s America would react to some of the filth that splashed across the Internet. Hoover was already understanding the implications, demanding that Congress pass laws to control the spread of \$100 laptops, \$500 broadcasting systems, and \$50 mobile phones.

"Just get on with the movie," King snapped. He sounded stressed; life as a black man in 1940s America wasn't fun. Apart from politicians, the audience included reporters, Hollywood producers and dozens of people who would be influential.

"Yes, sir," he said, with more respect than was perhaps necessary. He meant it; compared to King, his life was simple and easy. "Broadcasting now."

He nodded to one of the assistants, who lowered the lights. He clicked on PLAY, and the laptop hummed as it sent signals from the DVD player to the projector, projecting the film against the white screen. The cinema's owners were already asking if they could buy one of the projectors for themselves; it was far better than their standard projectors. The theme music from *Independence Day* started to play, and he sat back and watched as the massive spacecraft approached the moon. For a while, he could escape into fantasy.



\*\*\*

“A most impressive young man,” President Roosevelt commented, as Will Smith pronounced his classic line. “And not, clearly, someone who was given the post because of his colour.”

Ambassador King nodded. “By the ideal time of 2015, it was generally accepted that someone’s skin colour and sexual orientation” – they’d already had leers when Smith’s wife had pole danced – “wasn’t affecting them one way or the other. We had gone through the repression stage, and trying to escape the overcompensation stage. Colin Powel was a good man, but Arthur Roberts should never have been allowed near the centre of power.” He scowled. “Bastard set back the expected black president for ten years.”

Roosevelt smiled from his wheelchair. “What happened to him?”

“The man wanted to be president, and he could be charming, so he talked the Democratic Party – yes, your party – into letting him be one of the candidates,” King said. “And then he pressured people into voting for him because he was black; there was nothing else *to* him, but his colour.” He snorted. “And then it turned out that there was...irregularities in his accounts, and then he denounced it all as a smear campaign, and...”

King chuckled. “In the end, the middle-class blacks voted Republican in a body,” he said. “The shouts of outrage had grown so loud that no one knew what had happened, at all. He was trying to run in 2016, but the Party Convention was very against the idea.”

Roosevelt’s eyes narrowed. “Is there a reason in particular that you’re telling me this story?”

“Merely to illustrate my point,” King said. “The system you have now, even in the Deep South, is designed to hold the coloured man down. That we avoided race war was a matter of sheer good luck, it could have been a lot worse. It might well have become a *lot* worse if Roberts had been elected President. You have to prevent that from happening.”

Roosevelt shook his tired head. “You know what he’s saying about me,” he said. King nodded; Roosevelt’s opponent, Wendell Willkie, was making capital out of Roosevelt’s death in 1944, and of the lists of broken promises that had surfaced from the future. It didn’t help that Wallace, who would have been Roosevelt’s running mate, had started to set up his own party, ignoring claims that he was a Soviet Agent. The FBI had demanded the right to investigate him, and Willkie was making capital out of Roosevelt’s reluctance.

“You can’t loose,” King said, and hoped that that was true. He looked up at the scene; President Whitmore was preparing to lead the fight against the aliens.

“With craft like that, how could we lose?” He heard General Marshall whisper behind him. “What do the British need us for?”

King scowled to himself. Isolationist feeling within the US was growing as more and more of the history, the future, was revealed. Brutal racial attacks, directed against Japanese, Chinese, Mexicans and others, occurred daily. They didn’t understand how the British could run out of weapons, they didn’t understand how long a precision weapon took to make. Canada was already arming the Contemporary British forces; under pressure the United States had sent several of the army divisions to the Philippines. The situation in the Far East

was worsening; interception of Japanese messages suggested that the Japanese were preparing to jump.

“I have the feeling that I’m on the *Titanic*,” Roosevelt muttered. King lifted an eyebrow. “Too many balls to juggle, and too much to do. Are you aware that the British have refused to sell us the equipment to make these little gadgets?”

He lifted a mobile phone and waved it under King’s nose. “I had expected it,” King admitted.

“A lot of people are annoyed about that,” Roosevelt said. “They are demanding, demanding, that I force you to make them give us the technology.”

King scowled, wishing for the patience of his legendary ancestor. “There’s something of an element of tit-for-tat in it; your future self would have slowed the British nuclear program,” he said. “In the same vein, you know what they found at Feltwell; evidence that the future Americans were reading commercial encryption codes and using them for commercial gain. Some Parliamentary committees were considering laying charges against the USAF and NSA staff.”

“Did you know that LeMay was demanding that I create the USAF right now?” Roosevelt asked. “All the fame of being proved right seems to have gone to his head.” King shook his head. “It doesn’t matter,” Roosevelt continued, “the priority is forcing our own system forward.”

“You might become involved in the war against Japan,” King said. On the screen, Whitmore was launching his second missile at the alien ship. A cheer went up as the missile slammed into the hull of the ship.

“And Willkie thinks that we can avoid one,” Roosevelt said. “He thinks that the British will kick Japan out of the war without our help.” He scowled. “And the Red spies, such as Laurence Duggan and Harry Dexter White, don’t help either.”

“That depends,” King said. He looked over at the president he admired. “Do you really want the British dictating the peace settlement of the war? Unless America joins the war, your ability to affect the outcome of the conflict will be limited, in fact practically non-existent.”

Roosevelt fell into an uneasy silence. The movie came to an end. Colonel Palter stepped up in front of the screen. “Thank you for your time,” he said. “What we are about to show you is not fictional. This is footage taken by a patrol deep within enemy territory, within the very heart of darkness.”

Roosevelt looked up as images from Poland, burning houses, raped Polish women, slaughtered Polish men and kidnapped children began to be displayed. A silence fell as the images rolled on; death camps, gulags, the slave camps of Germany...

“That’s what the war is about,” King muttered, as Roosevelt stared at the screen. “That’s what Germany and Russia are doing, Mr President, right now. This is no longer a minor matter in Europe; between the Germans, the Russians and the Japanese they control a vast part of the world’s resources. *America* is threatened; if Britain falls, they will be forced to

use their technology to buy good treatment. There are weapons that can wipe out the Pacific Fleet at a stroke, and weapons that can crush whole cities. Hitler is on the cusp of apotheoses or nemesis; *you* have to take a hand in this!"

\*\*\*

Palter watched the audience leaving, some shell-shocked, others already buzzing about the film. It would be a good way for the growing Future Embassy, as it was becoming known, to make money, but there were other matters. Palter looked up as King approached, surrounded by his honour guard.

"Think any of them will take the lesson to heart?" King asked, as the cinema cleared. "Do you think that that will change a few minds?"

"I have no idea," Palter said grimly. "These people are nothing like as...accustomed to blood and gore as we had become. There's a strong Polish voice here. If only Roosevelt would come out in favour of aiding the British!"

"That's difficult for him here," King said. He watched as one of the Marines stripped the computer down and packed it away. "There's a lot of concern over how the British are selling gadgets and the recent ruling on films and songs."

"A good compromise is supposed to make everyone mad," Palter said wryly. "How was I?"

"You should have been Sideshow Bob," King said.

"I'd never wear the hair," Palter said. He grinned. "At least some of the people who did the work will be paid something, even if its only five percent of the total earnings."

King nodded as Palter led the way out of the building. One of the Marines slipped ahead, checking for threats and then giving the all-clear. "Still, I think I'll have a word with Ambassador Quinn," he said, as they climbed into the really old-new car. "Perhaps he can restrain the British."

"They need the money," Palter pointed out.

"I know," King said unhappily. "Nazis on one side, racists on another." He met Palter's eyes. "Have you heard from...?"

Palter shook his head. "We'll just have to work to take as much advantage from the chaos as we can," he said loudly. "Once we start showing the videos to the Polish communities, they might start protesting louder and louder."

King's mobile phone rang. He picked it up and listened. "Gibraltar's fallen," he said finally. "You'd think that they wouldn't have let it fall without a fight."

Palter shrugged. It was bad enough that Cuba had been forcefully stripped of the Batista regime, but he suspected that the 1940 United States would make a mess of it again anyway. "They're all just damned Greasers to them anyway," he muttered.

“I beg your pardon,” King said, and ducked, sharply. A bullet snapped through the front window, shattering it. A second bullet skimmed through the side window as the car spun around madly, slamming into the kerb.

“Get down,” Palter snapped, pushing King down and drawing his own sidearm. The Marines were moving to surround the car, lifting their rifles. “Where is the bastard?”

A Marine, as black as the night, waved at a body. The would-be assassin didn’t seem special, he was just a man. A neat headshot had killed him.

“Anyone else?” Palter asked, keeping his pistol up. The assassin had been armed with a simple pistol himself, a neat device of 1940 manufacture.

“Not as far as we can see, sir,” the Marine said. “Should we take the body?”

Palter nodded. “Our priority is to get back to the Embassy,” he said. “Once there, we can answer questions from Washington’s finest.”

“Yes, sir,” the Marine said.

**Future Embassy  
Washington DC, USA  
15<sup>th</sup> September 1940**

The FBI investigator, a mild little rat-faced man, didn’t inspire confidence. King was mildly surprised that he actually managed to ‘sir’ him and sound like he meant it.

“We know who he was,” the investigator said. King lifted an eyebrow, and then wondered if the investigator was one of Hoover’s opponents within the FBI. “His name was Johnny Redman, a member of the Southern Democrats from Mississippi. According to some of his comrades, Redman was very...ah...”

“Anti-black,” King suggested.

“Yes, anti-black,” the investigator said. “Redman was named on two occasions for...ah, anti-black crimes, but the police there let him go. He had influential friends, one of whom got him the post up here.”

King glanced down at his PDA. A message scrolled across it from Palter, who was listening. REDMAN KNOWN KKK MEMBER, DIED 1956, SHOT WHILE TRYING TO ESCAPE.

“Now that’s an interesting tool,” the investigator said, when King had explained what it was. “Are you sure it’s the same person?”

King smiled, feeling some of his tension drain away. “There’s a legal debate over it,” he said. “Still, he *did* shoot at me.”

“True,” the investigator agreed. “I wish I could promise you results, Ambassador, but you’ve made a lot of powerful enemies. I don’t have any way to prove that there was anyone behind

him – only the fact that he knew where you would be and carried a picture of you proved that *you* were the target.”

“I see,” King said. “If Edgar fires you, come here; I might offer you a job.”

The investigator grinned. “Perhaps I’ll take you up on it,” he said. “For the moment, I can only give you a list of suspects, with no real proof.”

King shook his head. “Thanks anyway,” he said. “You’ve been very helpful.”

**RAF Brize Norton  
United Kingdom  
16<sup>th</sup> September 1940**

The news of the fall of Gibraltar had shocked some politicians and TV spokesmen, many of whom went on the screen to decry the failure and demand that the Government sack the commanding officer. Others, more perceptive, wondered why *any* attempt had been made to defend it, pointing out that it was practically impossible to hold a fortress against a modern attack. For Kristy Stewart, the whole concern of the matter was the question of whether or not it would delay her trip to Germany. She’d been at Brize Norton for nearly a week while arrangements were made, and the trip had been put back twice.

“Miss Stewart?” A man’s voice asked. Stewart studied him with interest; he was young, blonde and handsome, wearing a Major’s uniform. “I’m Major Stirling.”

“Pleased to meet you,” Stewart said. “Is it time to go?”

“In a couple of hours, yes,” Stirling said. He waved her to a chair. “I have several matters to discuss with you first. For a start, are you *certain* you wish to go?”

Stewart nodded. “It’s a way of making journalistic history,” she said.

“Perhaps,” Stirling replied. “I have to make some things clear to you,” he said. “For a start, you and your cameraman are the only people going all the way. The RAF crew are going to leave you in Sweden. From that moment, you’re on your own. Understand?” Stewart nodded. “The second point,” Stirling continued, “is more important. The equipment you have been issued has been rigged with a self-destruct system. In the event of someone trying to break in, it will explode, understand?”

“I hope that you are not hoping to assassinate Hitler this way,” Stewart said dryly. “It would be bad for the BBC’s reputation.”

Stirling chuckled. “No one thought of that,” he said. “The point is to keep our technology out of their hands, and you will not be able to have more sent in, understand?”

Stewart glared at him. He wasn’t quite as attractive as she’d thought. “I’m not a child,” she snapped. “Do you seriously imagine that the Germans will be able to use my equipment to make the jump seventy years ahead?”

“I hope not,” Stirling said. “Point is; take care of your equipment.”

“I always do,” Stewart said. “Anything else?”

Stirling looked at her, meeting her eyes. “One of the ideas that we have – one of the fears we have – is that the Germans will simply add you to the hostages they already have, interrogate you, rape you, use you as breeding stock...all of those are possible.”

“People don’t treat reporters like that,” Stewart protested. “It’s unheard of...we walk through death and it never touches us...”

“Hitler has never heard of those rules,” Stirling pointed out dryly. “Understand, and this is the important part, anything you say or do within the territory that Germany – Hitler – controls may be used against you. If they think that you’re a spy, or worse, they’ll kill you outright and damn us to do anything about it, understand?”

Stewart nodded. “Then there is a second point,” Stirling said. “This is directly from the Prime Minister; if you do get into trouble, there will be no attempt to help you or to rescue you. We simply don’t have the asserts to risk extracting you under fire, understand?”

Stewart felt the first faint trickles of nervousness passing through her chest. “I understand,” she said finally. “I won’t need rescuing.”

“Sooner you than me,” Stirling said. “You do understand that anything you take with you will be examined before you board the aircraft?”

Stewart nodded. “I understand,” she said.

“Then good luck,” Stirling said. “I hope to see you back again; I have enjoyed watching you on TV.”

“Enjoyed watching me, or watching my chest?” Stewart asked, and laughed when he blushed. “It’s always nice to meet a fan.”

## Chapter Thirty-Four: Freedom of the Press

German Embassy

Sweden

16<sup>th</sup> September 1940

Roth hadn't been happy about being ordered to leave the vital nuclear research program and escort a female reporter from Sweden to Germany, but even the favourite of Henrich Himmler wasn't allowed to question his orders. In the time of trouble, Himmler's inner circle tended to grow smaller, and Roth had every intention of staying alive.

He scowled. He had nightmares, ever since reading the description of the final year of Nazi Germany, but he didn't dream about that. Instead he dreamed of the uncovered reports of future traitors, wondering if one day he would see his own name on the screen. The German Ambassador had been more than happy to see him – or had at least managed a convincing façade – but it was a distraction. Sweden hadn't been bombed, even the embassy had remained untouched, and he was envious. The room was well-lit, with bright colours and expensive wine, and he shrank from it.

“*Herr* Roth,” the Steward said, “please allow me to present Miss Kristy Stewart, of Britain.”

Roth lifted an eyebrow, feeling blood rushing down to his groin. The reporter was *beautiful*, dressed in a manner that would make a French prostitute blush, revealing far more leg and breast than Roth, who was unmarried, found comfortable. She was dressed to enchant, and Roth realised that she'd already enchanted the Ambassador.

“I trust that you slept well,” the Ambassador said, kissing her hand. She didn't look charmed; Roth estimated that the Ambassador was old enough to be her grandfather and might well have *been* her grandfather. “We had the bed designed specially.”

*For two people, no doubt*, Roth thought, concealing a leer. Ambassador Von Hothan's exploits among Swedish ladies were well known in Berlin. Himmler had openly wondered why Hitler hadn't had him recalled and shot years ago, but Roth suspected he knew why; Ambassador Von Hothan was as meek and harmless as a lamb. He shook his head. There were many ways to die in Germany and underestimating the *Fuhrer* was one of them.

“I slept well, thank you,” Stewart said. Her voice was soft and warm. “I can't wait to see more of Germany.”

Roth smiled; didn't the girl know that she was in Sweden? From the report, the strange cross between an autogyro and a transport aircraft had landed in Sweden, tossed out the reporter and her cameraman, and lifted off again without waiting to be refuelled.

“Allow me to introduce you to SS-*Standartenfuhrer* Herman Roth,” Von Hothan said. “He will be your escort for your trip.”

Roth stood straighter as the girl examined him. Up close, the sheer...*personality* Stewart had was far stronger, he felt himself drawn to her. He wanted to impress her, he wanted to brush his blonde hair into shape, but he resisted, aware of her regard.

“A pleasure to meet you,” she murmured, and Roth felt his heart beat stronger. “When are we leaving for Germany?”

“You must stay and visit for a few more days,” Von Hothan said quickly. “There are so many sights to see...”

“Unfortunately, that won’t be possible,” Roth said firmly. “The agreement in which you will be transported safely across the Baltic to Germany is only open for this week.”

“I quite understand,” Stewart said. “I’m looking forward to working in Germany.”

Roth smiled wryly. “Perhaps,” he said, leading her away and ignoring Von Hothan’s protests. “Can you tell me more about yourself?”

“There’s not much to tell,” Stewart said, tossing her head. The effect was very distracting; Roth was starting to suspect that she did it on purpose. “I always wanted to be on TV, so I started training as an actor, but its...well, very sexist.” Roth lifted an eyebrow. “They take one look at your boobs, and then pat you on the back and give you lines. Should you grow old, they dump you.”

“I do not understand,” Roth said, wondering if his English would be easier to use. Stewart’s German was oddly accented. “It’s a short-term job?”

“Of course,” she said. “How many great actresses last past the first scandal? You say your lines, you don’t get any choice at all, and you wiggle your hips at every opportunity. And the minute you put on weight, someone fires you and replaces you with the next bimbo. At least as an interviewer, you get some respect.”

“I see,” Roth said, who didn’t. “Are you aware of your schedule?”

Stewart nodded. “I’m to interview Hitler...”

“The *Fuhrer*,” Roth snapped. “There are people who will object to such a disrespectful mode of address.”

”The *Fuhrer*,” Stewart said. “And then I’m to stay in Berlin, if you will allow me to do so.”

“Yep,” Roth said. “Are you ready to leave now?”

Stewart looked over at Von Hothan, who was watching her avidly. “Oh, *yes*,” she said. “When can we leave?”

**House of Commons  
London, United Kingdom  
16<sup>th</sup> September 1940**

Hanover had faced Parliament before, but there was a new tone in the air; the news of the fall of Gibraltar had shocked many. He shook his head as the next speaker pontificated; many of the speakers had considered abandoning the fortress back to the Spanish of 2015, despite the clearly expressed views of the population.



“To ask the honourable Prime Minister,” the MP for Greater Manchester boomed, in tones of utmost disgust, “why it was considered unimportant to hold Gibraltar? The fortress is *ours*, it has been ours for generations, and we have a responsibility to the inhabitants, many of whom are either in German hands or in North Africa now! Why was the military not ordered to hold the fortress at all costs?”

“Perhaps if you hadn’t been so willing to make cuts in the military, we would have more options,” someone shouted from the backbenches. The Speaker banged her gavel, but didn’t comment otherwise; a sure sign that she agreed with the speaker.

Hanover stood up. The decision had been political, not military; the Oversight Committee and the PJHQ had been certain that the fortress *could* be held, but the cost would be too high. Britain, with only a small army and air force, could not afford to become tied down defending a useless fortress anyway. Still, there was no way that he could explain that to a man who didn’t even have the guts to admit his mistake and retire.

“Honourable members,” he began. “The problems of defending a fortress are well understood, even in this era.” Hanover smiled; an unsubtle reminder that their advanced technology did not guarantee victory. “In effect, the defenders have to hold onto a chunk of rock, while the enemy makes an attempt to dislodge them. With Hitler’s weapons, devastating the rock and slaughtering much of the civilian population would have been easy – I would have been remiss in my duties if I ordered the rock held at all costs.”

Hanover scowled. He’d made the decision based on the need to avoid a long-term commitment to an ongoing fight with German and Spanish forces, as the possibility of a conflict with Japan grew larger. If the British Army had held – as PJHQ had assured him that they could – pride would dictate holding on to the Rock, whatever the effects elsewhere.

“Accordingly, I made the decision to spare the inhabitants further suffering, and ordered the Rock evacuated,” Hanover continued. “Units of the British Army prepared a defence that punished the Spanish for their aggression, and other units of the armed forces struck at Spanish bases elsewhere. Already, units of the Marine Commando units have taken Spanish Islands, which will become bases in due time.”

He spoke over mounting hubbub. “Short of inflicting untold suffering upon the Spanish people, either through the use of nuclear weapons or by smashing the food transportation network, there was very little we could have done to end the Spanish involvement in the war. I stand by my decision.”

He sat down, noticing his opponents gauging their support. Clearly, they decided that there was no point in forcing a vote of no confidence, for the next question was about a different, even thornier issue.

“Ah, Prime Minister,” Harry Jones said. The ancient Conservative MP was old enough to remember the first time that the Second World War had been fought. “History records that the Japanese and Soviets, and the Nazis, had developed powerful biological weapons, some of which were even deployed. Might I enquire as to the policy as to our response to their use?”

Hanover nodded. “The policy remains the same as it always was,” he said. “In the event of a Weapon of Mass Destruction being deployed against Britain, we will retaliate with nuclear weapons.” The firm nod from the Leader of the Opposition forestalled any opposition. Most MPs correctly guessed that agreement had already been reached on the subject. “Even without the monstrous American nuclear arsenal, we can devastate Germany – and they know it.”

“An excellent report, Prime Minister,” Jones said. “If I may beg Parliament’s indulgence, I have two supplementary issues; will we retaliate for use of a biological weapon against a third party, and what precautions are being taken against rocket attack, particularly one carrying a biological weapon.”

Hanover considered. The rules were clear; there were questions a Prime Minister could duck, but not for long. “For the moment, we would view with alarm a biological weapon being used against a third party,” he said. “As for precautions, we have a limited – very limited – number of Patriot missiles. All of them remain deployed around London and the east coast.”

“A question, if I may,” an MP said. Hanover winced; George Tamlin lived in and represented an area with a large Polish population. “What measures is the government taking to prevent the genocide in Poland?”

“We are attempting to form links with the Polish resistance,” Hanover said carefully. “Although I understand the popular anger, we are not at war with Russia, and we cannot start a war without using nuclear weapons, which the House has refused to sanction.”

### **Undisclosed Location** **Berlin, Germany** **17<sup>th</sup> September 1940**

There were depths to Kristy Stewart that she rarely let anyone see, including a shrewd mind and considerable knowledge that she was careful to keep to herself. Despite her claims to Roth, even producers found an up-and-coming interviewer a threat, and she knew that her charms were the only things that kept her in her post. Baron Edmund, to be fair, wasn’t the type of person to demand sexual favours, but she knew that it did happen.

She followed Roth through a long underground tunnel and watched his back with interest. Despite being an SS man, one of the people she’d been warned about, she had to admit that he was attractive. She was pretty certain that he found her attractive, and under other circumstances, she would have bedded him. She shook herself; this was no time to allow her hormones to distract her, at the end of the corridor waited Adolf Hitler himself.

“The *Fuhrer* is behind that door,” Roth said. The five heavily-armed SS guards didn’t react, but she could sense their disapproval. Roth had forbidden her cameraman to enter the bunker; her only way of recording the interview was her helmet camera. “Are you ready?”

“You know, you have a really nice ass,” she said, as she checked herself. She was dressed rather more conservatively than yesterday; a knee-length skirt and a blouse. “Are you *toned*, or are you *built*?”

Roth didn't seem to know what she meant. "Are you ready?" He asked, and moved forward when she nodded. "SS-*Standartenfuhrer* Herman Roth and Reporter Kristy Stewart, to see the *Fuhrer*," he said.

"You may enter," a woman's voice said, from out of nowhere. The door clicked open, to reveal a simple waiting room. A female secretary sat at a desk, typing away on a laptop. Stewart felt her eyes widen; where had the Germans gotten that from?"

"Don't film that," Roth said calmly. Stewart shrugged; he didn't know that the camera had been working non-stop, dumping the recordings back to the BBC system over the limited bandwidth available from Britain. "I have to wait here."

"You may enter," the secretary said, and scowled. Stewart ignored her and gave Roth a hug, much to his surprise, before walking into the room. She lifted an eyebrow as she walked into Hitler's sanctuary. The *Fuhrer* wasn't the monster she'd expected; he was shorter than she'd expected, smiling warmly. He reminded her of a schoolteacher, rather than a mastermind of evil.

"Enchanted," Hitler said, kissing her hand. "It's always a pleasure to meet a reporter, particularly one as charming as you."

"Thank you," Stewart said, as Hitler waved her to a chair. The room was as comfortable as it could be, without being pretentious. Several artworks dotted the walls, some of them she remembered from a girlhood trip to the Louve in Paris.

"Goring chose them," Hitler said, as he seated himself opposite her. Stewart remembered that Goring was known as an art fanatic. "He has a promising career ahead of him as an interior designer."

"I imagine so," Stewart said, lying. "It's quite...imaginative." Now she could look closer, she was struck by sudden ostentation. The room looked tasteful, but only on first sight. Very much like Hitler himself.

"Now, I imagine that you want to ask a few questions," Hitler said genially. "I will listen and even try to answer."

Suddenly disgusted, Stewart asked the first question. "Why did you try to exterminate the Jews?"

"The Jews are a plague on society," Hitler said firmly. "Their creation of Israel in the false future is proof of that. Their manipulation of finances destroys thousands of lives, in Germany and elsewhere. One day they will all be gone, and then the true Aryan race will live again."

"Historians have said that the existence of an Aryan race has been proved a myth," Stewart said. Hitler's eyes glittered. "They wondered what research you conducted on the subject."

"I thought about it for a very long time, unfurling the Jewish manipulations, to uncover the truth that they have hidden from us," Hitler said. "The proof of Jewish plots is simple; the

Jews have never been able to form a state that was strong and proud, even according to your own files Israel could never have survived without Western support.”

Stewart gave up and approached from a different angle. “You have begun destroying the Poles as well,” she said finally. “What have they done to us?”

“The Poles have served the Jews well,” Hitler said. “They conspired with the Jews and the French to keep Germany down, and much good it did them! The French didn’t even let them prepare their army in time to attempt to resist us, did they? And then the French surrendered after we kicked in the rotten door.”

Stewart stared at him. “But your forces are exterminating them,” she said. “Why?”

“Because, thanks to your people, we now know that the Poles will prove a bane for us in the future,” Hitler said. His voice, discussing horrifying details, was calm and composed. Stewart realised suddenly that Polish lives meant nothing to him; perhaps German lives were worthless to him as well. “We are handling the problem before it can ever become a problem.”

Stewart wanted to run, she wanted to hide. “Where do you see your alliance with Stalin going?” She asked desperately. “It’s not as if you can co-exist, can you?”

Hitler smiled. “For the moment, we have a common enemy,” Hitler said. “Between us, we will reshape the world in our image.” He looked up at Stewart. “Although sharing the world is not impossible,” he said. “You rule over vast lands and we would be more than willing to trade.”

Stewart couldn’t think, couldn’t decide what to say. She settled on a neutral question. “Can I remain in Berlin for the moment?”

“Is the interview over so soon?” Hitler asked mildly. “I do have a message for your people and your leaders.” Stewart adjusted the camera. “We are aware that you possess weapons of mass destruction that can do considerable damage to Germany, although they would be unable to crush the *Reich*. If you use such weapons against us, we will deploy our own weapons against you, weapons of a destructive power different, but no less dangerous. We have the weapons ready to deploy; we will use them if you attack us with your own weapons.”

“I’m sure that the politicians will take that into account in their calculations,” Stewart said, feeling fear running through her body. “Can I remain in Berlin?”

“Of course,” Hitler said. “I would be very interested in reading your stories of Berlin life during the war.” Stewart realised that he didn’t understand her profession; she wondered if any German did. “You may stay in Berlin as long as you wish.”

\*\*\*

Roth snapped to attention as Hitler escorted Stewart out of his office. The young reporter seemed...flustered, a strange mix between fear and...something else.

“Thank you for bringing her,” Hitler said. He was always polite with subordinates who were beneath his political notice. “You may escort her back to her quarters.”

“*Jawohl, Mein Fuhrer*,” Roth barked, taking Stewart’s arm. She held it gratefully; he realised that she was trembling. “Right this way.”

Stewart said nothing as he led her along the corridors. She’d been given a room that had once belonged to an SS group leader who’d been sent to Poland, one barely decorated. He opened the door for her, she pulled him inside.

“Stay,” she said, her hands already tearing at his clothes. Before Roth could object, she undid his trousers and started work on his underclothes, before tearing away at her skirt. He wondered absently if she wanted to be taken standing up, or bent over a desk, but she pulled him into the bedroom, stripping off the rest of her clothes as she moved. Roth undid his jacket, dropping it on the floor as her body was revealed; she was even better naked than he’d felt. Roth felt his gaze run over her body and he smiled; this was going to be good.

“Take me,” she breathed. He sensed her desperation, and her mounting excitement, and could resist no longer. Pushing her down on the bed, he pressed his way into her with desperate energy. She moaned as he entered her, pulling him to her.

Roth wasn’t a virgin, he’d used SS whorehouses and he’d even been engaged for a while, but Stewart tore his breath away. She really was very good.

## Chapter Thirty-Five: Iranian Nemesis

The Kremlin

Moscow, Russia

17<sup>th</sup> September 1940

Stalin was in a good mood when Molotov entered, waving the Foreign Minister to a seat and passing him a fine cigar. Molotov tensed; whatever Stalin wanted was going to be bad, he was certain of it. A wave of Stalin's hand indicated a steaming samovar of tea, brewed just the way that the dictator liked it. Molotov was not reassured.

"The advance into Finland progresses well," Stalin said. Molotov nodded; information was power in the Soviet Union, particularly if you got it first. "Comrade General Koniev reports literally blasting the Finnish Mannerhiem Line out of the ground."

Molotov allowed himself a smile, showing his approval. For once, it wasn't faked; the Red Army had learnt a great deal from the Winter War. Being humbled had taught the army a great deal – and the files from the future had suggested the most competent commanders. The NKVD had been kept busy as loyal, but incompetent commanders had been placed in positions where their incompetence would do little harm.

"Indeed, we should be in Helsinki within a week, and the Finns are already preparing their underground resistance," Stalin continued. "Of course, we shall serve them as we served the Poles and the Tatars, how will they live without their food and drink?"

"Comrade, how will the fascists react?" Molotov asked, with real concern. In the original future, Finland would have joined the fascists in an attack on Russia, something that the new attack was designed to prevent. "They have vital interests in Sweden, and this will take our forces close to them."

"We will, of course, recognise their pre-eminent position in the region," Stalin said smoothly. "After all, we have no real interest in the region, apart from a defensive barrier. They can have Sweden if they want it; we have no interests there."

Molotov relaxed slightly. "The Swedes will probably end up playing us off against the Germans," he said.

Stalin shrugged. "It's a matter of small concern," he said. "Now; Comrade Porpov informs me that we will have the military build-up well underway in a month, including the new T-34 tank and the fleet of military trucks. For the moment, Operation Peter will have to proceed with what we have on hand, but the Persians have so little with which to fight us."

"Yes, Comrade," Molotov said. "The only real danger is becoming involved with the British to such an extent that the Germans will see weakness and jump on us."

Stalin snorted. "You worry too much," he said. Molotov quaked; he could be disappeared and replaced with someone more...accepting of Stalin's quirks and whims. Not a trace of his fear showed on his face, but he knew that Stalin sensed it somehow.

“I live to serve the Revolution,” he said finally, and Stalin smiled. “It is my job to advise you.”

“Of course it is,” Stalin said, with trademark irony. Molotov knew that, in Stalin’s view, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics would find it easier to get by without Molotov. “As it happens, we have made contact with both German supporters and Communists within both Iran and Iraq, and even supporters of Ibn Saud. We’ll keep the imperialists busy while we secure Iran.”

He waved a hand at the map. “Comrade Zhukov has more than enough firepower,” he said. Molotov nodded; Zhukov had even been given the privilege of accessing the files of his victories in the near-mythical other timeline. “He has one hundred and fifty thousand men and nearly five hundred tanks. Mainly old models, but far tougher than anything the Iranians have. He believes that he can secure Iran in a week to a month.”

“He knows his trade,” Molotov said carefully. Zhukov had been canny enough to give no precise timetable, but if Molotov agreed with him and the general failed, Stalin would remember.

“Of course he does,” the General Secretary said cheerfully. “While Hitler and the future Britain and the Japanese fight it out, we will secure our position in the Middle East.” He smiled. “The future is not yet written, Vyacheslav Mikhailovich; while the imperialists and the fascists grind each other down, we will position ourselves for the next round.”

Molotov nodded. Discovering that the Soviet Union was fated to lose in Afghanistan was a shock; Stalin’s response had been to order the Afghans exterminated, sending in troops on slash and burn missions and showered Kabul with nerve gas. The waves of fleeing humanity were starting to have an effect on North West India, further confounding the British.

“With Iran, we will have secured Tsar Peter’s instructions, and then we will take all of the oil at our leisure,” Stalin continued. “If rag-headed holdovers from the days before the light of communism can threaten America, we can do the same – and our motives will be different. In our lifetime, Vyacheslav Mikhailovich, we will see the world united under a red flag.”

With terrifying speed, his mode shifted. “And of our own nuclear program?”

“It proceeds,” Molotov said reluctantly. ‘Proceeds’ was an overstatement; the scientists were proceeding with ant-like speed. “We lack equipment and knowledge, and most of our sources in America have been silenced.”

“Then the fascists will have the superweapon before we will,” Stalin bellowed. “That is intolerable!”

Molotov, who privately agreed, winced. The resources of the USSR were vast, but its scientific base was sadly limited. Unfortunately, Stalin, not being a scientist, didn’t understand the need for research to establish *how* to build a weapon, nor the lack of the required equipment to build the prototype reactor.

“We could always ask our allies for assistance,” he said. “However, I suspect that Hitler will prove untrustworthy; it’s not in their interests to supply us with details like that.”

Stalin nodded slowly, his great head lowering. “We still supply them with strategic materials,” he said. “Were we to cut them off, they might give us information that we could check, or he might order an attack.”

Hitler had done that in the original timeline, Molotov knew, and had come within a hairsbreadth of success. Armed with foreknowledge and a reformed production system, might he succeed if he tried again?

“We can ask for the information,” Molotov said carefully. “Should he refuse, well, we’re in no worse a position, and we will soon dominate the oil wells of the Middle East.”

“I have thought about sabotaging the oil wells in Romania,” Stalin said. Molotov allowed himself one lifted eyebrow; the USSR had been planning to get their hands on the oil wells. “Unfortunately, that might tempt Hitler into an attack before we are ready to meet him.” He shook his head, lighting a new cigar. “No, for the moment, we have to play carefully.”

He grinned up at Molotov, a playful grin that had sent thousands to the gulags, or to the executioners’ block. “In time, Comrade, we will be able to dictate our own terms; for the moment, as the dialectic says, patience is required.”

Molotov relaxed and bowed; patience was indeed required. For Stalin to grasp that was a minor miracle, if Molotov believed in miracles, which he didn’t. Communism had shaped the world according to logic; there was no place for superstition, as the Christian Poles, the Jewish Poles and the Muslim Tatars and Afghanis were finding out.

USSR-Iran Border

**Iran**

**17<sup>th</sup> September 1940**

Georgy Konstantinovich Zhukov, General of the Soviet Union and Hero of the Soviet Union, victor of the Battle of Khalkhin Gol against the yellow Japanese, and also victor of shadowy battles in a timeline that would never exist, examined his final dispositions with concern. He’d implemented as much of his strange other-self’s doctrine as he could, including concentrating the tanks and improving the logistics, but he knew that the army was short of many things it needed. Soviet industries were working as hard as they could, but the army was critically short of radios, trucks, rolling stock and countless other things.

“Comrade General?”

Zhukov schooled his expression into immobility as the man approached. He was a thin pale colourless man, which a pinched face like a creature out of myth, and he wore green tabs on his shoulder boards. He was NKVD; representative of Beria, and through him Stalin himself. He was also someone who should never have been allowed near a battlefield.

“Yes, Comrade Commissioner?” Zhukov asked, trusting in Stalin’s desire that he defected the Iranians to protect him. “You have a concern?”

“The Persians have hammered a couple of our cavalry patrols,” Commissioner Petrovich said. “Are we not going to punish them?”



Zhukov waved a hand at the lines of tanks, now preparing their engines for the charge ahead. He'd ordered the horse-riding patrols to locate the Iranian dispositions, knowing that the Red Air Force wasn't up to the task. Two days after he'd given the order, he now knew where most of the Iranians were.

"In half an hour, comrade, we will be on the march," Zhukov said. The plan was a modification of the one that had worked at the Battle of Khalkhin Gol; the first echelon would engage the Iranian positions directly, while the second echelon would swing around them and cut the Iranians off from support. Once the Iranian forces in North Iran had been destroyed, and there was the inevitable wait for logistics to catch up with them, they would proceed south to Abadan and Tehran.

"The politburo will not be pleased," Petrovich said, but he swung away. Zhukov scowled inside; someone with so little training could get hurt on a battlefield. Time passed slowly; he continued to receive reports, and slowly marked out the location of the Iranian forces.

"Time to go," he said, calling Petrovich back from where he'd been harassing the tank crews. "Are you ready, Comrade Petrovich?"

"Yes, Comrade General," Petrovich said. "I give you my approval to advance."

\*\*\*

Captain Jagir Rezha, a distant illegitimate relation of the Shah, examined his position with some concern and worry. The British, who dominated Iran – or at least they had, as the position of the future British wasn't so clear – had restricted Iran to a small army; only ten thousand soldiers were positioned in the north. The future British had given the Iranians some of the captured Italian weapons, and some Italian advisors to teach them how to use them, but they were a very mixed blessing at best.

"Bastards," he muttered, and studied his fortress. He'd positioned the best guns to defend the location, knowing from Finland that the Russians would come on and try to take it by force. He had his own scouts out, watching for incoming Russian attacks, but he knew that warning would be limited.

"Flare," one of his spotters shouted, as a firework burst up in the sky. He had hardly any radios, certainly not enough to give his scouts some, and the only solution had been flares. A horseman might not make it back before the enemy arrived; the only solution had been a chain of flares in the sky.

"Positions," he shouted. He'd picked his position with care; the Russians would have to charge at him, unless they looped around miles away they'd have to come at him frontally. A rumble passed through the air as a swarm of planes passed overhead, heading south, perhaps to Tehran itself.

"*Sir*," a man shouted, as a second, duller rumble began to sound. He lifted his binoculars and saw a line of black shapes moving across the ground, heading for his position. He cursed as details of the Soviet tanks became clear; they seemed far tougher than the Italian tanks were, tough and mobile. There were several different designs, moving as if the world couldn't hold them, and he knew with a sudden sick certainty that he couldn't stop them.

“Stand by to fire,” he said, as the gunners worked their guns. They hadn’t realised that it was futile; not yet. Had the Soviets spotted them? “Fire!”

All of his guns fired as one. He was proud of his men as explosions dotted the Soviet ranks, and then he felt his heart sink. Only one Soviet tank had skidded to a stop, burning; three more tanks crashed into its rear. The others just kept coming, firing on their own.

“Fire,” he yelled desperately, and then an explosion blasted him to the ground as a Soviet tank hit his guns. The chain of explosions devastated the Iranian position; the Italian tanks were picked off without even managing to fire at the enemy. The entire position had been decimated, and *still* the Soviets were coming on. His infantry turned to flee, only to be mown down by machine guns as the enemy closed in. A shell landed near him and he knew no more.

**Ten Downing Street  
London, United Kingdom  
17<sup>th</sup> September 1940**

“It’s a coordinated action,” Stirling said, as the display of advancing Soviet tanks appeared on the screen. A long-range drone had been based in Saudi Arabia, supporting the anti-Saudi campaign, and PJHQ had ordered it moved to Iran as soon as the first reports became clear.

Hanover lifted an eyebrow. “Why do you think that?” He asked mildly, his mind ticking over with thoughts. “Coordinated with whom?”

“The Germans and the Japanese,” Stirling said. “We lost Gibraltar only two-three days ago, and the Japanese are clearly preparing to hit the remains of the Empire in the rear. Meanwhile, the Soviets take Iran; that gives them the option of heading west into Iraq and then Saudi – an area of vital interest to us – or heading east into India, dooming any possibility of forging a democratic government.”

“I wonder if Prime Minister Nehru knows,” Hanover mused. The Indian and Pakistani embassies – Bangladesh hadn’t rated an embassy since the state collapsed – had been seconded to the Provisional Government, trying to hold India together.

“The Iranians have demanded our help,” McLachlan said. “As you know, we replaced the embassy in Tehran with some of our people at once, and pulled out most of the troops to Iraq. The Iraqis are attacking us; at least the Saudis are grateful.”

“They’re not really Saudis,” Hanover reminded him wryly. Shahan McLachlan had proven to be even more of a gift from God than he’d expected. Securing the oil supply – and incidentally gobbling up Kuwait and the Gulf States – had been easier than he’d expected, and it provided a place to dump unwanted immigrants. “Two questions; can we help them? Should we help them?”

General Cunningham coughed. “I don’t see that we have a choice,” he said. “I admit that I would be opposed to fighting under these circumstances, but if they gain a toehold in Iran, they will be difficult to dislodge later. On the other hand, unless the Iraqis cooperate, we will have serious difficulty in supporting any counter attack – hell, we’ll be on a shoestring.”

He picked up the remote and adjusted the display. "We currently have two infantry divisions and one armoured division in the North African theatre, along with air support and logistic formations. If we force through the final stages of their conversions, the Contemporary 7<sup>th</sup> Armoured can also be deployed, at least as far as Saudi, which is where we planned to stockpile material. As it is, we'll be limited, and Contemporary forces will be worse off, I'm afraid."

He shook his head. "Canada, at least, can supply us with ammunition for them, but their tanks are nowhere near as tough as they have to be," he said. "We'd be much better off sending the unconverted units to the Far East, and trading 2<sup>nd</sup> Armoured for them, or using 3<sup>rd</sup> Armoured and its support formations..."

Hanover shook his head. "Parliament would have kittens," he said. "We have to keep a reserve in Britain."

"Then we'll have to rely on the provisional governments of North Africa to hold their own forts," Cunningham said. "If we move our forces to Saudi, and work there to build up a reserve, then we can move them into Iran if politics dictate. However, I must warn you that our logistics will be *very* bad indeed."

"So are theirs," Stirling said. Hanover looked across at him; the young officer was clearly thinking out loud. "The Soviet army was never very good at logistics, and it seems that they're planning to snatch as much ground as they can in the next few days. At some point, they're going to have to refuel, and we have a major airbase in Iraq."

Hanover nodded. The Iraqi Government had allowed the British to keep the massive airbase in the centre of the country, simply because they weren't certain what to make of the news of the future.

"We can move a couple of Jaguar squadrons, one of the mobile air control systems and their supports into Habbaniyah Airbase," Stirling said. His voice stumbled over the name. "Once the drone has located the support formations, we can start pounding them from the air, and isolate the Russian formations in Iran. I don't think that we could weaken them enough for the Iranians to handle them, or even stop them, but we could slow them long enough to move our own forces into Iran."

"In theory, they can take most of the country in a month," Cunningham said. "There is the danger that they might launch an attack of their own on Habb...whatever base."

"Habbaniyah," Stirling said. "We could airlift an infantry force in and task it with holding the base."

"Assuming the Iraqis cooperate," Hanover said thoughtfully. "Their policy towards us changes every second day."

"And some of them might tip off the Soviets to the location of the airbase," Cunningham said. "We can't count on the Red Army being as incompetent as Rashid Ali, who is currently under arrest."

Hanover considered. The Iraqi Regent hadn't hesitated to purge those who would overthrow the monarchy; it had been child's play to slip in a few other names. Rashid Ali's power base hadn't been enough to preserve him from jail, although the Regent had hesitated to have him executed.

"We have to try," he said, and scowled. "General, Major, draw up a deployment plan for my approval tonight." He glanced at the clock. "Morning tomorrow, in fact," he said, changing his mind. "John, stay a while."

\*\*\*

"Major Stirling was right," Hanover said, after the meeting had concluded. "This is a joint plan."

McLachlan nodded. "The Japanese are clearly up to something as well," he said. "Unfortunately..."

"It will be at least three more days before the submarines arrive, and a week before the fleet arrives," Hanover said. "The Germans are pounding the American-led convoys hard...*damn it*; why did they cut the Navy? We don't have anything like enough *fucking* ships!"

"The good news is that America might enter the war," McLachlan said. "The propaganda, our technology, and the clashes between German and American vessels in the Atlantic...and if the Japanese attack the Philippines..."

"They won't," Hanover said dryly. "They won't repeat the same mistakes again. That leaves us with the option of fighting to regain the Empire, or agreeing to Japanese and Soviet dominance of their respective areas. I bet you anything you want to put forward that the Germans are planning to land in North Africa again, once we're distracted."

"Impossible," McLachlan said flatly. "They wouldn't stand a chance."

Hanover shrugged. "When has such considerations ever bothered *Herr Hitler*?" He asked. "They're trying to grind us down, John, and they might just succeed."

McLachlan grinned. "We could always blow up the Axis and call it a draw," he said.

"Don't even joke about that," Hanover snapped. "We need the Americans in the war."

## Chapter Thirty-Six: Reagan's Ghost

Ronald Reagan Airport  
Nr Washington DC, USA  
19<sup>th</sup> September 1940

Ambassador King knew that both the Secret Service and the President's medical advisor had advised against the trip to Ronald Reagan Airport, which had now been formally dedicated by the actor himself. *He* thought that having an airport named after him a fine idea, and few people had had the heart to object. Colonel Palter was delighted with the success; Reagan II, as the future Americans thought of it, would have kilometres upon kilometres to expand into, and the Future Embassy held enough land to build a second airport in California. Martin Luther King Airport was under construction, ringing the world in jet airports. When the war began, there would be a second line of airports to Australia.

He nodded politely to Ambassador Quinn, who was staring at the British-built equipment that had been torn from a British airport and transported across the Atlantic under heavy escort; one of the handful of British frigates had even been detailed to escort the American ship. The United States Navy had become more and more involved in the Battle of the Atlantic; losses had been taken and war had been threatened. Hitler, who correctly realised that no submarine would be successful against a modern British ship, chose to concentrate on the older Contemporary ships, including the ones under American control.

"I can't wait to see this," Roosevelt said. The large passenger jet, one of a handful of RAF transports, would not be the 'first' aircraft to cross the Atlantic by any means, but it would be making the trip with an ease that no Contemporary aircraft could show. King smiled; the President was almost child-like in his enthusiasm. The undeclared war was taking a toll on him, and it was good to relax for a while.

"The aircraft is called a Tristar," Quinn said. He seemed amused by Roosevelt's delight. "It's a personal transport, carrying representatives from the Government and the trading parties. While it isn't supersonic, it can carry its passengers in relative comfort, and the Germans cannot hope to intercept it."

"Just as well, young man," Roosevelt said. He peered into the darkness as one of the ex-USAf men – now discovering that their skills made them far too important to be allowed to fly again – started to operate the air traffic control system. The 1940's United States possessed considerable private air traffic; King foresaw a considerable trade in compact radar systems.

"United Kingdom One, you are cleared to approach," the controller said. Roosevelt looked up as the noise of a jet engine split the sky; King found himself wishing that the 2015 administration had seen fit to station some of the F-22s in the United Kingdom. Now *they* would have been impressive, if the British hadn't grabbed them for their own air defence.

"Wow," Roosevelt breathed. The Tristar could be seen dimly in the gloom; flickering lights in the sky. It took on shape and form as it roared down and landed neatly on the runway, the first aircraft to land properly on Reagan Airport. The plane taxied to a stop and a ladder was moved quickly into place as the hatch hissed open. A dark-haired man, Hanover, appeared in the hatch and waved to Roosevelt, before climbing down onto the ground. Roosevelt ignored

his doctor's mutterings and wheeled his wheelchair forward, moving to meet the British Prime Minister. King followed him at a discrete distance, smiling a welcome.

\*\*\*

Hanover had wanted to send McLachlan, or one of his deputies, but the meeting was too important to allow a flunky to mess it up. Prime Minister Churchill had developed a close relationship with Roosevelt; it was no exaggeration to say that the future of Britain might depend on his ability to do the same.

He sucked in a breath as he saw Roosevelt. The older President reminded him of his grandfather; twinkling eyes which were fixed more on the aircraft than himself. His wheelchair squeaked as the President wheeled it towards him with the air of a man playing chicken.

"I've read a lot about you," he said, knowing that there was a lump in his throat. He shook Roosevelt's hand firmly; the President's grip was strong and firm. "It's a honour to meet you at last."

"It's a honour to meet you as well," Roosevelt said. "I had quite a good rapport with Mr Churchill, who I understand is long dead in your time, and I look forward to carrying it on with you."

"It would be my pleasure," Hanover said. He shook hands with Ambassador King, noting with some relief that the black man had survived 1940s America. "I can't wait to hear about everything that has happened here."

He knew that he was babbling, his awe at meeting a modern legend pushing him forward, but Roosevelt didn't seem to mind. "Right this way, then," the President said. "We have a room set up for you and the party right here."

"Excellent," Hanover said, watching with some awe as Roosevelt propelled himself – waving away the offer of one of his guards to push him – across the field and into a large building. "You've accomplished a lot here," he said to King, who smiled. "I'm quite impressed."

"Labour is cheap in the depression," King said. "The only problem was making it suitable for jumbo jets, so we thought we might as well start preparing for the 1980s at once. As you know, there were problems with improving the original airports around Washington; you could launch a stealth bomber from here if you had to. The airport will one day be capable of handling thousands of people per day."

"It still seems amazing that people will want to travel in such numbers," Roosevelt said. The President seemed amused by the concept. "Even now, we don't have lots of people using the airlines, not when there are ships and trains."

"The pace of modern life is faster," Hanover said. "Even terrorists couldn't distract from that, you see."

"So I heard," Roosevelt said. "We supported a bunch of barbarians for years?"

Hanover shrugged. "You didn't, Mr President," he said. "You have the opportunity to correct all the old mistakes."

"And doubtless make new ones," Roosevelt said. "There are parts of the country that are torn apart by racial struggles, you know."

Hanover, who hadn't, nodded. "It's dangerous," he said. "In Germany and we assume Russia, all those who spoke for sanity have been wiped out. In America, I assume that the Ku Klux Klan is striking at black leaders?"

"And vice versa," King said. "It's getting unpleasant."

Roosevelt waved them all to seats and waited while a black orderly, who winked at King, poured them drinks. "You've opened quite a can of worms for us," Roosevelt said. Hanover nodded. "You'd think that knowing the future would make people more reasonable, instead we have anti-Japanese riots and anti-Black riots...there are even people who think that you're trying to rebuild your empire."

Hanover shook his head, sipping the cup of coffee. "We have no interest in rebuilding it," he said. "We are attempting to cushion the fall as much as possible by using our knowledge to enable democratic rule first, and trading networks that will jump development forward fifty years."

Roosevelt shrugged. "With yourselves in charge," he said.

"It won't last," Hanover said. "We have to deal fairly with everyone; under growth trends India and Africa will become more powerful than us after ten years or so. All we can do is offer them the chance to develop; they'll become your trading partners as well, which is more than they will become if Japan wins the war."

"Ah, the war," Roosevelt said. "And Russia is pushing into Iran and Finland. There's quite a lot of anger about Finland, but you did nothing to help them."

Hanover scowled. "Neither did you," he said. "Like it or not, you are threatened in this war."

"I know that," Roosevelt said calmly. "Unfortunately, my opponent, Wilkie, is pushing for isolation, claiming that the only way to avoid permanent military deployment is to remain isolated and deal with our own problems. It's hard to say which way the vote will go, with some of my support bleeding off to Wallace and his *third* party."

Hanover considered. "I'll be honest," he said. "We need your help."

"You've already begun propaganda here," Roosevelt said. "The ethnic votes are very keen on it, even the German voters."

"I was hoping to recruit some of them for a legion under Rommel," Hanover said. "We were planning to start hitting German morale with broadcasts, once we had everything ready."

“Interesting thought,” King injected. “I assume that you can blast the message through German jamming.”

Hanover nodded. “The problem is that Ambassador Yurina Sako, the Japanese ambassador of 2015, has clearly failed to convince the Japanese of the futility of challenging the world. They’re moving, Mr President, and you’re on their target list.”

“I have always been worried about Japanese expansion,” Roosevelt said. “Unfortunately, not all of us are keen on becoming involved in your war.”

“It’ll be your war soon enough,” Hanover said, as calmly as he could. “What do you want?”

“You are holding a number of future Americans prisoner,” Roosevelt said. “We want them back to assist our technical development.”

Hanover shrugged. “Not all of them *want* to return,” he said. “Some of them...feel that you offer nothing for men and women of their skin colour.”

“But you are holding some of the men from Feltwell and other places,” King said. “Mr Prime Minister, you must understand that the men who ordered them to spy for commercial advantage are lost in the future.”

“Under international law, they can be charged with espionage,” Hanover said. “We’ll trade; you can have them back the day before the election.”

Roosevelt smiled. “I’ll send a battleship to pick them up,” he said. “The new Atlantic Fleet needs the practice.”

Hanover shrugged. “In exchange, we want you to allow us to recruit in America without hindrance.”

“We already did that,” Roosevelt said. He chuckled deeply. “Listen to us haggling like fishwives; we do have shared interests. If you send them back, I will win the election with Truman as my Vice President.”

“I would have thought that Ambassador King would be interested in the post,” Hanover said. “You were mentioned as a possible candidate for President in...ah, 2020?”

“Yes, but be serious,” King said. “A black man, in 1940? It would unite a lot of people against us.”

“I suppose,” Hanover said. “Tell me; what changes have you made in your technology now?”

\*\*\*

Colonel Palter entered the room as soon as he was called; he’d expected the call from Ambassador King. Ordered to give a briefing, he’d worked hard to gather the information, even if old habits made it hard for him to just *give* the information away.



“The...ah, established interests haven’t proven too keen on us,” Palter said wryly. “I’ve been running around, up and down, dragging information out of my mind, only to see it ignored or discarded. I’d get mad, if I got mad.”

“Don’t get mad, get even,” King said wryly.

“True, sir,” Palter said, giving the Ambassador more respect than he really deserved, in the hope that Roosevelt and the other Contemporaries would realise that he deserved it. “For the moment, the greatest improvements are in the defences of Pearl Harbour and the Philippines, but that’s as far as they go. Some of the Army Air Force – grief, I miss the Air Force – Generals want to move directly onto jet fighters, while the Navy wants to simply copy the Hellcat and the other designs from 1943 and the Pacific War. Both parties are arguing, and as long as they’re arguing they won’t come to a decision. Sadly, the Navy *still* wants its battleships, and they won’t move over completely to carriers and submarines. Please....don’t ask about the torpedo designs...

“The army, at least, is delighted with the Firefly design, the problem is in building enough to be useful when not all of the generals are convinced that war with Germany is inevitable. In the meantime, they’re trying to build up, which isn’t easy in the current political climate.”

“At least the opposition supports high military expenditures as a way of deterring attack,” Roosevelt said. “The news about the war with Japan really put the wind up them; they want us to be strong and completely independent.”

“Yes, Mr President,” Palter agreed. “The downside is that the Army and the Army Air Force are having an inter-service war. The Army wants close-air support for the troops, as well as paratroopers and aerial supply lines; the Army Air Force wants to start again with the B17 and move directly to the bombers that blasted hell out of Germany last time around. They’ve got their hands on source materials from the war and are using it to boost their respective cases.”

Hanover smiled. Palter reminded himself of why he didn’t like the British Prime Minister. “Would it not be smarter to create the USAF ahead of time?”

“Perhaps, but both the Army and the Navy are very against it,” Palter said. He had to admit that it was a good point. “For the moment, we’re gearing up for war...but not everyone is agreed on what lessons we should draw from the last time the war was fought.” He smiled. “At least some lessons have been learned quickly; we have forced forward both radar and radio, as well as encryption.”

“I see,” Hanover said. He looked across at Roosevelt. “I trust that we can find time later to discuss the issue of production?”

Roosevelt nodded. “I would normally invite you back to the White House for dinner, but I understand that you plan to fly back to Britain tonight?”

Hanover nodded. “Just you wait,” he said, and Palter had to smile. “Back in our time, a diplomat could visit five world capitals in a day.”

\*\*\*

Jim Oliver amused himself by demonstrating an old Japanese-made Game Gear to the Secret Service men, finally donating it to the leader's children, while waiting for the man he had come to see. Officially, he was representing Mr Bracken, but as Mr Bracken was a composite persona he was representing the people behind Bracken. The Americans of this era, he'd been told, placed more reliance on good will and hard work; he was looking forward to learning if that were true.

"I'm sorry I'm late," the man said. Oliver stood up and shook hands firmly; Henry J. Kaiser was just as impressive in life as he was in history. "I was slightly delayed by the guards."

"It's quite understandable," Oliver assured him. "I've been sent on behalf of the coalition that wishes to trade technology for mass-produced items."

"So I've heard," Kaiser said. "I was quite fascinated by the laptops; you're selling them for *only* one hundred dollars?"

"Correct," Oliver said. "Frankly, we can get the price down to fifty dollars, once we remove the need for self-powered systems. I imagine that you found the files on yourself interesting."

"I am to build Liberty Ships," Kaiser said wryly. "I wonder who thought of that."

"You did, sir," Oliver said. "Did you examine the other requirements?"

"You want me to build equipment for the war," Kaiser said. "I read it with great interest; you want transport ships, tanks, lorries, landing craft and other equipment, paid for by selling the laptops and mobile phones."

Oliver nodded, noticing that Kaiser didn't seem to have a phone on his belt. "Indeed," he said. "We are very interested in improving the American industrial base."

Kaiser smiled. "And making a great deal of money in the process," he said. "Tell me; why should we build equipment for you? Why can't you build it for yourselves?"

"Because we don't have the sheer size of industry required," Oliver said, who'd expected that question. "We need the equipment as soon as possible, and we need you to be ready to meet your own war production requirements. The sooner it begins, the sooner that you will be ready to fight with us."

"Interesting," Kaiser said. "You seem certain that war will come."

Oliver nodded. The government had briefed him carefully on that point. "The Germans have access to some knowledge about the future," he said, declining to mention that that had been his work. "We now *know* that they are working on weapons of a destructive power you cannot even begin to imagine."

Kaiser's eyes narrowed. "If you have those weapons, why don't you use them?"

"It's an effect of having sixty years of semi-peace," Oliver said. "All the long-haired hippies convinced everyone that it was better to be red, and then better to be green, rather than use

the weapons. We haven't had a good war leader since Thatcher, and did *she* use the weapons? Of course not; no one has the guts to use them."

"And the Germans know that we fought them in the original history," Kaiser mused.

"Indeed," Oliver said. "If they gain control of the rest of the world, working with their allies, they will attack you before you can develop the weapons yourself."

"Well, speaking on behalf of the other companies and myself, I think we will be delighted," Kaiser said. "I understand that you are to remain here?" Oliver nodded. "You must give me a chance to show you around, perhaps even to talk in private," Kaiser said.

"I would be delighted," Oliver said, shaking hands. "I have to report to the Prime Minister, but then I would be at your service."

Kaiser bowed and left to an old/new Rolls Royce, waiting for Oliver, who smiled to himself. Taking Kasper's people legitimate would be difficult, but with a great deal of effort it could be done, and the Bracken persona would lead the way. There would be so much opportunity in America, and someone with advance knowledge of the future and a great deal of ruthlessness could *really* clean up.

Oliver allowed himself a smile as Hanover and the crippled President came out of their meeting room. The Americans would be more than happy to pay through the nose for advanced technology, and Oliver would be more than willing to supply it.

## Chapter Thirty-Seven: The Light of Truth

Berlin, Germany

20<sup>th</sup> September 1940

Somewhat to Roth's surprise, neither Himmler nor the *Fuhrer* had said anything about his sudden relationship with the English reporter. Kristy Stewart was many things, but discreet wasn't one of them; and in the *Fuhrerbunker* even the walls had ears. Three days after they became lovers, Roth watched beside her as the recording of the *Fuhrer* interview was broadcast in Britain, and transmitted directly to the small television she'd brought with her.

"I can't access any other channels," she explained, as Roth lay beside her. Her naked body glistened with her sweat. "Each channel has a particular frequency, and if you haven't purchased access you can't watch it." She chuckled; it did interesting things to her breasts. "Of course, most of the channels are complete and total crap, but some are worth watching."

Roth watched as the *Fuhrer's* warning about the use of atomic weapons was concluded. The *Fuhrer's* press director, a short squat little man, had been delighted with the editing software that allowed even lighting and shadow to be changed. The *Fuhrer* looked far more impressive after the original image had been altered slightly, making his words clearer and body firmer. Roth, who'd seen the original footage, was impressed.

"Do we have any way of seeing reactions to it?" He asked, as the presenter spoke on. Stewart shook her head. "Pity."

"The Bracken Consortium, the recent development of numerous small companies, was delighted to announce the beginnings of a trade deal with equipment," a black presenter said. Stewart had already dismissed her as a real bitch; someone without an ounce of integrity in her stacked body. "Jim Oliver, recently released from German custody, has been appointed Managing Director of the American concerns, which will help to aviaiate the economic crisis that has been ongoing since the Transition."

Roth leaned forward as the presenter spoke on. "Is there anyway to get more details?"

"I'm afraid not," Stewart said. "Someone you recognise?"

"I met him briefly," Roth said absently, knowing that Himmler would not be happy if he discussed anything concerning Oliver with her. The TV image changed to a cartoon, he was amused to discover that the Americans were portraying their people as yellow-skinned. "What on Earth is that?"

"*The Simpsons*," Stewart explained. "It's a comedy cartoon about a stupid American family."

Roth shook his head. "I won't ask," he said, checking his watch. "The *Fuhrer* was quite happy with your report, so the *Reich* information bureau has cleared your travels around Berlin, although they do warn that if the British launch an air raid, there is often hardly any warning from the coast watchers before the planes start launching their missiles."

Stewart shrugged. "Danger exists everywhere," she said. "I knew the job was dangerous when I took it."

“*Reichminister* Goebbels was also very happy,” Roth said. “He would like to discuss the power of the press with you at some later date. I would advise you not to be in the same room with him alone.”

Stewart gave him a blinding smile, totally unselfconscious in her nakedness. “But I’ve got you to protect me,” she said. Roth felt a sudden surge of protectiveness. “Not to worry; Goebbels has quite a reputation back home.”

Roth smiled. The files had been very clear on how Goebbels had ended his own life after Hitler killed himself. It had led to even more promotion for the man the SS called the ‘mouse-doctor’ behind his back; whatever his skill, he wasn’t the sort of Aryan the SS wanted. Himmler had a private, but widely-known reward for anyone who found evidence proving Goebbels’ involvement in any number of seedy practices; even Roth had tried to uncover something incriminating.

“I suppose he is well-known back there,” he said finally. “Are you ready to go out?”

Stewart grinned, squeezing one of her breasts. “I don’t think that going out in the cold like this is a good idea,” she said. “Let me get dressed first, ok?”

Roth nodded. Her devotion to her work was almost as amazing as her appetite for sex. “I’ll wait for you outside,” he said. “I have to clear our trip with the Reichsführer-SS.”

“You don’t want to watch?” Stewart asked. Roth grinned, shook his head, and slipped outside. Picking up the telephone, he made arrangements while pulling on his own clothes, finally donning his black uniform jacket. Suitably attired, he waited for her as patiently as possible; even Russian women took less time to get ready to go out!

\*\*\*

One of the most annoying details about the *Fuhrerbunker*, at least in Stewart’s view, was that it’s construction blocked the UHF transmissions she’d been planning on using to send her reports directly back home. The edited version of the Hitler Interview, as she’d termed it in her mind, had been transmitted – from a transmitter she’d placed on the outskirts of the city.

“Of course the RAF wouldn’t write you off by slamming a missile into the *Fuhrerbunker*, if they knew where it was,” Roth had said dryly, when she’d enquired about the refusal to bring the declared transmitter into Berlin. Her poor cameraman, bored and alone, was being treated well, at least according to a text message from him. Still, he wasn’t with her – and there were only a limited amount of things to do.

She felt Roth take her hand as they walked down the long tunnel to the entrance, which was somewhere in Berlin. She knew she was totally lost, and didn’t care. Roth, she was confident, would look after her; she’d worked hard to make him have feelings for her. Her own fear and shock, astonishing to a person not given to self-introspection, had driven her forward; she’d acted wanton in the knowledge that it wasn’t entirely an act.

*I guess I wanted a big strong man to hold me and tell me it was going to be great, she thought wryly. What would the Association of Female Reporters think of that?*

“Here we are,” Roth announced, in his improving English. Stewart let him lead her up into Berlin, somewhere around the centre of town. Her pocket PC buzzed; it was receiving signals from the new network emanating from Britain. The signal was still weak, still nothing like what it would have been in 2015, but it began the task of transmitting her complete report to the BBC anyway.

“Impressive,” she said, and meant it. Even under the threat of war – a pile of rubble showed where one of the government’s buildings had once stood – Berlin still seemed to be a gay town...except for the limited number of men. There were guards around the rubble, and a handful of gaily-decorated officers, but where were the civilian men?

“They’ve gone to be soldiers,” Roth said, when she asked. “Your people, with the empire you seem intent on rebuilding, scared us. The women here are on their leave; most of them work in factories and other industries.”

Stewart blinked. “What will it do to your society when the men come back?”

“I imagine that the women will go back to their kitchens,” Roth said absently. Stewart smiled to herself; nice abs usually meant limited brainpower. Roth seemed more than willing to look at her breasts and no further; playing the wide-eyed innocent came easier.

“You don’t think that they’ll want to keep control of their earnings?” She asked. “Female spending power might become very important to the *Reich*, you know.”

Roth shook his head. “The *Fuhrer* has decreed that women are to work to produce the next generation of Germans,” he said. “Nothing is more important than that; women in the workplace is a temporary emergency measure.”

Stewart very much doubted that the *Fuhrer* was right about that, but didn’t say anything. Roth led her on a long walk, wandering around the centre of town, before coming to a building. A man sat there, riding a wheelchair, and Roth saluted him.

“This is Gunter,” Roth said. “He used to teach here.”

Stewart looked at the pile of wreckage and gasped. “I taught junior boys,” Gunter said. His voice was a dull rasp; he hawked and spat. “There were thirty boys in the classroom when your missiles came calling; only five survived.” He waved a hand at his legs. “Look what happened to me.”

Stewart shuddered. Gunter’s legs ended in bloody stumps. Even 2015 technology couldn’t entirely fix such a serious problem. “What did the children do to deserve that?” Gunter demanded. “They were *killed*!”

“I’m sorry,” Stewart said automatically.

“Gunter comes here every day, despite the SS guards,” Roth said, as he steered her away. “His school no longer exists and we can’t give him back his legs.”

Stewart checked her camera. It had faithfully recorded the entire scene; a touch of a button sent it to Britain. She shook her head sadly; had that *really* happened?

\*\*\*

The five Eurofighters swooped in across Denmark, their presence reported by German radar stations as they closed in on Germany. Behind them, a single large transport followed, concealing powerful broadcasting systems. Flying Officer Victor Abernathy checked his radar as the small force crossed over Denmark and headed towards Germany.

“Eagle-one, I have seventeen German aircraft rising from near Bremen,” Flying Officer Sheila Dunbar reported. “Victor, one of them is a jet!”

“We confirm, Eagle-one,” the AWACS said. The AWACS, despite prodding by Abernathy and his wingmen, was hanging back over the North Sea, protected by a further ten Eurofighters. “Confirmed; flight profile matches simulation of early ME-262 design.”

Abernathy shook his head inside his helmet, wondering at the German action. Unless he was wrong, the ME-262 wouldn't be able to match the Eurofighter; the Germans would have difficulty supplying it with the materials it needed to be a threat. On the other hand, the ME-262 might be able to match the Eurofighters height; they had been a nuisance to the allies in the first war by doing just that.

“Only seventeen,” he said, into the radio. “They must be running scared. Eagles, salvo ASRAAMS, Sierra-one, designate targets for Eagles.”

There was a moment's pause as the AWACS distributed target locks to the Eurofighters. The ASRAAMS were fire and forget missiles, designed to operate independently, but computers on the AWACS could control them if necessary.

“Fox-two,” he said, as the targeting data appeared on the screen. “Blow through them!”

The Eurofighter shuddered as three ASRAAMS launched from its wings in quick succession. The other planes launched, their missiles lancing ahead of them, swatting down the German aircraft with ease.

“We confirm, all targets serviced,” the AWACS said. “The mission is good to go.”

“Oh really,” Dunbar said, her strong contralto easily drowning out any comments from the other pilots. “How much do you want to bet that the response is ‘go to hell’ or some other comment along the same lines?”

Abernathy shrugged. He knew that the mission was dangerous – the Germans hadn't bothered to return the two pilots they knew to have landed on German-held territory – but he also knew that the flight was almost untouchable. With seventeen of their aircraft destroyed in less than a minute, the Germans would be less eager to challenge them – he hoped.

“It's worth a try,” Abernathy said finally, when none of the other Eagles commented. Dunbar was known for her temper; Abernathy was perhaps the only pilot who dared to contradict her. “Anything that takes some weight off us is for the good, eh?”

“This is Speaker,” a new voice said. “We are beginning transmission now; stand by.”

\*\*\*

In the early evening, at 1700hrs precisely, Radio Berlin broadcast from Berlin to every corner of the *Reich*. *Everyone* in Germany was supposed to listen to the programme; failure to do so could be considered evidence of impure thoughts. In a comforting blast of martial music, the announcers read out the latest news – or propaganda – and encouraged everyone to do their duty for the *Reich*. Afterwards, everyone stood for the German anthem, and returned to work.

“This is Radio Berlin,” a particularly annoying nasal voice announced. Stewart smiled to herself; Goebbels, for all of his skill, wasn’t good at choosing announcers. Whatever criteria he used, it wasn’t good enough; a honeyed female voice might have been better. “Today the glorious forces of the German *Reich*, under the leadership of *Fuhrer* Hitler, crushed...”

The nasal voice vanished under a blast of static. Stewart blinked up at Roth, who looked puzzled. All around the small café, the patrons stared at the radio. The owner thumped the set a couple of times, but the static remained.

“We’re being jammed,” Roth said, his tone puzzled, until the static vanished. A new voice appeared, speaking, and Stewart felt her jaw drop.

“This is *Generalmajor* Erwin Rommel,” the voice said. “The reports of my death have been greatly exaggerated. Apparently, at some time in the future, I would have realised the truth; the *Fuhrer*, in the name of his own power, would commit the most terrible crimes, crimes for which Germany would be blamed and punished. I was lucky; I was rescued before the SS could execute me.

“Tell me; have you considered the price of Hitler’s *Reich*?” Rommel asked. Stewart noticed the café patrons glancing nervously at Roth, whose face was darkening. “Across Poland and the Balkans, all those who would pose a threat to the *Reich* are being exterminated, to the last man, woman and child. In Germany itself, all those who do not confirm to the impossible ideal of German manhood will be destroyed; the *Reich* will destroy everyone who does not fit its ideal.

“For a man of honour to refuse to fight such evil would be a grave sin. I have no choice, but to take up arms against Adolf Hitler, and fight until the *Reich*, until the SS, until the evil, is burned from Germany, or it destroys me. If you know, deep within your heart, that Hitler is evil, then come and join me. Help me take back our country, before the British and the Americans and the Russians occupy us, and crush us for years.

“Already, Germans living in America are joining the Free German Army,” Rommel concluded. “If you want to fight and you can make it to free territory, join us. Help recover Germany, because if the other nations, the democracies, do it for us, they will not be gentle. Germany cannot win this war; Germany can only survive by overthrowing the Nazis and returning the nation to its people.”

There was a hint of a chuckle in his voice. “We return you now to your normal program,” he said. “Reports on the progress of the Free German Army will be transmitted every week to you, same time, same channel.”



The transmission ended. Static hummed for a long moment, and then the nasal voice was back, talking about production levels as if nothing was wrong. Stewart wondered; would the Nazis bother to respond, or would they seek to ignore Rommel?"

\*\*\*

"I think we annoyed them," Dunbar said, as the radar suddenly lit up with contacts. Dozens of German aircraft, some jet-propelled, the others more conventional propeller planes, were rising from the ground, being vectored up towards the British planes.

"I noticed," Abernathy said. The temptation to engage the Germans was considerable, but he knew that it would be futile. "All planes, its time to return to the hanger."

"Aww," Dunbar said. "Victor, how about just taking a few pot-shots?"

"No," Abernathy snapped. "All planes, return to the base. We're not here to fight."

\*\*\*

"Naturally, it was decided to keep the truth from the German public for the benefit of his family," Goebbels said, speaking into a microphone *and* at Stewart's camera. She held it steady, ignoring Goebbels' eyes trailing all over her body, despite the conservative dress she was wearing. "The facts of the matter required tact and discretion.

"*Generalmajor* Erwin Rommel, the former commander of 7<sup>th</sup> *Panzer*, was discovered to have been influenced by evil Jewish elements after the arrival of the warped Britain," Goebbels continued. "The intention of the Jews was to corrupt him and turn him into a weapon against the *Reich*; for his own safety the *Fuhrer* ordered him removed from command and placed into a private rest home. When he showed signs of recovery – he was on the verge of denouncing the Jews – they assassinated him.

"Fellow Germans, the man who spoke on the radio was a fake," Goebbels said. Stewart had to admit that it was clever; how many people had *heard* Rommel? "He is a *faux* Rommel; a Jew pretending to be one of the greatest Germans who ever lived and served the *Fuhrer*. The *Fuhrer* himself gave Rommel his command, trusted him with his own protection; could such a man ever submit to Jewish manipulation? We buried the real Rommel only a week ago; how *dare* they try to pretend that he still lives!

"Towards this extent, the *Fuhrer* today pronounced a death sentence on the fake Rommel, and all associated with him. When the *Reich* secures its final victory, the false one will hang, and no one will see his final tomb! For the moment, the *Reich* advises people not to listen to the transmissions; they will introduce dangerous ideas and dilute the perfection of the Aryan nation. *Ein Volk, Ein Reich, Ein Fuhrer!*"

The transmission creased and a fawning technician ended the recording. Stewart tapped the button on her camera as she lowered it; the recording would continue, but neither Goebbels nor Roth would know.

"A fascinating instrument," Goebbels said, as she slung the camera around her neck. "Perhaps you could obtain a few for us."

Stewart shuddered; even the most sexist producer had never addressed her in those oily tones. “I very much doubt that I will be permitted to bring more of them here,” she said. “This one is keyed only to me; anyone else would be unable to use it.”

“A great pity,” Goebbels said, and leered. It took all of her self-control to avoid slapping him hard enough to knock out some of his teeth. “You will, of course, allow us to see the finished...data stream before you transmit it back to England.”

“Of course,” Stewart said, and allowed Roth to lead her out of the room. Danger was doing what it always did to her hormones; she wondered if Roth felt the same. Didn’t men get erections before they died?

“He means it, you know,” Roth said quietly, leading her back to her quarters. Despite her knowledge of German, she knew that she would be quickly lost within the bunker if she tried to navigate on her own. “*Don’t* transmit without his permission. Even the *Reichsführer-SS* would be unable to protect you.”

“I’ll get on editing it,” she said, as they reached her quarters. “Unless, of course, you have something else you want to do?”

He grabbed her and kissed her, hard. It was hard and brutal and it was just what she needed at the moment, something to force the demons and the stress away for just a few more days. The lovemaking was savage, almost painful. Afterwards, she held him while he slept, plotting her next step.

## Chapter Thirty-Eight: Strike South

HIMS *Yamato*

Japan

22<sup>nd</sup> September 1940

The *Yamato* was not fit for sea, not yet. Despite a massive effort, costing more money and resources than Yamamoto wanted to think about, the Combined Fleet would go to war without the ships it had enjoyed in the first war, a year in an alternate future. All of the other uncompleted battleships, except *Yamato*, had been cancelled; they would be converted into carriers and support ships for the carrier groups. Still, as Yamamoto's flagship, the battleship was still officially in the fleet, even if it would not leave the harbour of one of Japan's most important naval bases.

Yamamoto scowled. The fleet that was moving into position, slowly, but steadily, was nowhere near as powerful as the one that had fought in the shadowy alternate future, but it faced a weaker enemy. *Perhaps*, Yamamoto reminded himself; the British had managed to establish an air-link across their empire, despite Soviet interference.

"I told them not to trust the Russians," Yamamoto snapped, knowing that there was no one in his stateroom to hear. Openly expressed disagreement with the Emperor – as represented by the War Cabinet – was considered treason, and you never knew who might have been subverted by the militarists. The Russian attack had stalled while they brought up their supplies and rearmed. For the first time in years, Yamamoto approved of the Army's belief in the minimalist approach; the Russians wanted too much equipment and supplies for *their* advance, as well as purging the northern region of Iran of possible enemies.

He shook his head. It was the most complex action in the history of the Japanese Navy, and Yamamoto knew how dangerous it was. It wasn't as complex as the one that had been launched in the other future, but it was against an enemy who was a dangerous unknown. Even the Germans hadn't been able to provide a nuclear shield...and Yamamoto knew where the new plagues in China had come from.

"No, I am loyal," he said to himself, and scowled. The attacks *would* go in, and they *would* succeed, and Japan *would* be triumphant. Even with the new technology, the British Empire in the Far East was weak; India with internal troubles and Australia with limited forces. Australia could be driven out of the war; Yamamoto had insisted on offering them good terms, once the first round of the fighting came to a close.

Angrily, he stood up, ceremonial sword clattering at his hip, and marched into the next stateroom. The Ambassador from the future waited there; he'd given her the stateroom in hopes of tapping her future knowledge. She looked up as he entered; a beautiful face, wrapped around with dark brown hair...and worry in her eyes. She was attractive, Yamamoto knew, and strange. He didn't think that anyone would ever marry her; too much intelligence in women was a dangerous thing.

"The attack is about to begin?" Yurina asked. Her voice, firm and resilient, was weaker than it had been; the shock of finding herself in the past had stunned her. "You are about to commit Japan on the path to destruction?"

Her voice infuriated him. He felt like slapping her, like drawing his sword and slicing her open, just to silence her. “This time, they won’t make the mistake of even letting us regain economic strength, let alone military power,” she snapped. “This war...”

“This war has been commanded by the Emperor,” Yamamoto said, and knew that it was a lie. “We will force them out of the Pacific, giving us time to develop new weapons.”

“Is that the lie the Germans have told you?” Yurina asked. “You *don’t have time!* It takes *years* to develop advanced technology; even with a complete list of instructions, which you don’t have.”

“Silence,” Yamamoto snapped. Her face was very close; her eyes glaring into his. “You have a duty to help us!”

Yurina, inanely, giggled. “Admiral, do what you will. Attack Australia. Attack China. Attack India. *You will still lose!* Do as you want in the fullest exercise of free will; you will lose! The odds are so highly stacked against you that no amount of martial glory will dispel them.”

“We are going to attack Singapore and the Dutch East Indies,” Yamamoto said. “They have had very little time to defend them, and then we will move on to Australia, should the government refuse to leave the war.”

Yurina smiled. “Why should they trust your word?” She asked. “They don’t like you, and after this they won’t trust you at all.”

“The choice will be between abandoning the war, and Britain, on good terms, or being invaded,” Yamamoto said. He felt fury rising through him; how *dare* the woman question *his* decisions. A dull ache within his chest suggested the reason. He *knew* the odds against them; Yurina was putting his fears into words.

“They won’t submit,” Yurina said. “Why should they? Its not as if you can beat them.”

“We have to win,” Yamamoto said. “What other choice is there?”

“Only the one you never considered,” Yurina snapped. “The choice not to fight at all.”

### **Singapore Naval Base Singapore 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1940**

General Flynn allowed himself a quick smile, before cursing. They could have held Gibraltar, but the *fucking* politicians had insisted on giving it up, although not without bleeding the Spanish white first. Unfortunately, Singapore was a far harder place to defend, and the air bridge wasn’t as useful as he’d anticipated. He had nine Contemporary divisions and a scratch force of 2015 soldiers to hold Singapore, and his stockpile of weapons was lower than he’d dared fear.

He scowled. The natives operated on a rigid class system, one that refused to admit the value of non-whites, which had nearly led to one riot already when a black infantryman had refused

to kowtow in front of a Contemporary businessman. The Europeans didn't seem inclined to worry about the Japanese threat; *their* main objection had been to their precious golf course being converted into a temporary landing area for VTOL aircraft. The plans for creating a governing council, one that would allow all of the citizens to vote, had been greeted with united opposition.

*Anyone would think that they wanted the Japanese to win*, he thought bitterly, examining the map again. Historically, the Japanese had landed in Siam – Thailand – and advanced down; now the Japanese had been moving troops and supplies in for weeks. The SAS detachment, observing the Japanese from long distance, noted that the Japanese were preparing what seemed an overland offensive, discarding the thought of an amphibious invasion.

*Bastards*, he thought, glowering down at the pictures. His plan, Operation Matador II, had been intended to hit the Japanese as they landed, but Sir Josiah Cosby, the Contemporary British Ambassador in Siam, had warned that the Japanese were nearly completely in control of Siam. Thousands of troops was a potent argument for toeing the Japanese line, and Flynn knew that attacking the Japanese would be futile.

*I need more forces*, he thought, and studied the map. The decision to concentrate on India and Singapore was a good one – he'd assisted the PJHQ to design the plan – but it depended on holding Singapore. What Contemporary naval forces there were, Royal Navy and Royal Indian Navy, would be unable to save Singapore if the fortress was breached. Unfortunately, he was grimly certain that it would get nasty...

"I trust that you supermen from the future are working on how to save us," a snide upper-class voice remarked. Flynn hid his scowl, smiling as cheerfully as possible at the speaker, Sir Shenton Whitelegge Thomas, Governor of Singapore.

"It didn't work the first time around," Flynn said, scowling. Thomas had been one of the leaders of the campaign against equal rights, which had nearly sparked off a race riot. "Look; who was the dumbass who called this place a fortress?"

"Whitehall," Thomas said, putting a wealth of disdain into the word. "Can here be defended?"

Flynn scowled. "Look," he said. "Across the border, the Japanese are building up their forces," he said. "They've clearly thought through some of the consequences of the future knowledge and moved to counter them; we can't launch our own invasion now."

"Why not?" Thomas said. "The little yellow men won't pose a threat..."

"The little yellow men, as you put it, are a superbly trained and determined army," Flynn snapped. "Their equipment is rubbish, and if I had a handful of proper tanks, I could really clean up. But I don't; so I have to improvise."

He waved a hand at the map. "Ideally, I would meet the Japanese in one of the defence lines we're building, and *what* a fuss your people made about conscripting everyone without a proper job to build them, but I don't have the manpower to guarantee holding them." He scowled. "And as I have only twelve Harriers here, I cannot guarantee that the Japanese won't manage to land more troops behind our lines."

“There are the aircraft here,” Thomas objected. “The torpedo-bombers...”

“Scrap,” Flynn snapped, dismissing them with a wave of his hand. “If the Japanese commit a carrier to support the invasion force, the Zeros will make short work of them. In the meantime, the Japanese will secure Malaya and then push down to us, unless the fleet arrives in time.”

“Well, I have confidence in your ability to hold them,” Thomas said. “However, I must protest at the detention of dozens of Japanese citizens, an action that will only provoke Japan into...”

“Those citizens are spies,” Flynn snapped. One of them, a hairdresser, would have starred prominently in the first invasion of Singapore, a universe away. “We don’t let spies run around behind our backs.”

“But a number of prominent citizens are unhappy,” Thomas said. “They say that you and your men are undermining the social structure of Singapore, and convincing chinamen that they are our equals, and worse. You’ve given away India to a bunch of rag-tag fakers and your coolie troops are...”

He broke off; Flynn was holding a knife to his throat. “If I was you, I wouldn’t take it any further,” Flynn said, as casually as he could. “Those...coolies are British citizens, many of whom have lived in Britain longer than you have, Governor. My orders are to defend this place, even though it doesn’t deserve a single life from one of my people. I will carry out my orders or die trying.

“Understand; we *don’t care* about the Empire,” he snapped. “By the time I was born, in 1975, the Empire was *gone*! There are many of the former subjects in Britain now, equal citizens. You have the choice between allowing them equality now, here, or having them take it by force later! Do you imagine that the Japanese aren’t stupid enough to use the racial divisions against Singapore?”

“The Japanese won’t incite a colonial revolt,” Thomas said, his mind dimly realising that it was required to comment. “It would blow up in their faces as well...”

“The Japanese have begun cleansing their territories of non-Japanese,” Flynn snapped. “They are more than willing to scream ‘Asia for the Asians’ and use it; you, sir, offer them nothing. My force, which does include some of their descendents, can only operate as an equal to your people.”

Thomas sat down heavily. Flynn felt a flicker of sympathy; his attaché had reported that Thomas was coming under heavy pressure to get rid of the ‘coolie and nigger troops’ before the pressure cooker exploded. The Chinese, Malaysians and Indians had heard about the changes in India – and they wanted in. They wanted equality – and some of them were preparing to fight to get it. A bizarre mixture of Communists, nationalists and Japanese-supporters were preparing trouble, and he knew that his force would be unable to stop them.

“General,” Thomas said, “if the Japanese don’t come quickly, I fear that we will destroy ourselves before they come.”

“That would be bad,” Flynn said. “Might I suggest widening the franchise?”

“You know I can’t,” Thomas said. Flynn shrugged. “They would never allow it.”

Flynn shook his head, dismissing Thomas, and turned back to the map. Siam’s position was nasty; their border with Malaya was long and seriously undefended. Absently, he wished for the Australian divisions, but they had been sent to Australia itself. The building of a modern airport was going slower than he’d feared; some of the builders had gone on strike and the established interests had had fits.

“Give me a week, two weeks, and I’ll hold this place,” he addressed the map. “Before then...well, I can offer nothing.”

\*\*\*

Nearly a hundred miles due north, General Tomoyuki Yamashita glared down at the map and scowled. There were only two large roads leading to Singapore, one on each side of the peninsula, and he was certain that both of them would be defended. It was what he would have done. His sudden summoning from China, to take command of nearly sixty thousand Japanese troops – and thousand more Chinese coolies – had been a surprise to him, but the news of the future had been worse.

“We have to force the British out of Malaya,” the Army Minister had ordered, and Yamashita shuddered when he thought of the cost. No wonder a semi-disgraced officer had been offered – given – the command, and one who would win a similar battle in an...

Yamashita shook his head. It hurt whenever he thought of it. There was a fascinating amount of data in the files the Germans had sent, and according to the War Cabinet all that could be checked had proven accurate. Still, he knew that whoever was commanding the British forces, one of the 2015 commanders according to one of the dozens of Japanese spies within the city, would know the history better than he would – and would take steps against a repeat.

The map was as detailed as thousands of Japanese agents could make it, even if the British had suddenly rounded up many of the agents. Already, clashes had been reported between Japanese bicycle scouts and a handful of British units; Yamashita knew that he could not rely on his advance being unobserved. In fact, he had taken care to ensure that some of the bridge and railway engineers – veterans of the China War – would be attached to his advance. He was confident that the British would collapse the bridges; it was what he would have done. The British would see him coming, but would they see the scouts moving through the bad terrain?

It was a pity, Yamashita decided, that the Japanese navy would only launch an invasion towards the end of the campaign. A carrier had been allocated to the fleet; a battleship, a handful of cruisers and a small fleet of transports, which would support the Air Force in supporting the army. Still, even without the navy, the Japanese army was invincible.

Darkness was falling and Yamashita issued his final orders. The main advance began tomorrow, so the scouts had to go back into the jungle. The British had to be swept from the path of the advance.

\*\*\*

“Nippy little bastards, aren’t they,” Captain Dwynn muttered. His subvocalised comment was broadcast to the other members of the small force; the Japanese had never deployed any communication interception equipment, even if they had suspected their presence they couldn’t even hope to detect the signals.

“Now what would our esteemed primitive cousins think?” Corporal Chang subvocalised back. A fourth-generation Chinese immigrant from Hong Kong, his position within the troop had been challenged in a major bar fight in Singapore. “You know; this is the time of *Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips*. We have to set a good example.”

“And we’ll set it by killing Japs,” Sergeant Vash muttered. The big burly officer, almost too large to be an SAS man, checked the night-vision scope. All of the SAS team wore basic vision helmets, which allowed them near-perfect night vision, and needed no light. Nor did the Japanese scouts; five of them, showing up perfectly in infrared, moved carefully along the road, weapons extended.

“Keep it down,” Dwynn subvocalised. He didn’t mind chatter – an SAS team was too small for a strict chain of command – but they were in the field. Admittedly, the Japanese field craft was lousy, even by 2015 standards, but their weapons could still kill. “Chang, transmit the contact report to Singapore.”

“Want to bet they ignore it?” Chang asked, but he did as he was ordered. “Bastards only want their own pleasures, nothing to do with us.”

“But think of some of the pleasures,” Vash subvocalised. “Who would have thought that Indian women worked as whores?”

“You’re not allowed to talk anymore,” Dwynn subvocalised back. The team had been astonished by the hypocrisy of the racial chain on Singapore; it wasn’t *cricket* to marry a Chinese woman, but it was permitted – and winked at – for a man to visit a Chinese brothel, or an Indian brothel, or a Russian one, every woman there an escaped princess. “I’m sure those women had something unpleasant.”

“AIDS isn’t due for years,” Chang said. The brothels, at least, had been happy to take his money. “Anything else; the medics can take care of with ease.”

“You’re all nuts,” Corporal Plummer subvocalised. “The odds are that AIDS started here. You should suffer for your excesses; that’s how you know they’re excesses.”

“Shut up,” Dwynn snapped. His orders were starting to print out on his helmet screen; a subvocalised command shared the compressed file with the rest of the team. The orders were clear; sneak closer and try to determine if the Japanese were moving up tanks and lorries, or if it was just a probe, like the Contemporary scouts had beaten off from time to time over the last week. “Everyone understand?”

“Yes, sir,” Vash subvocalised, after everyone had muttered agreement.



“Then move out,” Dwyinn said. “Plummer, take point; Chang, hold your weapon ready and stand by, but only fire on my command.”

The darkness seemed to grow more oppressive as the SAS team moved closer to the Japanese position. The Japanese light-discipline was better than Dwyinn expected; there were only hints of lights through the jungle. Audio-discrimination programs built into their helmets identified the noises of vehicles revving up, preparing for action.

“I think that this is it,” Plummer subvocalised, as they came over a ridge and looked down. A handful of Japanese tanks stood on the road, preparing to move forward. Chinese coolies worked hard, whipped whenever they slowed, to load trucks; a small group were being chained to the front of lorries.

“What the hell is the point of that?” Vash asked. Even his attitude had grown darker as the sight unfolded itself in front of them. “What are they doing? Pulling the lorry along?”

“I think they’re mine detectors,” Chang said. His professionalism slipped slightly. “They walk over a mine...*boom!*”

“Bastards,” Vash muttered. “Sir, I recommend attacking them.”

“What, on our own?” Dwyinn asked. He checked his helmet; it was transmitting a report of their sighting to Singapore. “No, Chang; our task is to watch and wait.”

## **Chapter Thirty-Nine: Apotheoses or Nemesis**

Government House  
**Canberra, Australia**  
**23<sup>rd</sup> September 1940**

Prime Minister Menzies awoke from a fitful sleep – the news of the Japanese military movements having alarmed him – when his mobile phone rang. Of all the technologies and gadgets that the future Britain had introduced, he disliked the mobile phone the most. Even before, he had very little privacy, but now anyone who had his number could awake him at will.

“God help us when these become popular,” Curtin had warned, and Menzies was forced to agree with him. The noise the phone made was appalling; a strange theme tune that no one would explain to him. Just who were the Simpsons anyway?

“Menzies,” he said, and listened. The caller was General Blamey, the commander of all of the Australian forces on Australia – and nominal commander of the handful of future personnel from Britain – and one of the very controversial individuals in government.

“I see,” he said finally. His wife lifted his head and he smiled as reassuringly as he could at her. “I’ll be right down.”

“Bob?” Pattie Menzies, his wife, asked.

“Don’t worry, sweetheart,” Menzies reassured her. “I’ll be back soon.”

His orderly helped him to pull on his clothes, a simple grey business suit, and brush his hair. He tended to brush his hair forward; a vain attempt to escape the stern features that had earned him the nickname ‘Ming the Merciless.’ As soon as he left the room, two of his guards fell in beside him, ensuring his safety. All of the government members were protected, following a warning that important or would-be important figures might be assassinated by the Japanese.

“It’s clear,” one of the guards reassured him, as he moved ahead to glance into the war room. Menzies pulled himself upright, put a noble, Prime Ministerial expression on his face, and marched into the room. The military men saluted; the civilians smiled.

“Prime Minister,” Ambassador Atwell said. Menzies wasn’t certain how he felt about the future man; he was helpful, but he could be disturbing, as well as a critic of the ‘white Australia’ policy. “I’m sorry that you were disturbed.”

“It was at my suggestion,” General Blamey said. An aide passed Menzies a cup of the future coffee, one of the first items sent from Britain via the new air bridge. “We’ve been receiving reports that indicate that the Japanese are on the move.”

“There have been a number of clashes in the Thailand-Malaya border, which is near Singapore,” Colonel Hamilton said. The future Briton was calm and composed. “General Flynn has ordered the execution of Operation Picador, the plan to defend Singapore. We’re also tracking Japanese aircraft entering the Dutch East Indies.”

Menzies nodded. Japanese troop transports had been seen near the East Indies for weeks; unfortunately the moribund Dutch administration, still trying to work out to whom they owed allegiance with the disappearance of the Government-In-Exile, had been reluctant to allow the Commonwealth to move troops into Java. An infantry regiment was dug into Papua New Guinea, and another in the Solomon Islands, but no one expected them to hold.

“Have they said anything to us?” Menzies asked, studying the computer map. The first of the nuclear submarines was due in three days; with its help perhaps the Japanese could be prevented from landing on Australia itself.

“Nothing at all,” Atwell said. “Did you think they would?”

Menzies ignored the insult. “I assume that the air force has been alerted?”

General Blamey nodded. “The RAAF and the New Zealanders have been placed on alert,” he said. General Blamey, at least, had shown no hesitation in using the advanced technology to improve his communications. “Unfortunately, you know what the air force is like at the moment...”

Menzies scowled. The Royal Australian Air Force was weak; the promised shipload of advanced aircraft was still in transit. The troops that had returned from the desert had brought the former Desert Air Force back with them, but no one thought that the handful of Gladiators and some Swordfish would stand up to the might of Imperial Japan.

“The Contemporaries can’t adapt to the new jets,” Hamilton said, and the room temperature dropped noticeably. A Hurricane could be flown by a commercial pilot; one of the super-fighters from the future needed *years* of training to fly. “Even if we had them, we don’t have anywhere to fly them from.”

Menzies nodded grimly. Work was proceeding on a large airfield for the advanced jets, but there was so much to do and so little time to do it in. “I assume that London has been alerted?”

“Yes, Prime Minister,” Hamilton said. A console chimed an alert; Japanese aircraft were rising from French Indochina, heading for Borneo. Others were heading down towards the Dutch East Indies. “Sir, it looks like bombing raids for the Dutch East Indies.”

Blamey scowled. “I bet you anything that the Dutch are going to roll over and let the Japanese in,” he said. “You know what they’re like.”

The console chimed again. New contacts were appearing; red icons heading...towards Australia. “We have a major bombing raid in progress,” Hamilton said dispassionately. “Targets...Darwin, Perth, Cairns...perhaps Brisbane itself.”

“So that’s where their carriers have gone,” Blamey said grimly. “The air force is going to have to defend four different cities.”

Menzies rounded on Hamilton. “Why didn’t your equipment see them coming?” He demanded. “If you can track aircraft over Singapore...”

“We are not tracking aircraft over Singapore,” Hamilton said calmly. “Radar stations on Singapore itself are tracking them for us, and transmitting their results to us. Radar stations on the islands we’ve chosen to defend are contributing as well, but we don’t have a perfect net and even if we did we wouldn’t necessarily see a carrier that’s over the horizon.”

Menzies let out a breath. “And do your magic guns work on the same principle?”

“Yes, but we put them around Canberra,” Hamilton reminded him. “There weren’t enough to secure all of the cities, not yet.”

\*\*\*

Against the rising sun, streams of Japanese aircraft fell out of the sky and swooped down on harbours and airfields near Darwin, attacking the Australian ships in the harbour with grim determination. The attack was savage, barely deterred by the desperate fire of the ships and the harbour defences, and mauled part of the Royal Australian Navy. Transports and commercial ships were blown out of the water; the Japanese left the port in ruins.

A second flight swooped down on the nearby airfield, slashing away at its facilities, including the extended runway for 2015 aircraft, and targeting the aircraft hangers. The Japanese pilots were astonished to realise that the RAAF was serious about deploying the Wirraway training aircraft, but it didn’t slow down their reflexes. Wiping out the RAAF was one of their missions; slowly the Australians were wiped out of the sky.

*A shame that we could not invade directly,* Admiral Ozawa thought. His posting to command of the three carriers that made up part of the Carrier Striking Force had astonished him; apparently he showed the proper virtues in the future. Admiral Nagumo had been sent to command the battle-line; the battleships that would assist the capture of Singapore. One of his carriers was out of reach, positioned to attack Perth, but the other two were a powerful striking force.

“The aircraft have finished rearming,” his assistant reported. Ozawa nodded; the aide bowed and waited for orders. Ozawa considered; attack Australia again, or attack the British possessions in the Indies?

“Order them to continue their attacks on the Australian Navy,” he ordered, checking the reports from the spotter aircraft. Seven of Australia’s known capital ships – cruisers – had been reported destroyed or sunk; the others hadn’t been located. The RAAF had fought bravely, the men reported, but had been destroyed. Only five aircraft had been lost.

“Signal from the *Soryu*,” a midshipman said, running in and bowing. “She’s sunk two more Australian ships and damaged the harbours.”

“Excellent,” Ozawa said. “Now we’ll finish the job. Once the Indies are in our hands, we’ll invade that vast land and turn it into a home for us all.”

**Singapore**  
**Malaya**  
**23<sup>rd</sup> September 1940**

General Flynn threw himself to the ground, rolling out of bed, as the explosion sounded. He cursed as he grasped blindly for his radio; taking a catnap had clearly been a worse idea than he had thought. Had the Japanese managed to sneak a battleship up to bombard Singapore?

“General,” Colonel Higgins snapped. “General?”

“I’m awake, damn it,” Flynn snapped back. “Report!”

“Sir, a Japanese spy smuggled one of their tiny mortars near the airfield,” Higgins said grimly. Flynn felt a sinking sensation in his chest. “The guards caught him, but not before he fired off three shells and killed seven of the Harriers.”

“Shit,” Flynn swore. “What about the situation on the ground?”

“The SAS teams are having to move carefully,” Higgins said. He waved a hand at the big map on Flynn’s wall. He’d been pointedly refused a room at the formal hotel on the Peak District, where all the upper-class Englishmen lived, and so he’d moved into a small room in the military headquarters. “The Japanese are pushing forward with considerable vigour, and they’re been sending aircraft out to bomb the defence lines. We have reports of air attacks on forces all across the Indies and Australia. I think that this is it.”

“When was the last time a British force prepared to face an attack?” Flynn asked absently. He cursed; losing seven of his nine Harriers was a shock. “The Falklands? Never mind; order everyone to alert and tell Governor Thomas that I want to see him.”

“Yes, sir,” Higgins said. “Rules of Engagement?”

“Alpha-two, I think,” Flynn said. “Shoot if they see the whites of their eyes. Tell them that the SAS are to prepare for Operation Picador; everyone else is to prepare to meet an attack.”

“Yes, sir,” Higgins said. His pager buzzed. “Sir, aircraft are inbound from French Indochina, heading for Singapore.”

Flynn nodded. “Understood,” he said. “I have to take command; order the air defences to engage the enemy, cleared to fire without warning.” He snorted. “Do we still need the legalese?” Higgins shrugged. “Target-lock them and fire at will.”

\*\*\*

Flynn heard the *chitter-chitter-chitter* of the radar-guided machine guns as the Japanese aircraft closed in on the island. The Governor flinched, even underground in the bunker, and winced as the first explosion shook the ground.

“A Zero went down,” a technician called out, when Flynn cocked an eyebrow at her. “The enemy aircraft have been wiped out. Some minor damage to the docks; one bomber crashed into the Peak District.”

“Send the fire brigade,” Flynn ordered, and scowled. Did Singapore even *have* a fire brigade? “What’s it like on the streets?”

“Panic,” Higgins reported. “The police have been clashing with Chinese and native factions for the last hours; a lot of weapons have been smuggled in and are being used on us. Some of it is opportunistic looting, but we’re still being killed.”

“I should declare martial law,” Thomas said. He’d become a great deal more agreeable when the attacks had begun. “Order everyone off the streets.”

Flynn had considered that. “It won’t work,” he said. “We’re already losing control; we’d have to bring back a division to control the streets, and we can’t afford it.”

“Can we afford not to bring them back?” Thomas asked. The report of a white woman being raped had shocked the upper class, who’d been pressuring the governor to bring the police to the Peak District and protect them and them alone. “We have to...”

“We have to stop the Japanese,” Flynn said. He scowled, considering the problem. Far too many of the attacks were motivated by the desire for revenge, to kick the Europeans while they were down; the most successful Chinese businesses hadn’t been attacked. “My troops are not equipped for crowd control.”

“The Council is already demanding that I take action to protect their property,” Thomas insisted. His voice was becoming more plaintive. “People are dying, important people...”

“Everyone is important,” Flynn snapped. “Colonel, kindly put the Governor in protective custody.”

Ignoring Thomas’s protests, Higgins escorted the Governor to one of the police stations. Flynn scowled at the map; he needed a peaceful rear area, but at the same time he understood the racial frustration that had burst out of the ethnic population. Was it time for Operation Clean Sweep?

“Colonel, can we pull Clean Sweep off in the next few hours?” He asked, as Higgins returned. “That is, without lowering the defences enough to pose a real problem?”

“It’s about bloody time,” Higgins said. “Half of the men are very...unhappy about those stone age bastards.”

Flynn smiled for the first time. “Answer the question,” he said.

Higgins took a moment to consider. “I don’t think that any of them would put up a fight,” he said. “We’d use the infantry reserve to do the act, all 2015 forces, not Contemporary. The only problem is that some of the other locals may take it as permission to start something.”

Flynn scowled. “There are times that you daren’t belch without someone taking it as a sign to start something violent,” he said. “Colonel, take personal command and carry it out, gather up all of them and place them in the POW camp. Then inform everyone that we’ve declared martial law; and then we’ll decide what to do next.”

“Yes, sir,” Higgins said. “We’ll round all of the aristocrats up, no bother at all.”

\*\*\*

“I think the Japanese mean business,” Corporal Plummer muttered, as another row of lorries moved past along the road to Kuala Lumpur. Historically, it had taken the Japanese nearly ten weeks to reach Singapore and take the island; the way they were going it suggested five weeks, perhaps less.

“Not a chance,” Captain Dwyinn muttered. The Japanese advance was rapid because they hadn’t run into any opposition. The SAS had been ordered to change that; the team had crossed nearly thirty miles to reach their current location.

“When do we hit them?” Sergeant Vash asked grimly, as some Japanese tanks appeared, moving along the road as fast as they could. “Those would make good targets, sir.”

Dwyinn nodded. “Everyone, choose a tank and prepare to hit it,” he said, using his helmet to distribute firing targets. Invisible beams of laser light reached out for the Japanese convoy, which now included lorries and marching troops. “Fire!”

The rocket-propelled grenades lanced out from their position; bursts of machine gun fire from Vash peppered the Japanese troops. The RPGs were basic weapons; they couldn’t hope to damage a modern tank, but they would destroy the pathetic Japanese tanks with ease. A chain of explosions shattered the Japanese tanks, bringing the convoy to an abrupt halt.

“Bastards are disciplined,” Chang muttered, as the Japanese infantry began to return fire. Single rifle shots *cracked* through the jungle, seeking out their position.

“Hit the lorries,” Dwyinn ordered calmly. None of the Japanese bullets had come close to them yet. The RPGs fired as one; basic weapons that could be reloaded very quickly. More explosions billowed up as the Japanese started to spread out and approach their position. Vash slaughtered a Japanese patrol by sweeping his machine gun across their bodies, but they kept coming. If they’d had AK-47s, like the *Jihadis*, the SAS team might have been in trouble.

“Time to leave,” Dwyinn said, and tossed a series of fragmentation grenades down at the advancing Japanese. Screams and explosions rang in the air as the grenades detonated; the SAS team slipped into the jungle down paths they had explored previously. After bursts of firing, the Japanese didn’t attempt to follow them.

“Looks like we scored a success,” Vash said, as Dwyinn transmitted a report to Singapore. Details of the other SAS teams were sparse; it looked as if there had been a handful of other successes, but not enough for the British to become complacent. He smiled; all of the nobs from Singapore had been rounded up and put out of the way.

“Oh, they’ll be pissed about that,” Chang said, when Dwyinn told them the news. “Think about it; all of the coloured people taking their place.”

Vash chuckled. “I wonder how it’s going to end up,” he said.

\*\*\*

General Yamashita glared down at the series of reports and swore vilely. One of the weaknesses of the Japanese army, its main one, in his view, was that it never invested enough attention to its supply lines. The generals, all of whom knew about the spirit and little of the

material of war, *planned* to make do with as little supplies as possible. The British, with the benefit of seventy-five years of hindsight, were slashing his supply lines apart; small parties of men destroying lorries and refusing to fight directly.

“General, we are winning,” his aide-de-camp protested. Yamashita ignored the idiot; on the map, the advance looked as if it was succeeding brilliantly, but he knew better. For one thing, the enemy hadn’t come out to fight; there was no way to win without destroying the enemy army. Instead, there were the *damnable* sneak raids on his supply lines, and an army that had slowed down.

“I assume that the bridge has been repaired,” he said, referring to a bridge that had been destroyed with a tank on it. The aide bowed. “See to it that it is guarded night and day.”

“*Hai*,” the aide said, bowing. Yamashita scowled; some of his infantry had attempted to catch the shadow-warriors. Only one British death, a black man wearing strange clothing, had been reported, near the main base. In exchange, nearly a thousand Japanese soldiers and coolies had been killed – and more had been killed by the strange aircraft.

He scowled as the scream of a jet aircraft echoed in the sky. The two aircraft – the forces had only seen two of them – had developed a skill at hit-and-run that was demoralising sections of his army. He had to keep Zeros orbiting above his bases, just to prevent raids from damaging even more of his precious supplies. Despite the fact they were slower than the jets the Germans had reported, they were careful not to engage in combat with the Zeros.

He looked down at the map again. Everywhere, Japan seemed to be winning; Burma, the Dutch East Indies, Malaya...but he suspected that it was an illusion. The other shoe had not yet dropped.

“Order Maskato to press forward,” he said. In a week, assuming that they could keep up the pace, the city of Kuala Lumpur would fall...and then they would reach the main defensive line. The tactical air units, heroes of the battle at Nomonhan, were already working on it...and taking heavy losses. Perhaps by the time Yamashita’s forces reached the line, it would be broken...but Yamashita suspected that it would be anything, but broken.



## Chapter Forty: Reactions

10 Downing Street  
London, United Kingdom  
25<sup>th</sup> September 1940

The flight of German aircraft, a handful of the newer jets and three dozen Messisamitts, roared over the channel, followed by a flight of the new V1s. Before they had crossed over the water the Eurofighters pounced, launching missiles at the jets before closing to cannon range. The Germans fought bravely, launching new unguided missiles in a vain attempt to down a jet before they broke and ran, heading back for Germany. The V1s, primitive cruise missiles, came on, falling to the RAF and the ground-based weapons.

In the war room, Hanover watched as the last V1 vanished from the screen. It had been one of fifty raids, launched since the Japanese had opened hostilities in the Far East, and it was wearing the RAF out. Every time the Germans launched an air raid, the jets on Combat Air Patrol had to intercept, or launch QRA from one of the airbases. The wear and tear on the equipment was staggering; no one had ever expected a war on this scale.

“Major Stirling?” He asked finally. He’d ordered Stirling to brief him in person before he faced Parliament in the afternoon; even though Parliament was acting almost responsibly for the moment. He doubted it would last; only the pressures of a real live war had kept Parliament focused on actually important issues.

“The Australians are taking a beating,” Stirling said, after checking his PDA. “Their navy was salvaged on the first day of the war, and now the Dutch rolled over and *surrendered* their airfields in the Dutch East Indies, they’re being bombed regularly. For the moment, we’re blocked from sending them aircraft; the Japanese have bombed all of their airfields and are repeating the effort whenever it seems necessary.”

“Bastards,” Hanover commented. “What about the submarines?”

“That’s the good news,” Stirling said. “*Trafalgar* sank three Japanese cruisers that were going to bombard Darwin and two destroyers. Since then, the Japanese have travelled in convoys through the region. Unfortunately...they’re running out of torpedoes.”

Hanover nodded. “Tell them, if they can, to locate and sink the Japanese carriers,” he said. He scowled. “We’re not used to the fog of war,” he said. “The moment the Japanese break contact, we’re screwed.”

Stirling grinned. “The British Space Centre came up with an idea about that,” he said. “We can get back at least some satellite coverage if we start at once.”

“Marvellous,” Hanover said dryly. “How many of our firstborn do we have to sacrifice?”

“We have some boomers with ICBMs that aren’t doing anything,” Stirling said. He tapped his PDA, transmitting the file to Hanover’s PDA. “The idea was that, in the short term, we rig up a couple of communications and reconnaissance satellites, basic American designs that the ESA stole, and then launch them into space as a temporary measure. In the long term,

they recommended developing a space centre in Kenya, using American boosters to launch a proper communications network.”

Hanover smiled. “We need them,” he said. “The submarines are doing a grand job, but they’re not able to find anything below the horizon yet. At this rate, we’ll have to build up in India and crush Japan from there.”

“The battles for Singapore remain undecided,” Stirling said. “The Japanese, we think under General Homma, are still pushing down towards the defence lines, despite the SAS’s interference. They just don’t need as much in the way of supplies than we do. On the other hand, they’re having to divert some of their strength – a lot of their strength – to keep their lines secure. The really bad news is that they’re looting and raping their way south.”

“Bastards,” Hanover said again. “And Burma?”

“There was only a Contemporary battalion there,” Stirling said. “They’ve forced them back, although we slowed them down by taking out the bridges with Harriers from India. Of course, if the Soviets do manage to take Tehran and Iran, they might be in a position to slip a knife in our backs.”

“It’s still too soon to begin flying aircraft from that airbase with the unpronounceable name,” Hanover mused. “Damn it!”

“RAF Habbaniyah,” Stirling supplied. “Ground teams are working there now, and we have a proper forward base in Saudi – which, by the way, is now called the Republic of Arabia. Give us a week and we’ll start hitting their supply lines as well. PJHQ suggested that we could move one of the new Armoured Divisions, 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup>, up to Habbaniyah as well; they only have Chieftain tanks, but they’re better than anything the Soviets have.”

“Show me a plan for their deployment,” Hanover said. “We still can’t free up the forces in Britain itself, worse luck.”

Stirling shrugged. Politics was not one of his concerns. “On different news, President Roosevelt seems to be moving ahead of his opponent in the Presidential Race, which is due to happen on 5<sup>th</sup> November. The Japanese attack put the wind up a lot of people; particularly with Japanese convoys sailing past the Philippines and attacking islands the Americans warned them to leave alone. On the other hand, there isn’t much support for war, now that the cost of the first Pacific War has sunk in. We might end up with a third Roosevelt administration that doesn’t have a mandate to go to war.”

He displayed a chart. “Polls and political polling are far less reliable here than back in 2015, and they were never *that* reliable in our time, but a lot of industries are in favour of using the war to hack open our trade routes, and to force forward Latin America, rather than fighting beside us. They’re scared that our technology, which they can’t duplicate, will give us an advantage in trading with the rest of the world, and we’re annoyed some of their oil producers by our actions in Saudi. And, of course, there are the social...uprisings popping up across America – they’re scared.”

“The *West Virginia* arrives today, doesn’t it?” Hanover said thoughtfully. “A single battleship and the *Queen Elizabeth*, coming to collect the future Americans.”

Stirling nodded. "Many of them, those who want to return to pre-civil rights America, have signed agreements with various American interests. The Navy and the USAAF, in particular, are very interested – they've even agreed to waive all rights to the military material in the country in exchange for dropping the espionage charges."

Hanover shrugged. He knew, even if Stirling didn't, that the mobile phone masts provided by Britain possessed hidden systems, ones that did the same trick. "Ah, screw it," he said thoughtfully. "None of the people who really should have been hauled in front of the EU court have been born yet. We'll let them go." He chuckled. "We won't *forget* it, of course."

Stirling coughed. "Some of them, the ones on day release, have been purchasing books and equipment," he said. "Do we let them take those?"

"They can't buy anything too important," Hanover said wryly. "Why not?" He chuckled. "Any final matters?"

"The Australian, General Blamey, believes that the Japanese will descend on Australia itself when they've finished with the Dutch East Indies. They want to know if Admiral Turtledove will be diverted, now that the war has begun properly."

Hanover scowled. "What did Admiral Grisham say?"

"She wanted to brief you in person," Stirling said. "I think, however, that she had in mind seeking a battle with the forces on hand." He smiled. "If the Japanese can be tempted into concentrating their forces against our fleet, we could destroy them from long range."

USS *West Virginia*  
Nr Liverpool, Irish Sea  
**25<sup>th</sup> September 1940**

Captain Mervyn Sharp Bennion stared at the aircraft that flew over his ship from time to time, truly believing in the future Britain for the first time. His ship, the *West Virginia*, had been at Pearl Harbour, but then they'd been summoned back to the United States for a hurried series of refits, and then, instead of going back to Pearl when the Japanese attacked the British, they'd been ordered to the future Britain. Near his battleship, the liner *Queen Elizabeth* followed; it would provide most of the personnel transportation.

"You were supposed to die at Pearl Harbour," the Negro Ambassador King had told him, before he returned to his ship. "Perhaps you'll have better luck in this life."

"Penny for your thoughts?" The British naval officer, Peter Townsend, said. The officer had come aboard as they'd neared Iceland; the puny-looking ship that had delivered him leaving them shortly afterwards.

"I was wondering why all your ships looked so frail," he said, leaving behind thoughts of his own death. "That *Edinburgh* didn't look as if it could stand up to a line of battle."

"It couldn't," Townsend said. "It's a difference in design philosophy; after World War Two battleships like this one" – he waved around *West Virginia*'s dark lines – "were proven

obsolete. It was the aircraft carrier that was the new queen of the seas, and submarines as the kings, so units like *Edinburgh* were built to defend one and hunt the other. If it had to fight your ship at point blank range, I imagine that it would be quickly sunk. Indeed, I believe that Harpoon missiles are being refitted for bunker-busting warheads, which have proven themselves effective against battleships from this era.”

“Then what happens when you face a battleship?” Bennion asked, interest overwhelming his dark thoughts. “Do you get quickly sunk?”

“There are only a handful of battleships in our time,” Townsend said thoughtfully. “There are two American ones on active service, and a Russian ship that is a semi-battleship. I can never remember what happened to that ship, but if we had to fight one, we’d send a submarine or use missiles from long distance.”

Bennion frowned. “So Tojo could send the *Yamato* around here, move up to the coast, and bombard you?”

“We’d see it coming and the RAF or the Fleet Air Arm would take it out,” Townsend assured him. “The German ships have been sunk, although they’re managing to slip a handful of u-boats through the blockade.” He scowled. “One of our submarines was wrecked; the coast was different in our time and no one thought of that when the Captain decided to slip in closer to Norway and hit an electric u-boat.”

“Shit,” Bennion said. “What happened?”

“Crew rescued, craft destroyed before the Germans could investigate,” Townsend said. “We’re bloody lucky that it wasn’t a nuclear submarine; that would have been a real disaster.” He tapped the side of the battleship. “Some baboon had the idea of building a nuclear-powered battleship, but it was scrapped along with a nuclear-powered aircraft.”

“I think I’ll keep this ship as long as I can,” Bennion said. He waved a hand at the stream of motor launches coming out to meet them. “Is that them?”

Townsend chuckled. “Remember to be polite to them,” he said. “Each of them will end up pulling in more money than you.”

“Humph,” Bennion said. He’d expected it, but it was still astonishing. “They’re mixed together!”

“Black, white, male, female, combinations you’ve never heard of and might not exist in this timeline,” Townsend said. “They’re all equals here; *don’t* try to treat them as subordinates or you’ll regret it.”

“They wore the blue during the War between the States,” Bennion said absently. “I have no doubt that they’re good Americans.”

“They’re coming back to a land that thinks of them as uppity niggers,” Townsend said. “Oh yes, they’re very good Americans.”

\*\*\*

Jock Gordon, liaison officer to the American bases, was astounded to see the American battleship sitting in the middle of the Irish Sea. Liverpool, of course, no longer possessed the facilities to handle a battleship – even though there was an extensive program being carried out to provide a base for the five Contemporary battleships – but he wondered why it could not have come in closer, or for that matter why the *Queen Elizabeth* could not have come in to the docks. The air was clear, but very cold, and the spray splashed over his body, soaking him.

The Americans grew silent as the battleship, the *West Virginia*, grew closer. Gordon watched them carefully; a third of the Americans in the country, mainly blacks, had requested asylum; others had requested permission to stay for a while anyway. The Government had granted it, with the exception of a known criminal who would be returned later.

“This is pretty much your last chance to stay here,” he said, as the battleship’s squat form loomed above them, its crew preparing to meet their descendents. The launch bumped against the side of the battleship, the crew attaching lines to allow the packages to be hauled onboard. Gordon shook his head; the Americans had purchased every last history and engineering books in Liverpool, as well as different parts of practical equipment.

“Coming aboard,” he called up, and pulled himself up the rope netting by force of will. It was hazardous; the oily netting was disgusting to the touch, but he made it. “Jock Gordon,” he said, saluting the Captain.

“Captain Bennion,” the Captain replied, returning the salute. “These are the future?”

Gordon smiled as the future Americans came aboard. *West Virginia* was nowhere near as luxurious as any 2015 naval ship. “These are the ones who wanted to return,” he said. “Take care of them; they’re good people.”

“Don’t worry, we will,” Bennion said. “You should have put them on aircraft.”

“Money talks louder than diplomacy,” Gordon said. “It was a political decision; only a handful of aircraft are in service on the trans-Atlantic run, and they’re needed to supply goods. And then your President was worried about the Germans targeting the crew in particular, so he insisted on a battleship.”

“Personally, I voted for the other guy, last time,” Bennion said. “Still, history says that he’ll make a good wartime President, and everyone knows that the nips are just waiting to kick us in the nuts...we were supposed to deploy to Manila, but we got sent here instead.”

Gordon chuckled. He *liked* the Captain. “You’ll be sunk quickly,” he said. “Until we kill the Japanese carriers, your ships will be sitting ducks. You’d be better off putting resources into your own carriers and aircraft.”

“Everyone’s an expert on the war,” Bennion said, as the boxes of possessions and books were loaded onboard.

“Everyone’s been studying the war,” Gordon said. “They even took the children back to school to learn about it, just to keep them off the streets. All of histories judgements are known, you know. Of course, most of them were about Nazi mistakes...”

“We made fewer mistakes, then?” Bennion asked wryly. “Give me a couple of hours to learn, and I bet I could improve my ship.”

“Radar, sonar, some decent anti-aircraft guns...” Gordon began. Bennion glared at him. “I know, you want to do it on your own.”

Bennion smiled. “I also want to sail with the tide,” he said. “I don’t have time.”

“I imagine you’ll be back here soon enough,” Gordon said. “Be seeing you.”

\*\*\*

“All ahead full,” Bennion commanded, and *West Virginia* started to move, powering slowly away from England. The warning about different coastlines had alarmed him enough to change the plan slightly; the battleship and the *Queen Elizabeth* would head south, rather than north. Some of the low-flying helicopters had been alarming – he’d been on the verge of ordering general quarters – but Townsend assured him that they were friendly.

“They’re the press,” he said. “Events like these are considered newsworthy, and now that there is a slight surplus of fuel, they’re allowed to film your ship.”

“I should have had it spruced up,” Bennion commented, as Ireland started to slip away. He gave the correct orders; the course was directly to America. A small launch caught up with the battleship with ease; Townsend’s ride home. The *Queen Elizabeth* carried no pilot.

“See you next time,” Townsend said, shaking his hand. “Have a nice trip.”

“Bring us up as fast as you can,” Bennion ordered, as soon as the launch had departed. “I want to go home.”

“Aye, sir, the helmsman said, and the ship increased speed. Hours passed as the day darkened, the sun catching up with them, and then...disaster struck. An explosion blasted through the hull of the battleship, shattering the stern of the ship. Bennion was thrown to the deck as the ship shuddered violently, almost breaking up under the impact. He staggered to his feet, the deck shifting under him, to stare out of the porthole at a wrecked ship.

“Get the lifeboats going,” he shouted, knowing that it would probably be futile. The deck shifted again; the ship was beginning to break up. A second explosion ran through the ship as one of the armouries exploded violently, followed by an almighty blast as the *Queen Elizabeth* blew up. “Get everyone off the ship!”

A third explosion shattered the prow of the ship and Captain Bennion knew no more.

10 Downing Street  
**London, United Kingdom**  
**25<sup>th</sup> September 1940**

“Although it’s impossible to be certain, it looks like a torpedo strike,” Townsend said later. He had assumed command of the frantic rescue effort, one that had almost failed. “The four survivors, all shell-shocked, report several explosions; they think that one of the shell

bunkers, shells for their main guns, exploded. There were no survivors from the *Queen Elizabeth*.”

Hanover nodded thoughtfully. “One of the new German torpedoes,” he said. “Didn’t anyone warn Captain Bennion that there were still submarines about?”

“I believe that someone passed on the warning to the Atlantic Fleet, but Captain Bennion was contemptuous of the danger,” McLachlan injected. Townsend looked relieved. “I’ve contacted the new American embassy; they’ve informed President Roosevelt.”

“Thank you, Mr Townsend,” Hanover said. “What happened to the survivors?”

“We flew them to the hospital in Plymouth, where they are being treated,” Townsend said. “They’re burned and injured, but alive. The forces on station will keep searching, but this was a scratch job at the limits of our range, so...we may not find anyone else.”

“Thank you, anyway,” Hanover said. “I’ll put you and your crew down for medals.”

He waited until Townsend had left before continuing. “I wonder how America will react,” he said. “The Germans have sunk an American destroyer before, but this is something bigger, with all their hopes and fears invested within the hull of two ships.”

## Chapter Forty-One: A Date That Will Live In Infamy

House of Representatives

Washington DC, USA

26<sup>th</sup> September 1940

“A date that will live in infamy,” Roosevelt said.

Ambassador King couldn't even raise a smile. The President had been delighted by the recording of his speech from the original history, but events had forced it away. He hadn't realised just how much hope had been invested in the men cruelly slaughtered in the cold seas. The news had hit Washington late last night...and the town had gone mad. Germans had been hunted through the streets...and some Congressmen were calling for a declaration of war. Radio Berlin was denying it, of course, but no one believed them.

“The election is going to be a war mandate,” Roosevelt said grimly. “Wilkie and Wallace are acting as if the ship *deserved* to be sunk, for being in a war zone without permission, and blaming it all on me.”

King nodded. Official Washington had swiftly divided itself up into two camps. Under normal circumstances, they might have moved quickly to a decision, but now...*now* was the election in a month, and with war on the agenda...

“All of the industrialists and navy men are screaming for war,” Roosevelt said. “They want to declare war on Germany and Japan. The senate is going to debate the matter later today; perhaps I should ask them for a declaration of war.”

“You should,” King said. “The Germans used the lit-up ship as a target; they *knew* it was American. They knew who was on the ship and moved to kill them!”

“So their...ancestors have been reminding their senators,” Roosevelt said. “Ambassador, this is going to be nasty.”

King studied Roosevelt. The news of the disaster had stunned the President; his body wasn't as strong as it had been once. Did he still have the strength for the coming war? The Japanese had been careful not to hit American targets, but anti-Japanese hysteria was rising; General Macarthur had been sent to the Philippines, with a mandate to get the defences ready. King had a nasty suspicion that the man who abandoned his troops in the first timeline would be watched like a hawk in the second timeline.

“General Marshall has been in communication with me,” Roosevelt continued. “We're nothing like ready for war now; many of our best units went to the Philippines and Pearl Harbour. If we withdraw them, we might as well invite the Japanese in to take over. On the other hand, how are we to press the war against Germany?”

King smiled; Colonel Palter had been over the matter with him too. “We build up in Britain,” he said. “It'll take us at least six months to build up a powerful force in Britain, then we swarm over the channel and march on Berlin.”



Roosevelt nodded grimly. "General Groves is worried about the German atomic bomb," he said. "If it gets used here, will the British retaliate for us?"

King nodded. "I believe that Prime Minister Hanover would use his own bomb to punish the Germans," he said. "However, it might be worth asking him."

\*\*\*

Roosevelt was reluctant to use his wheelchair too much within the Senate or the House of Representatives. Even knowing that he would die in four years unless he took better care of himself hadn't removed his concern; showing weakness on the floor could be jumped on with ease.

"We have been attacked," he said, and his voice whispered through the room, building in power. "This is not a simple...mistake, this is not an accident, this is an act of *war*. Losing the *Sims* was an accident; the destroyer *might* have been hit by accident, but not the *Virginia*. Not a battleship, lit up at night, carrying a glowing American flag. This was a *deliberate*, a defiant, slap in the face for us!

"The Germans say that they didn't do it," he said. "I say they're lying; they must have fired on the battleship. They wanted to scare us, to remind us that we are not safe, and they have angered us. They have awoken a giant; Germany, Russia and Japan, the Axis powers, have set out to dominate the world! Do we allow them to conquer the world, slaughtering entire peoples until they come for us at the end, or do we make a stand against them now?"

"They are three powers, working together, working to share the world between them," he said. "I ask the House now for a declaration of war against Germany, against Russia and against Japan. I ask the House to make a stand, to say *enough*; we will not surrender to the evil of the world. We have allowed others to fight for too long; now it's our turn. I ask the House to vote now, to declare war."

He sat down. Roosevelt, an astute politician, didn't expect the House to declare war on all of the Axis powers, but he hoped that they would declare war on Germany. The debate raged on and on, sparing no argument and counter-argument. By the time a decision was made and voted upon, it was almost dark.

**10 Downing Street**  
**London, United Kingdom**  
**26<sup>th</sup> September 1940**

Admiral Grisham nodded politely to Hanover as she entered the war room. Hanover nodded back with the respect that one gives to a dangerous adversary; short and bulky, with a bulldog face, Grisham was not known for giving ground to anyone, even the Prime Minister. Her support staffer, a young Asian girl called Karen, carried secured datachips with her, loading them into the secured computer. Hanover allowed himself a moment to admire the curve of her behind in her uniform, before waving Grisham to a seat.

"All right," he said, once the staffer had left the room. "What's so important that you had to call me away from a meeting?"

“As you know, the Japanese are blockading Australia,” Grisham said. “We’ve had some success by using submarines to pick off their blockade forces, but we’re short on torpedoes and they have been successful at cutting the air bridge. What that means is that Admiral Turtledove, who is a week away after rounding the horn, is going to have to fight his way through.”

Hanover scowled. “Do the Japanese know that he’s coming?”

“We know that they have agents in Madagascar,” Grisham said. “There are also the South Africans who want to move at once to an Apartheid system; they would be happier if we and the Nazis battered each other into the ground. Yes, we believe that the Japanese know that the fleet’s coming.”

She waved a hand at the map. “One of our problems has been to locate the Japanese carriers and battleline,” she said. “They’ve been very successful at manoeuvring the carriers fast enough to avoid our submarines, and the Captains have been ordered to avoid risking their own discovery by attacking a heavily guarded convoy. Of course, if they knew how few ships we have...they would be very tempted to try and take out Turtledove’s force.”

Hanover nodded. “I see your point,” he said. “Should we order him to the Arabia Republic?”

Grisham grinned. “Why?” She asked. “We can have the other submarines meeting up with him, and he has some of the newer destroyers and frigates, armed with Harpoons. As long as they don’t come to point-blank range, he should be able to cripple the Japanese fleet.”

Hanover steepled his fingers. “The Australians need the equipment on the freighters, don’t they?”

“Oh, yes,” Grisham said grimly. “Without it...well, the Japanese are pouring units into the East Indies and advancing on the Australian positions. With the growing war in Malaya, we won’t be able to spare them anything new for a while, which leaves them on their own.”

Hanover stared up at the map. “When was the last time a British fleet sought battle with another fleet?” He asked. “The Falklands? World War Two? Admiral are you confident that we can win such a battle?”

“As long as the enemy doesn’t close on the fleet successfully, then yes; we can win,” Grisham assured him.

“The enemy gets a vote too,” Hanover muttered. “Very well; order Admiral Turtledove to execute the plan, assuming that he gets a chance, but the freighters are not to be risked.”

“Yes, Prime Minister,” Grisham said.

**Undisclosed Location**  
**Berlin, Germany**  
**26<sup>th</sup> September 1940**

Goebbels glared into the camera. "I say again," he said, his voice firm and convincing. "No submarine of the Third Reich was anywhere near the American battleship. The *Fuhrer* himself decreed that all American ships were to be left alone, and none of the u-boats were close enough to fire at the American ship."

He scowled; the effect was quite impressive. "The Third *Reich* rejects the American claims without doubt," he snapped. "The British or the treacherous French doubtless used one of their own submarines to hit the ship, merely to start a war with America. While the demand that Germany send its crew to America for trial, there is no crew for Germany would not be so uncivilised as to fire upon a battleship of a friendly power."

He finished speaking and stormed off. Stewart turned off the camera and carefully stored it back in its carry case. Roth watched her thoughtfully.

"Do you think he was telling the truth?" Stewart asked.

Roth lifted an eyebrow. The woman had no common sense; despite being in the centre of the Nazi regime, she asked the strangest questions of people who were either fanatical Nazis or scared to give a honest answer. If Himmler hadn't issued the strictest orders to keep her safe, she would have been dead a thousand times over.

"Normally, around here, when something is planned, people try to take advantage of it," he said finally. "No one has moved to take advantage of this development, which is the surest sign that this was an accident."

"I see," Stewart said thoughtfully. "I suppose that there's no way to be certain?"

Roth shook his head. "I don't think so," he said. "You could ask for another interview with the *Fuhrer*" – he smiled at her expression – "or the Grand Admiral, but I don't think that anyone planned for this to happen."

Stewart nodded. "If you don't mind, I'll transmit this back to London for the evening news, and then we can find something else to do."

Roth smiled. The woman was insatiable. "Of course," he said, and thought of what they could do together.

\*\*\*

Professor Horton studied the document from Washington, from the German ambassador, and felt a surge of hope for the first time. He forced a smile off his face as the SS guards hauled him along the long corridors to Himmler's office, and managed to sound respectful as Himmler greeted him and waved him to a seat.

"The report is grim," Himmler said, without preamble. "Tell me; will the United States declare war on us?"

Yes, Horton wanted to shout. "There's no way to be certain," he said instead. "Historically, the United States was declared war on, by the *Fuhrer*, rather than declaring war itself. It's impossible to know for sure."

“And if America joins the war?” Himmler pressed. “Can we defeat them?”

Horton considered. The information had to be chosen carefully. “If you manage to develop an air defence network and secure positions in France, you can hold them off until they get tired of bleeding to death,” he said carefully. He was determined not to mention the atomic bomb. “I assume that you have no way of hitting them.”

“Von Braun believes that we can push the V3 forward, a rocket capable to hitting the Americas,” Himmler said. “If we can build a nuclear warhead” – Horton felt his face go pale, even behind his dark skin – “then we can threaten them with nuclear fire and devastation.”

“Or they’ll bombard you with their own weapons,” Horton said, reeling. He had hoped that Himmler knew nothing about nuclear weapons. “The British have a lot of such weapons.”

“And would they agree to risk trading city for city?” Himmler asked. Horton winced. “If we have the weapons in time, we can prevent them from landing, correct?”

Horton shuddered inside. “If you have the weapon, then you can deter them,” he said. “You’ll have to set off a nuke someone out of the way, just to convince them that you can do it.”

“Then we would lose a warhead for nothing,” Himmler said. Horton scowled; he’d hoped that Himmler wouldn’t notice. “On the other hand, if we work with the Soviets, we can...”

“They’ll be ready to stab you in the back,” Horton said quickly. Historically, Stalin *had* considered hitting Hitler; the only thing he hadn’t counted on was Hitler striking first.

“Perhaps, perhaps,” Himmler said. He considered. “Kesselring has been suggesting that we move against the Turks and join hands with Stalin. What do you think of that?”

*It’ll overstretch you*, Horton thought. “Historically, the Turks were very resistant to joining either side,” he said, wracking his memory. “They made a pro forma declaration of war towards the end of the war, on you, but they contributed nothing beyond that. On the other hand, you control goods that they need to have and you can even threaten a joint invasion.”

Himmler considered. “And once we were in the desert, we could punch into Iraq and then into their new conquest,” he said, ignoring the logistical problems. “I suppose that that would impress the *Fuhrer*; he might even commission you as a member of the General Staff.”

With a shock, Horton realised that Himmler intended to credit *him* with the plan. He showed no concern over the Turks, or even the Germans who would be killed on the mad plan. He’d sowed the seeds of Germany’s defeat – and it was only at the cost of thousands of lives.

“Are you unwell?” Himmler enquired mildly. “Perhaps the services of the SS doctor...”

“No, thank you,” Horton said. “I think I must have eaten something that disagreed with me.”

*As opposed to being eaten by something that disagreed with me*, he thought, as Himmler managed to look concerned. It didn’t look natural.

“So, if you maintain a defence of the coast at all of the possible invasion points, you can prevent them from gaining a foothold,” he said, knowing that he was suggesting the impossible. “If they can be prevented from gaining a foothold, you can slaughter their men; invasion will probably be impossible until spring of 1941, at least.”

Himmler smiled. “Thank you, as always, Doctor,” he said. “Might I enquire after the health of your wife?”

Horton knew that it was a not-so-subtle threat. “She’s got Morning Sickness,” he said. “Your...nurse has been very helpful.”

“Indeed,” Himmler said. “I have no doubt that she will be equally useful in the future.”

\*\*\*

General Galland allowed himself a half-hearted smile; Goring had finally been completely disposed from the *Luffwaffe*. The podgy *Reichmarshall* would still have a role in the *Reich*, perhaps as a propaganda specialist or as administrator of the resettlements in Poland, but he would never be given serious responsibilities again. News of his actions in the last days of the *Reich* had finally crossed Hitler’s ears, and the tantrum had been spectacular.

*A pity that the fat fool wasn’t simply executed*, Galland thought, as he listened to Kesselring. The strategist was describing in grand detail Operation Orient, the plan intended to force passage through Turkey during the winter, and then regroup to meet the Americans, should they invade from Britain.

“If we are successful at invading or otherwise convincing Turkey to join us,” he said, “we can push our way into Iraq and this new...Arabia Republic...”

“British Imperialism,” Goebbels said. Radio Berlin had been decrying the conquest of Saudi as soon as word had reached them from Nazi supporters in Iraq. “It exposes the hypocrisy of the British, that they move against a free country...”

Hitler banged the table. “Carry on, Field Marshal,” he said, as the room went silent.

“As soon as we present a threat to their Middle East possessions, they will have to commit forces to fight us there,” Kesselring said, as if Goebbels hadn’t spoken. “Fortunately, the British fleet presence in the Mediterranean has been sharply reduced; mainly Contemporary vessels with a handful of advanced ships. Italian shipbuilders have been turning out submarines, which we have sent against the Contemporary vessels.

“Once we are established, we will move to present a threat to their canal and to their new allies in Saudi,” Kesselring continued. “Their choice will be to fight us in a region hostile to us, while the Soviets head east and enter India.”

“Stalin hasn’t managed to take Iran yet,” Himmler muttered. “How do we know that the sub-humans won’t simply give up?”

“He can’t afford not to,” Kesselring said. “Now, more than ever, he needs our support.” He looked up at Hitler. “*Mein Fuhrer*, we can have the main elements in place in two weeks, and then ask the Turks to join us or be invaded.” He scowled. “*Mein Fuhrer*, we have to

move *now*; not before America can weigh in. We have to buy time, time to prepare the new batches of weapons, time to build the atomic bomb. Forcing the pace of conflict forward is the only way that we can win that time...”

“*Mein Fuhrer*,” Hitler’s secretary called. Galland blinked; she knew better than to interrupt unless it was something *very* important. “This came in from Washington.”

“Thank you, Trudi,” Hitler said, and took the sheet of paper. He read it quickly. “The die is cast,” he said. “It’s time for us to meet our inevitable destiny.”

Galland read the sheet of paper as it was passed around the room. The important bits were all too clear.

WHEREAS the Government of Germany has deliberately, without provocation, acted to cause the death of thousands of American citizens.

WHEREAS the Government of Germany has wantonly and cruelly acted to destroy entire nations.

WHEREAS the Government of Germany has seen fit to refuse to make any restitution for the attack against American citizens, to compensate the survivors, to apologise for the attack on the flag.

THEREFORE, Congress declares that a state of war exists between the Government of Germany and the government and the people of the United States and making provision to prosecute the same.

THEREFORE, be it Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, that the state of war between the United States and the Government of Germany which has thus been thrust upon the United States is hereby formally declared; and the President is hereby authorized and directed to employ the entire naval and military forces of the government to carry on war against the Government of Germany; and to bring the conflict to a successful termination, all of the resources of the country are hereby pledged by the Congress of the United States.

Hitler crumpled the paper and looked across at Kesselring. “Operation Orient is approved,” he said. “Field Marshal, it’s all in your hands now; save Germany and win us the time we need.”

## Chapter Forty-Two: Engage the Enemy More Closely

HIMS *Yamato*

Japan

29<sup>th</sup> September 1940

Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, Commander-In-Chief of the Japanese Combined Fleet, allowed himself a sigh of relief. Whatever the crazy Germans had done, they hadn't provoked the Americans into declaring war on *Japan*. Despite some desperate prompting by the China Lobby, the much-divided Congress had clearly decided that one war was enough.

"We were lucky," he remarked to Genda, who was giving him the reports from the battlefield near the Dutch East Indies. "And now it's all the more important to bring the war to a close – quickly, before Roosevelt manages to get America involved with us."

"That won't be possible until after we invade Australia and India," Genda said. "Once we complete the campaign in Singapore and the Dutch East Indies, we can land on Australia."

"If we can put together a force that those damned invisible submarines won't dare to attack," Yamamoto snapped. Naval Intelligence believed that there were only three submarines at most, operating near Australia. So far, no really large force had been attacked – but two destroyers had been lost trying to sink one. *Japanese* submarines were operating near India, but they simply weren't having as much success as they could have been.

"We mass troops and supplies on the Indies," Genda said. He waved a hand at the map. "General Homma believes that they can be occupied within a week, perhaps two weeks. With some luck, we might be able to manage an invasion of Australia within a month."

"We'll be lucky," Yamamoto snarled. "That *idiot* Yamashita is taking his time marching down to the Singapore Island and the naval base there. We should just deploy a holding force and send the battleships in to reduce the base."

"I believe that Yamashita is planning to do just that," Genda assured him. "However, one of our sources in South Africa sent us something very interesting, and it was confirmed by sources in Australia."

Yamamoto lifted an eyebrow, feeling his missing fingers twinge. "The British reinforcements?"

"Indeed," Genda said. "Nearly fifty ships, heading to Australia, carrying supplies that would make the invasion far more difficult." He smiled. "And, sir, we know their course."

Yamamoto felt real hope for the first time since learning of the American declaration of war on Germany. "We can assemble the fleet and destroy them," he said, running through what he'd learned of the British weapons. "We can swarm them under by sheer numbers of aircraft."

Genda bowed. "*Hai*," he said. "From reports, none of their ships carry much in the way of their jet fighters; their carriers are barely comparable to the *Shoho* in striking power. The real danger comes from their missiles, and they have to run out of them in a hurry."

Yamamoto nodded thoughtfully. "From what the Germans said, their ships had to be struck directly to penetrate the armour, and if the fleet moves quickly, we might escape strikes against the battleline. The carriers, on the other hand, will be *very* vulnerable, so the carriers will remain behind while the battleships steam forwards, presenting a threat they cannot ignore."

If Genda had concerns about risking the battleline to save the carriers, he didn't show it. "Once the battleships get to gun range, they'll savage the enemy force," he said. "Their armour is almost non-existent."

"Have an operational plan drawn up," Yamamoto said. "I'll take it to the War Cabinet and get their approval, and then we can start massing the fleet." He allowed himself a minute to consider. "Leave behind the two oldest ships," he said. "Admiral Nagumo can use them at Singapore. The others can rendezvous in the ocean wastes past the Indies well away from land, and then prepare for interception. Ozawa and Kurita can command their respective departments."

"Yes, sir," Genda said. "I'll start preparing the plan at once."

### **Indian Ocean 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1940**

Admiral Turtledove paced the bridge of his ship, the carrier *Ark Royal II*. He knew it suggested uncertainty, or even weakness, but he was nervous and aware of his nervousness. The crew were nervous too, even though they hid it under their professionalism. There had been no attempt to hide the presence of the fleet, rather than opposite, and the detection of a Japanese submarine had confirmed that the enemy knew where they were.

"We just picked up a primitive burst transmission," the EMCOM officer, Tom Landshark, reported. "*Very* primitive; only code words rather than compression."

"They haven't invented computer compression yet," Captain Rama pointed out. "What does it say?"

"Cryptanalysis isn't certain," Landshark admitted. "It's just a selection of words from a one-time pad."

"It's a contact report," Admiral Turtledove commented. He glanced down at the display; the carrier's Sea King helicopters were spread out, probing for enemy ships and transmissions. He glared across at a freighter, stacked with hastily-mounted machine guns tied into the point defence network; the AWACS it carried could have settled the debate in a moment. Somewhere over the horizon, the Japanese fleet was gathering...

*I should never have agreed to this*, he thought grimly, as the fleet moved to general quarters. The Japanese would know about the vulnerability of his thin-skinned units to kamikaze attacks, or to battleship shells. If they somehow managed to spoof the radar...



He shook his head. *Don't be stupid*, he thought angrily. *The Japanese can't possibly spoof all the radars on the task force.* "Commander, has the *Chatham* located the enemy submarine?"

"Yes, sir," Commander Bluebottle said. "It's trying to follow us and falling behind. We'll have lost it completely in a couple of ours, unless we slow down."

Every war fighting instinct in Turtledove's body called out for the imprudent submarine to be sunk. "Order the *Chatham* to keep an eye and a torpedo locked on the submarine," he said finally. "If it attempts to manoeuvre into a firing position, the *Chatham* is to fire at once."

"Aye, aye sir," Commander Bluebottle said.

Captain Rama smiled. "So, who do you think would win out of a world war two grudge match?"

Turtledove blinked at him. "I beg your pardon?"

"You have a contest between the five world leaders; Churchill, Stalin, FDR, Hitler, Mussolini and Emperor Hirohito," Captain Rama said. "All go in, unarmed; one comes out."

"That's a bloody silly death match," Turtledove snapped, even though he understood that it reduced the tension on the ship. "And besides...that's six world leaders."

"Sue me," Captain Rama smiled. "Ever since that woman started broadcasting from Germany, this has become a hot issue at the bookies."

Turtledove smiled. "Well, Roosevelt is on a wheelchair, so he's out quickly. Mussolini and the Japanese Emperor would be next – coming to think of it, where is the fat tub of lard these days?"

"Pretending he still rules Italy," Rama said.

"I can't remember if Stalin had any military experience, so he and Churchill might be out next," Turtledove said. "Hitler had experience, but he wasn't very healthy, but nor was Churchill at the time." He hesitated. "Captain, do you think that 1940s Britain is back in our place?"

"Shit, the French would just take over," Rama said grimly. "I can't see them passing up the opportunity to..."

"Sir, the *Trafalgar* reports that it's found the Japanese fleet," Commander Bluebottle interrupted. "We're vectoring a Sea King in to confirm the discovery, some four hundred kilometres from us."

"Beat to quarters," Turtledove ordered sharply. "Transmit the message to the fleet; Britain expects that every man will do his duty."

"Aye, sir," Captain Rama said. "Shall I order a drone launched?"

Turtledove nodded. "Order the submarines to move towards the Japanese ships," he said. "Stand by all air defences; stand by Harriers for launch."

"All ships report ready," Commander Bluebottle said. "The fleet is fully at your command."

\*\*\*

Roughly four hundred kilometres to the north, Admiral Ozawa nodded as his men decrypted the sighting report. Seconds later, one of the tiny picket ships reported one of the helicopters flying high above the water, heading towards the fleet.

"They've seen us," he said. He'd hoped that he could sneak closer before launching the attack, but the British had managed to locate them, perhaps with their marvellous radar. He'd kept his aircraft on the carrier decks, just to make certain that they presented a low profile, but there was no longer any need to hide.

He looked ahead, at Admiral Kurita's battleline as it began to pick up speed, heading for a surface engagement, and gave the order he knew his crew had been waiting for. "Launch aircraft," he said, and the four fleet carriers turned into the wind. Minutes later, Zero fighters, Nakajima torpedo-bombers and scout planes started to rise into the air, some taking on CAP, others heading towards the British fleet. Nearly three hundred aircraft; surely enough to soak up British missile fire and reach their targets.

\*\*\*

"Launch Harriers," Admiral Turtledove ordered, as the scope of the Japanese attack became clear. The entire British air contingent would be outnumbered; only fifty Harriers and Sea Harriers had been stuffed onboard the various craft, from the *Ark Royal* itself, the Marine Transport ship and the three adapted freighters.

"The drone reports four Japanese fleet carriers and two adapted transports," Commander Bluebottle said calmly. Captain Rama was issuing orders as *Ark Royal* flash-deployed her aircraft, launching the AEW helicopters and the ASW helicopters."

"Designate them for Tomahawk strikes from the frigates and destroyers," Admiral Turtledove said. "Order the *Chatham* to hit that submarine; any Japanese submarines are to be sunk without warning."

"Aye, sir," Bluebottle said. In the distance, a burst of water blasted up from the surface as a Japanese submarine died. A console beeped. "Sir, they just killed the AEW helicopter."

"Noted," Turtledove said. "Time for the drone to be on station?"

"Five minutes," Bluebottle said. "Shall I order the strikes on the battleships as well?"

Turtledove shook his head. "Carriers first," he said, as the tenor of the alarm changed. He looked up again; a swarm of Japanese aircraft could be seen in the distance. "Clear to engage."

"I think they're the *Akagi*, *Kaga*, *Soryu* and *Hiryu*," Bluebottle said. "They were in service at the time; the other big carriers will be being worked up at the moment. They were all sunk at Midway."

“Let’s sink them earlier then,” Turtledove said, as the flight of Japanese aircraft bore down on the fleet.

\*\*\*

Squadron Leader Sato smiled as his force bore down on the British fleet. He could see it in the distance; around forty ships, shimmering in the sunlight. There were two carriers, but neither of them seemed likely to carry enough aircraft to pose a threat. He blinked; there were *no* aircraft, apart from the strange whirly-bird craft like the one they’d shot down on their march to the enemy fleet.

A streak of fire shot past him and slammed into a Nakajima torpedo-bomber. He blinked and looked upwards; enemy aircraft were coming out of the sun. As they flashed closer, his first inclination was to laugh, until he realised how much damage his force had taken. He’d commanded a flight of twelve Zeros; half of them had been wiped out by the strange weapons.

He muttered a command into his radio and yanked his plane sideways as a streak of tracer fire screamed past him. One of the strange aircraft had targeted him, bumping and weaving as it spun around in the air. It was amazingly manoeuvrable, Sato realised as he forced his Zero through a series of spins and turns, trying to hit it with his own weapons. The attack seemed to have continued anyway; the Nakajima torpedo-bombers were launching strikes...and they were dropping like flies. He drew a bead on the tail of the strange aircraft, and then it spun around, nearly ramming him in midair.

He fired as it swooped past and hit it, hit something. It retreated, leaving a trail of smoke, and he looked down. For a long moment, he thought that the Nakajima torpedo-bombers had scored spectacular successes, and then he realised that he was looking at some kind of anti-aircraft fire. A handful of torpedoes were in the water, closing in on the enemy ships...he saw one explode in a blast of fire, and then a hail of shells blasted through his Zero, scattering his remains onto the sea.

\*\*\*

The frigate exploded in a blast of fire as a Nakajima torpedo-bomber rammed directly into the structure. Admiral Turtledove cursed; the Japanese aircraft were dropping like flies, but the rest were learning. Some daring pilots had realised that the machine guns, radar-guided through they were, couldn’t depress too low for fear of hitting their own ships, and were flying in low. The Sea Harriers picked them off, but not before they got their torpedoes off.

“*Ocean’s* been hit,” Bluebottle muttered. “Captain Anchovy thinks it’ll be fine, but wants SAR on standby to recover his crew.”

“Make it so,” Turtledove muttered. “What about the drone?”

“Getting real-time coverage now,” Bluebottle said. “It’s the *Akagi*, *Kaga*, *Soryu* and *Hiryu* all right; we don’t recognise the converted transports. The battleships are still oncoming; they’ll be on us in around ten minutes.”

*Ark Royal* shuddered violently. “That was a kamikaze,” Captain Rama snapped. “Bastard struck the side of the hull.”

“They’re concentrating on the carriers,” Bluebottle said grimly.

“Order the frigates to begin rapid-fire of Tomahawks,” Turtledove said grimly. “We have to finish this quickly” – another ship exploded – “before we end up wishing we’d lost instead of won.”

\*\*\*

The Type-45 destroyers hadn’t been originally intended to take on an anti-ship role, but experience had shown the Royal Navy that they couldn’t count on receiving the new carriers in time for the next war – as indeed they hadn’t. *Daring* and *Dauntless*, armed with Harpoon missiles, constituted a sizeable portion of the task force’s striking power.

“I see no need to waste missiles, not with those big battlewagons closing in on us,” Captain McTavish of the *Daring* said. “Designate one missile for each carrier; three from us and three from the losers.”

There were a few chuckles; the *Daring*’s crew had an ongoing football game with the *Dauntless*’s crew, and they’d won the last two matches. “Missiles locked, sir,” the weapons officer said. “We can fire upon your command.”

Captain McTavish paused to savour the moment. “Fire,” he said. A streak of fire blasted away from *Daring*’s deck, followed by two more. Behind them, *Dauntless* launched its own missiles. Flight time would be measured in seconds.

\*\*\*

The missiles had been programmed to execute a dive-bomb attack pattern and fitted with warheads designed to blow open bunkers. Travelling at supersonic speeds, they were high over the Japanese ships before the warning could even be passed by the handful of remaining aircraft, many of whom were launching last-ditch attacks or retreating.

*Akagi* was struck in the centre of her unusual flight deck. Ironically, the missile slammed right *through* the ship and detonated just under the vessel, but it made no difference. The explosion tore a massive rent in the hull of the carrier, ripping it apart. She was the luckiest ship – some of her crew survived – the other carriers died within seconds as *their* warheads detonated *inside* the hulls, igniting their stores of aircraft fuel, and blowing them out of the water.

Blood streaming from a wound to the head, Admiral Ozawa gave the order to abandon ship. Saluting the flag, he prepared to go down with his ship as she sank under the waves. There was no hope of salvaging the ship; that was clear from the damage to the flight deck. Admiral Ozawa murmured a prayer as the waters closed over his head, and died.

\*\*\*

Admiral Turtledove took a breath as the final Japanese aircraft died. For the moment, the fleet was in clear waters; the recording of the final moments of the Japanese carriers was playing on the screen.

“Report,” he said finally. “Captain?”

“We took a kamikaze to the prow,” Captain Rama said. “I think it was a Zero; no bomb detonated. Nothing a few days of repairs can’t cure.”

“And the fleet?” Turtledove asked, turning to Bluebottle.

“We lost seven ships; three destroyers and four freighters,” Bluebottle said. “Fourteen Harriers have been lost; two beacons have been activated and SAR helicopters are on their way. Twelve more ships, including *Ark Royal* and *Ocean*, have been damaged; *Ocean* cannot recover aircraft.” He winced. “Fortunately, we can land them on the freighters or *Ark Royal*.”

He smiled wanly. “On the other hand, we sunk six carriers, three submarines, and wiped out the cream of the Japanese carrier air force,” he continued. “A victory by anyone’s standards.”

“Let’s hope the Japanese agree,” Turtledove said. “Where are their battlewagons?”

Bluebottle glanced at the display. “Uh-oh,” he said. Turtledove lifted an eyebrow. “They’re not giving up,” Bluebottle said. “They’re still coming; around ten minutes until they get into gun range.”

Turtledove winced again. “Order the Lynx Helicopters to attack, with anti-shipping missiles,” he said. The Lynx helicopters had been ordered to orbit outside the Japanese range. “Then order *Daring* and *Dauntless* to take out the lead battleship; perhaps the others will get the message.”

He looked down at the fleet display, building up a picture of the damage to his fleet. “And perhaps we ought to get moving,” he said. “Order the submarines to attack as well; we need time and space.”

The mood on the bridge was sombre. “Aye, aye, sir,” Captain Rama said.

\*\*\*

Admiral Takeo Kurita felt fear gnawing at his insides, even as he ordered the six battleships to move forward faster and faster. He hadn’t expected the command – not after being blamed for losing the war the first time around – and he had a sneaking suspicion that the High Command regarded him as expendable. The six battleships, *Haruna*, *Hiei*, *Kirishima*, *Kongo*, *Hyuga* and *Ise*, were all older designs, not fit to engage aircraft carriers.

Admiral Ozawa was in command, Yamamoto had told him, but Admiral Ozawa was dead. The miracle weapons had screamed over the decks of his battleships, heading for the carriers, and before he could transmit a warning they struck. The ships that had escorted Admiral Ozawa were trying to rescue the crews, but it seemed that three complements had been wiped out in seconds. Although he would never admit it, Kurita was scared.

“Incoming aircraft,” an officer said. Kurita looked up to see the strange...helicopters swooping down on the battleline, launching missiles and aiming at the hull. He winced as the missiles slammed into the side of the ship, and then he opened his eyes, realising that he’d expected death.

“They didn’t penetrate the main hull,” Captain Harkada said in sudden delight. Kurita allowed himself a smile. The helicopters fired again, targeting the superstructure of *Hyuga*, which started to burn. “*Hyuga*’s been hit, Admiral.”

“The bridge is still intact,” Lieutenant Makako said. “Admiral, they can’t hurt us!”

Under other circumstances, Kurita would have disciplined the young officer, perhaps even beheaded him with his ceremonial sword. “It seems not, no,” he said. “How long until we enter firing range?”

“Two minutes, Admiral,” Lieutenant Makako said.

“Commence firing as soon as we enter firing range,” Kurita said. “We have the lives of our comrades to avenge.”

\*\*\*

The superstructure of the Japanese ship burnt, but it refused to slow. A series of explosions tore one battleship apart as *Trafalgar* made its presence known, but the others refused to run. Instead, they were closing in on the British fleet.

“They’re firing,” Captain Rama said. “Their shells are large enough for the close-in systems to engage.” Explosions began to sparkle in the air; water billowed up near the fleet. “They’re firing at extreme range without any radar.”

“I can program the firing computers only to engage shells that will come too close to our ships,” Lieutenant Payton said. Her fingers danced over the keyboard. “Done, I think.”

“You’re about to be promoted or killed,” Turtledove said. Another Japanese battleship seemed to slow, spinning in circles. “What happened to that one?”

“*Trafalgar* hit its propellers,” Bluebottle said. “UHF telemetry warns that they’re running out of torpedoes.”

“These blasted things must have a weakness,” Turtledove snapped. Another fountain of water blasted up. “Look the ships up in the cached Wikipedia; how were they sunk the first time around?”

“Ha,” Turtledove said, after a long moment. “Sir, some of the ships – I think they’re the same class – have weaker side armour. Perhaps a Tomahawk or a Harpoon...”

Turtledove looked up. The shape of the battleships, burning but unbowed, could be seen in the distance. “Order *Daring* and *Dauntless* to engage,” he said.

\*\*\*

“These are our last missiles,” Captain McTavish said. “Make them count.”

“Targets locked,” the weapons officer said. “Ready to fire.”

“Fire,” Captain McTavish ordered.

\*\*\*

Twin explosions billowed on the side of *Hiei* and *Kirishima*. The battleships healed over as the warheads detonated inside their hulls, blasting the ships apart. The explosions blasted chunks of metal into the air, showing the other ships with debris, and Admiral Kurita lost his nerve.

“Order a withdrawal,” he said, as calmly as he could. “We can’t hit them and I won’t waste battleships for nothing.” He scowled; three battleships had been lost, and one more would be because it could no longer steer. “*Ise* will cover our retreat. There’ll be another day.”

\*\*\*

“There are no more Harpoons left,” Bluebottle said. “We’ve still got the Tomahawks...”

“Sir, they’re withdrawing,” Captain Rama said. “They’re bugging out.”

Turtledove stared down at the drone’s report. The ships that had escorted the carriers were leaving, joining up with the remains of the battleline and heading north, away from the British fleet.

“Sir, we can still engage them,” Bluebottle said, quietly. “We still have Tomahawks, and we can fit the Harriers with anti-ship missiles.”

Turtledove shook his head. “Order *Trafalgar* to finish off that ship,” he said, waving a hand at the crippled Japanese battleship, still firing madly whenever it entered firing position.

“Other than that...I think we’ve pushed our luck too far for one day.” He stood up.

“Captain, Commander, secure from general quarters. I’m going to report to London; a report that won’t get us all shot.”

“Admiral, you just won the greatest battle since the Second World War,” Bluebottle said wryly. “Oh, right.”

“Get some sleep,” Turtledove said. “We all need sleep; that joke seemed funny for a while.”

## **Chapter Forty-Three: The Gates of Hell**

10 Downing Street  
**London, United Kingdom**  
**4<sup>th</sup> October 1940**

The party had started almost spontaneously when the news hit, appearing in Hyde Park and spreading across Central London. It was amazing; the police swiftly provided some protection, but it was all good-natured. Bankers and politicians cavorted with hippies and students, dancing madly to several different bands at the same time. Local businesses provided a supply of cheap food and drink, and the party just grew and grew. As night fell, the BBC was broadcast on the big screens that were only used for New Year under normal circumstances; over the next few weeks the stocks of morning-after pills would fall dramatically.

"Everyone's happy," McLachlan observed. "I'm sure I spotted the honourable MP for Blackburn in that crowd of..."

Hanover smiled wryly as McLachlan ran out of words. The crowd of naked people were enjoying each other; so far it all seemed to be consensual. The Police Superintendent had ordered the police to step in if that changed, but for the moment they were being allowed to proceed.

"They're celebrating," he said. "It's not as if we've had anything...real to celebrate before, is it? Liberating North Africa doesn't compare to sinking the pride of the Japanese Navy."

"I suppose," McLachlan said. "You heard the report from America?" Hanover shrugged. "They declared war on Germany - not on Japan - and it's going to be at least six months before they can contribute anything substantial to the war. They've shifted some of their Pacific Fleet towards the Atlantic, where we can move our ships to the Pacific once they take over convoy escort duties, but of course that's not where we need them."

Hanover shrugged. "All in good time," he said. "What about the hunt for the mystery submarine?"

"PJHQ made hunting it their priority," McLachlan said. They shared a long look. "The general consensus is that it was the submarine that was intercepted a day after the American ship was sunk; it was in the right place if it really pushed itself. As it was killed by one of our helicopters, its impossible to be certain."

"As long as it satisfies the Americans that we avenged their deaths," Hanover said, unconcerned. "And their politics?"

"It's nothing like as unanimous as it was after Pearl Harbour," McLachlan admitted. "Ambassador Quinn has been trying to gage opinion - and of course there are the strands of pre-Transition operatives in the United States that we can pick up and use ourselves - but not everyone is happy with the war. They're very anti-German, but not for the same reasons; the loss of the ship convinced a lot of them that Germany had to be stopped."



"The Poles and the Jews are the most strident on the war," he continued. "Ambassador King has been running the recordings of the extermination operation, which is still continuing. And then there are those who are Finnish or Norwegian, or even French and German. On the other side, there are those who believe that Japan and Russia are the real threats, and want the United States to concentrate on them. And finally, there are the people who want to solve the United States' internal problems, or don't want to fight the Germans, or distrust us and our intentions."

He smiled wryly. "The good news, of course, is that Ambassador Quinn can now report on other matters, rather than relying on underhandedness."

They shared a second look, before heading into the war room. Only a handful of the most important players had arrived for the meeting; it had been arranged at short notice. Hanover nodded politely to the room and took the chair.

"I think that we should disperse with the formalities," he said. "I have been invited to visit the Palace" - his mouth twisted slightly - "and His Majesty doesn't like it when matters are not followed as he wills. Admiral, please would you inform Admiral Turtledove that he and his crews have been nominated for any number of medals, and a knighthood for some of the Captains."

Admiral Grisham nodded. "The fleet has arrived at Australia," she said. "Once we get the AWACS up and running - now we have a proper air force and air defence network for Australia - we can free up some of the submarines for hunting missions."

"All in good time," Hanover said smoothly. "General Cunningham?"

"The Japanese are about to hit the defence lines near Singapore," Cunningham said. "The Japanese managed to sail a ship near the island and bombard it, but the Contemporary guns drove it off before it could do too much damage. General Flynn has requested a submarine to support the defenders...Admiral?"

"The *Turbulent* is on its way," Grisham said. "It does take time to move submarines, you know."

"As long as it doesn't see a tasty target and get distracted," Cunningham said. Hanover tapped the table gently. "General Flynn is confident of success, but Major Stirling has found something alarming."

Stirling coughed. "We finally managed to get some working intercepts on German communications," he said. "Although we are not as able to use it as I would like us to be, we have some communication taps via the equipment we gave that dumb reporter - it seems she's having an affair with a Nazi - and we have some taps placed in landlines by the SAS."

"We lost that sub that way," Hanover muttered. The cover story had led to some elements of the Royal Navy being mocked; that had led everyone to believe it. He chuckled suddenly. "I think we'll keep the information about the affair to ourselves, for a while."

"Yes, Prime Minister," Stirling said, rather hesitatingly. "The intercepts, however, have allowed us to piece together a picture of the German plans for the remainder of this year."

They seem to have concluded - correctly - that until the United States can gear up, they're still facing us alone."

"Good thinking," Hanover said crossly. "Its so much easier if the enemy lacks knowledge of some of their own future mistakes."

"Over the past week, they've been building up in Bulgaria," Stirling said. "The Soviets seem to have raised no objections, and, of course, they control everywhere else in that region. Their plan, basically, is to drive through Turkey and add to the confusion in the Middle East."

"And give us a leaking sore," Hanover said. "That would put back our other plans by...how much?"

"I'm not sure," Stirling confessed. "It depends on what the Turks do; both the Soviets and Germans are rattling sabres. From our limited contacts, it seems that the Turks are wavering; the Germans are promising them Mosul if they agree and the horrors of an invasion if they refuse." He scowled. "A German attack, particularly with the Turks involved, could really mess the Middle Eastern front up."

"That leaves Operation Ploesti," McLachlan said. Something like a sigh ran around the table. "Do we have a choice?"

"The Party would not be happy," Barton said grimly, "but I wish I could second the motion."

*How did it become a motion?* Hanover wondered. "Are you certain that you understand what this means?" He asked. "We would be changing a policy that was instituted by Prime Minister Smith, for very good reasons."

Barton scowled. His party was against it. "I'll take the heat from my party if you take the heat from yours," he said. Hanover smiled; Barton's opposition would be on the record. It was a neat way of supporting it, by letting the Government know that he wouldn't give them grief over it, and at the same time avoiding being knifed in the back by his own party.

"It seems to be unanimous," Hanover said wryly. "I'll issue the orders at once."

Defence Lines  
Malaya, nr Singapore  
**4<sup>th</sup> October 1940**

General Flynn allowed himself a sigh of relief as he inspected the defence lines. Nearly two weeks of very hard work had gone into the lines, using all the help the suddenly released resources of Singapore could provide, and he was confident that it would hold. The SAS had done a marvellous job of holding the Japanese up – although he suspected that flaws in Japanese logistics would have had the same effect – and the defence line had been the reward. A carefully designed wall, one designed to bleed the Japanese white, along angles they *had* to attack.

*He who would be strong everywhere is strong nowhere*, Flynn remembered, and frowned. Tiny SAS units, backed up by hastily-recruited auxiliaries from the coloured population of Singapore, would engage the enemy if they tried to move through Jungle history told them

would not be as impregnable as it looked. Sheer determination, bloody-mindedness and not a little ruthlessness had carried General Yamashita nearly four hundred miles, despite the best efforts of the SAS.

Flynn chuckled. Doubtless the Japanese General was enjoying his victory. The conquest of Kuala Lumpur, which had hardly been defended, had been reported in the Japanese press as a great victory. Even the Germans were getting in on the act; the British reporter in Germany had faithfully recorded an hour-long speech from Goebbels on the subject of Japan's inevitable victory. Aerial reconnaissance had reported dozens of heavily guarded trucks being moved down the road; the SAS had reported that the Japanese were taking no chances with them.

"Sir?" Colonel Higgins said. Flynn glanced up. "The Japanese are launching bombers from French Indochina - and the audio-discrimination programs are reporting engine noises. I think its about to start."

"I wish we were back in the desert," Flynn said absently. "What about Singapore?"

"The new Governing Council seems to be doing ok," Higgins said. "They're determined to prove that they can be trusted with the vote. They've got people working on repairs after that battleship took a crack at us, and we've warned them of an incoming air raid."

Flynn nodded and headed back to his headquarters. "Did you ever see that picture, that joke picture of the trenches?" He asked. A perfect division, with a single budge on the German side, and the British headquarters near the line." He chuckled. "And then, the same picture a few years later, but with the bulge on the other side...and the British headquarters well away from the line."

"No, sir," Higgins said.

"Well, live or die, I'm going to do it with my troops," Flynn said. He passed three guards and a machine gun position, and then stepped into the headquarters. The massive coordination system, an American-designed system, was already at work; Japanese artillery had started shelling a British position. This time...

"Start counter-battery fire," Flynn ordered. "Full radar tracking...now!"

\*\*\*

General Yamashita swore under his breath as another battery of Japanese guns, the light howitzer, exploded in a blast of fire. The main weapons were being targeted; every time they fired they were picked off neatly by a handful of British shells. The weapons were horrendous; he was losing guns for nothing! A flight of Zeros roared by overhead, chasing the strange British craft, and he cursed. He'd heard a private rumour, a very private rumour, that the Navy had suffered a defeat, but he hadn't been able to confirm it.

"They want a victory," he snapped, and glared down at the map. "Order the infantry and aircraft to go in," he ordered. "They have to take out their guns!"

\*\*\*

Sergeant O'Neal cursed as the Japanese planes swooped down, their engines screaming as they targeted the British guns. Bombs fell and his machine gun chattered back, targeting Japanese aircraft as they tried to swarm over the British position. There was a massive *crash* as a Japanese aircraft slammed headfirst into the jungle; the blast setting off its ammunition.

"Jesus, what a clusterfuck," he shouted, temporally deafened. He looked up, at the burning jungle, and saw Japanese soldiers coming at him, sneaking through the defence lines.

"No, you fucking don't," he shouted, and turned the machine gun on them. They fell, or threw themselves to the ground, and he laughed – just before the grenade landed near his position. The explosion blew him into little bits.

\*\*\*

"The enemy has made a breakthrough, in sector seven," Higgins snapped. "I'm ordering the reserve to engage!"

"Do so," Flynn ordered, studying the map. It made sense; the Japanese would be trying to outflank the defences on the road. He watched grimly; did his opposite number know the dangers?

\*\*\*

General Yamashita smiled as the first reports came back; they had penetrated the defence line and were attacking the outpost blocking the road. The terrain wasn't perfect, but he gave the order anyway.

"Order the tanks to advance," he ordered. "All guns are to concentrate on reducing that antitank position."

\*\*\*

Tank Commander Nishizumi gave the order and his little tank moved forward, followed by five others. The Type 89 *Otsu* tanks, medium tanks, were neat and manoeuvrable, but he was grimly aware of their weaknesses. The Soviet armour had been far more powerful and capable, but the Japanese Army had been unwilling to listen to the veterans of the tank brigade's only major conflict.

"Forward," he snapped, as the signalman waved them out of the compound; a former manor-like house owned by a corrupt headman. The sound of battle grew closer as the tanks motored on, cheered by the infantry, while the air force flew overhead. He allowed himself a moment to relax, then leaned forward as the enemy position came into view.

"Gunner, load high explosive," he ordered, sighting the weapon directly on the position. The infantry had overrun it, but they hadn't forced the British out; concentrating instead on preventing the British from repairing the hole in their lines. "Fire!"

The little tank shuddered as the shell blasted through the air and slammed into the British position. Nishizumi chuckled, and then narrowed his eyes in concern; two British infantrymen were pointing a large gun at one of the tanks. A streak of fire lanced out of the gun, and a tank exploded.

“Kill them,” Nishizumi snapped, and swept the machine gun across the British position. Three more little rockets screamed back at them from out of the jungle...and Nishizumi’s world vanished in a blast of fire.

\*\*\*

Captain Dwyinn stared down through the vision-engaging goggles on his helmet, tracking the Japanese movements. Through a combination of suicidal bravery and training no *Jihadi* could match, the Japanese had forced their way through the defence lines in two places. They died like flies, but they pressed on.

“Time to engage them?” Chang subvocalised. “If we don’t stop them soon.”

“I think its time,” Dwyinn said. The Japanese supply line ran over a bridge, and the Japanese had taken care to build three separate pontoon bridges from local boats, thus avoiding a crush at the end of the bridge. Several dozen lorries were moving up to the bridge.

“The rockets are ready,” Sergeant Vash assured him. “We can fire the minute you command it.”

“Thank you,” Dwyinn said absently. The Japanese had built several more bridges further down the river, and SAS teams were closing in on all of them. They waited...and waited...until all of the teams were ready.

“Fire,” he commanded, and Vash hit the switch. Twelve rockets, each carrying a pound of high explosive, struck the bridge and the lorries that were trying to cross it. The explosion surpassed his wildest hopes; the lorries had been carrying shells for the guns.

“Good God,” Chang breathed, as burning men leapt into the water. “We just cut a chunk of the Japanese Army off from any reinforcements.”

“Perhaps,” Dwyinn said, as bullets started to crack through the trees. “Time to leave, I think,” he said. “We did good today.”

\*\*\*

Corporal Jenkins let go of the clutch and drove the Saracen Armoured Personnel Carrier forward, steering to the sound of the guns. The Japanese knew that the British had no tanks – but a 2015 APC possessed more firepower than many 1940 tanks. Jenkins steered forward, ignoring the bullets pinging off the armoured, and gave the command to fire.

The Saracen had been extensively modified during the insurgency in Iraq and the various missions that had ended the Terror War. *This* Saracen was armoured against anything short of a main battle tank, and possessed gun ports to protect the soldiers inside when they fired, to keep the all-important death toll down. The hail of machine gun fire swept over the Japanese, steering into the path of *their* desperate attempt to fight the Saracen vehicles, and slaughtered them.

Jenkins had hoped to meet a Japanese tank – he’d been wanting to try the rocket launcher – but none appeared. Contemporary forces followed the Saracens, securing the breach in the lines and trying to capture Japanese prisoners. After the first few Japanese surrendered and then opened fire, Jenkins simply ordered them all killed. The counter-attack pressed on, and

the Japanese had nothing to stop them. Only one Saracen was knocked out by a grenade-stuffed bag that was thrown under the wheels.

\*\*\*

General Yamashita knew that the game was over. The sudden appearance of the British tanks – he cursed the intelligence that had informed them that there were no tanks in the region – had defeated his forces. He knew that he could keep fighting, but what was the point? Until he managed to deploy some anti-tank weapons that were actually worth the name, the British held the advantage.

“Order the men to fall back,” he ordered, knowing that it would lead to a disaster. Countless tons of heavy equipment would be lost in the jungle; there was no way that it could be carried over the river. “Special detachments are to destroy anything that could be useful to the enemy.”

He watched as his men carried out the final order. He was proud of them; they retreated in good order, firing at imprudent pursuers with a determination that he found hard to fault. The British didn’t follow with any determination; they worked to secure their defence lines before following the Japanese. The commander of the detachment at Kuala Lumpur would take command of the army; there were some supplies in the city that could not have been bought to the disastrous battle. General Yamashita, however, had one final duty.

Carefully, gently, he laid a cloth on the ground, drawing his sword with a single motion before kneeling on the cloth. “I die for the emperor,” he said, almost regretful that there was no one to hear him, and stabbed himself in the chest.

### **Oil Mining Complex Ploesti, Romania 4<sup>th</sup> October 1940**

*Oberfuehrer* Hauptman looked up in the sky as the night fell over Ploesti. The massive oil complex, source of most of Germany’s oil, was a prize target...and the SS had been entrusted with the task. Hauptman, a capable and vigorous officer who had been rejected by the *Wehrmacht*, had borrowed as many weapons as he could, ringing Ploesti in a web of steel. Even the partisans hadn’t dared challenge his defences; Ploesti was impregnable. Everyone knew that.

There was something moving in the night sky. He reached for his binoculars and looked up, seeing a star move. For a second, he didn’t understand; stars didn’t move, and then he realised that it was...something out of the world. *The British*, he realised, as the...whatever it was fell closer. He looked up at it again, caught by its simple majesty...and then the world went white around him.

## Chapter Forty-Four: Brighter Than A Thousand Suns

House of Commons

London, United Kingdom

5<sup>th</sup> October 1940

The last nuclear warhead had detonated in 2010, at least from the perspective of the 2015 British. Then, the news of the explosion near the Panama Canal – a botched attempt to wreck the canal – had flashed around the world in seconds. In contrast, no one in 1940 knew about the single warhead that had destroyed Ploesti – until Hanover announced it before Parliament.

“In order to cripple the German war economy, we made the decision to destroy Ploesti,” Hanover said calmly. The House, for once, was silent; the MPs were hastily calculating their options. “I wish to confirm that the mission was accomplished with a single trident missile, fired from a ballistic missile submarine, yesterday at ten o’clock, local time. Detonation was precise and at low attitude, and destruction was total.

“This was not an easy decision to make,” he continued. “We now know that the German war economy was dependent upon Ploesti; destroying the oil wells would cripple their ability to...spend their cruise missile aircraft with such enthusiasm. We also know that Germany was working towards sending troops into the Middle East, through Turkey, to join the war there. If that had happened...the war might have been lost.”

He took a breath. “Radiation contamination should be minimal,” he said, “although we have broadcast a warning. The device” – *such a harmless word*, he thought – “was designed to limit radioactive spread; the mountains contained much of the blast. Civilian casualties should be minimal.”

He sat down and waited. There was a long pause, and then the Chair of the House of Commons Defence Committee stood. “Thank you for informing us,” he said. Howard Barleycorn was a Conservative, like Hanover, but the HCDC was intended to provide oversight of military affairs. “Can you give us any assurance that the Germans are unable to retaliate against us with their own nukes, or other weapons of mass destruction?”

It was a reasonable, if impractical question, Hanover conceded. “The Germans do not at present possess any nuclear bombs,” he said. “We have devoted considerable asserts to ruining any program that they might have tried to force forward. A chemical attack is possible, but we are now confident with the recent modifications to the air defences that we can hold off any chemical attack.”

Barleycorn coughed. “Thank you,” he said. “On a different note, will the Navy be holding a Court of Inquiry into Admiral Turtledove’s tactics in the Battle of the Indian Ocean? Various retired...defence consultants have pointed out that he unnecessarily risked his entire force, merely to close with the enemy force. Why was the *Trafalgar* low on ammunition; why did the other submarines not intervene?”

A low rumble ran through the House and Hanover cursed. Whatever the truth of the armchair admirals statements, Admiral Turtledove was a hero at the moment. Barleycorn had just damaged his own political career, just to prove that the HCDC was still relevant in a changing world. Inevitably, it would damage the Party.

“The *Trafalgar*, to answer one question, was ordered to defend Australia before sailing to meet the fleet,” Hanover said finally. “In the process it fired off some of its torpedoes at Japanese ships, many of which proved more able to handle a Spearfish hit than a modern ship. It required several hits to sink a battleship, for example; the hull of a 1940 ship is stronger than one of our ships.

“As for the issue of a Board of Inquiry, the battle will be analysed to death by the Navy and any such decisions will remain in their hands,” he concluded. “Under the circumstances, facing a completely-unexpected foe, I believe that Admiral Turtledove did well – and so do the Australians.”

\*\*\*

“Well, I’m glad that’s over,” Hanover said, three hours later. Many MPs supported the nuclear strike, but a handful of backbenchers were furious about it, pressing for criminal charges.

“The Americans are quite impressed,” McLachlan said. They’d been informed as a courtesy. “The President is using it to wave in front of Congress, convincing them to support the war more. Some of them are asking why we don’t just threaten Berlin with them.”

“Hitler would call our bluff,” Hanover said. “And the public?”

“Some minor protests,” McLachlan said. “One demonstration, in Edinburgh, made the mistake of marching past the local shipyards in the Forth; they’re very hot on the war there as it’s bringing in shipping contracts. The ensuing riot saw the demonstrators in full retreat. The BBC is being supportive; some of the other news stations have adopted a cautious support policy.”

“Barton may have to leave us,” Hanover predicted. “There are a lot of MPs out there who want to move against nuclear war.”

“We’ve used one warhead,” McLachlan said. “One warhead, against an isolated target in Romania.”

“The first official nuclear strike since 1945,” Hanover said. “Which is kind of weird, when you think about it.”

McLachlan smiled. “I suppose that now we have the Americans, and we’ve sunk the Japanese Navy, we can start making plans to bring the war to a close.”

“War is peace,” Hanover said. “Don’t forget that.”

**Undisclosed Location**  
**Berlin, Germany**  
**5<sup>th</sup> October 1940**

The images of dead and dying Romanian children made Stewart want to retch. She staggered from the room, followed by Roth, and threw up in the toilet. Himmler felt sink himself; the pictures had been carefully faked from the images of Hiroshima, but they were all-too-real.



He waited while Roth took Stewart back to her room, and then returned to Himmler's office. The tall SS officer didn't look flustered; he seemed to understand the power of the weapon he was helping to build. Himmler knew that he hadn't mentioned that to his girlfriend; even a trusted SS officer would disappear if he did that.

"I trust that she is convinced?" Himmler asked. "It would be a shame to waste all that effort."

Roth nodded grimly. One particularly clever *Einsatzgruppen*, under the personal command of Reinhard Heydrich, had faked the scene. An entire village had been slaughtered for the effect; the images were being sent all over the world.

"I believe so," he said finally. Himmler nodded; Heydrich might well have had traces of Jewish blood, but he was too useful to discard or send to the death camps. "If she sends those images back to Britain, it will have an effect on their public."

Himmler shrugged. It struck him as stupid; even Churchill would not have been deterred by such effects. If he'd possessed the super-bomb, he would have used it; Berlin and Moscow would have vanished in balls of fire.

"I suppose that there is no doubt that it was a *kern* bomb," he said finally. "The professors are convinced?"

"I have refused to allow them to visit the site," Roth said. "Secrecy is all the more important now; the British will not hesitate to use a second bomb on the nuclear project if they suspect its location. For the moment, teams of Jews and Poles are working on clearing the site, according to the instructions in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*."

Himmler chuckled. Even Professor Horton had been unable to explain why the long-unborn *Encyclopaedia Britannica* authors had seen fit to include such information, even if the CDs did hold thousands of gigabytes of data. The same amount of data, focused on the war, could have forced German development forward faster than the British would have found comfortable.

"Some of them are suffering," Roth admitted. "Still, there are plenty more where they came from. For the moment, we've blamed the entire blast on a lucky missile hit on a tank full of fuel."

Himmler shrugged. "I have to make suggestions to the *Fuhrer*," he said. "I suspect that we're going to have to tighten our belts a bit."

\*\*\*

"They must be punished for this attack on our soil," Hitler thundered, ignoring the fact that Ploesti was on Romanian soil. "We need to make them regret the use of the hell-weapons!"

Speer coughed. "Before it was...destroyed, Ploesti supplied nearly forty percent of our oil supplies," he said. "For the foreseeable future, we will be dependent upon supplies from Soviet Russia, which leaves us with something of a problem."

Hitler swore violently. “*Gott in Himmel*,” he bellowed. “Stalin will be at our throats!”

“That is quite possible,” Speer acknowledged, as soon as Hitler had calmed down. “For the moment, they are engaged in the Middle East, but they are quite capable of fighting both us and the British at the same time.”

Himmler coughed. “Then we need to take the resources from them,” he said calmly.

“At the moment,” *General der Infanterie* Hoth said, “our armies are not prepared for such a campaign.”

“Then we will play for time,” Hitler said. Adversity, as always, forced his mind to work harder. “How long will it take to prepare the armies?”

“Around six months, if we’re lucky,” Hoth said. “*Mein Fuhrer*, we will be gambling everything on success.”

“Then we will continue to support the Russians in the Middle East, for the moment,” Hitler said. “Gaining control of the oil wells near Turkey would certainly help our problems...and we certainly don’t want Stalin to get to them first.”

The argument ran long into the night, discussing the war, the future, and the American declaration of war. Finally, Hitler was convinced to agree to a particular war plan, reluctantly. The council agreed to the plan – knowing that they had no choice.

## **HIMS *Yamato***

### **Japan**

**5<sup>th</sup> October 1940**

Admiral Yamamoto looked up at the sword, hanging from the wall, and knew that he didn’t dare use it. Minoru Genda and Takeo Kurita had already taken their own lives; the humiliation of knowing that only the British Admiral’s reluctance to slaughter thousands more Japanese had saved some of the fleet had led both of them to their deaths.

*Damn you both for dying when I needed you*, Yamamoto thought angrily. He wanted to die himself, knowing that if he did end his own life, he would be handing the government over to the militarists. The defeat, and the loss of thousands of lives, had cost the Navy a great deal of its influence, even with the conquest of the Dutch East Indies nearly completed. Talking the Army out of attacking the Philippines, in response to Hitler’s demand that they join the war against America, had been a very near failure; he’d finally refused to transport the army units across the sea.

“The battle was lost, then?” Ambassador Yurina said. Yamamoto glared at her, feeling a complex mixture of hatred and affection. “They destroyed the fleet.”

“The battle was a strategic victory,” Yamamoto lied, and heard her chuckle. It was a deep throaty sound, nothing like the quiet giggles of court girls. “Yes, we took a pounding, as you put it, and...”

“How many carriers were sunk?” Yurina asked. “How many battleships?”

“Four of each,” Yamamoto said grimly. The losses had been appalling; the four most powerful carriers in the world had been smashed like flies. Still, they’d had one piece of good news; it clearly took more than one torpedo hit to sink a battleship. “Ambassador, we have awakened a sleeping giant.”

“As long as the Americans don’t declare war, you might have a chance at winning a draw,” Yurina said. Yamamoto didn’t believe her; she’d preached inevitable defeat before. “Still, you should sue for peace.”

Yamamoto lowered his head, wishing that he could get drunk on *sake* and forget about the world. “They won’t,” he said. “They look at the victories in the Dutch East Indies and the successes in Burma, and they ignore the defeats, even though both defeats are of greater significance than the victory.”

He closed his eyes and felt hands falling on his shoulder. Yurina dug her hands in, massaging her shoulders. Yamamoto thought once of his wife, way back in the family home, and gave himself up to her caresses.

\*\*\*

Yamamoto slept on the stateroom bed, an older man watched over by a younger woman. Yurina sighed; even the Japan of 2015 had often required that ambitious women use their bodies for advantage, and she knew how to do it. Even when she’d passed into heights beyond which her sex no longer mattered, she’d kept up her skills; she’d used all of them in the last hour.

Yamamoto hadn’t been *bad*, not in the sense of an older man unable to get it up, like some of the men she’d had to sleep with. His guilt over betraying his wife had been charming; she’d almost cried herself. Eventually, like most men who were suddenly exposed to the joys of an unashamed woman, he’d given himself up to her, but he felt guilt.

*Why did I never get anyone like that?* She asked herself, or perhaps God, as she watched him sleep. Men were so predictable; show them some flesh and give them what they wanted, and they would do anything for you.

She shook her head. She had no choice, but to play the cards she had – for Japan’s future lay in her hands. If she failed, Japan would be burned to the ground, again.

**The White House**  
**Washington DC, USA**  
**5<sup>th</sup> October 1940**

“A pretty impressive video of a weapon,” President Roosevelt said, as the film of the destruction of the German oil wells concluded. “How long until we can develop such weapons for ourselves?”

“At least two years, Mr President,” General Groves said. He was a stout heavysset man, with an air of a bulldog. Ambassador King was impressed; Groves hadn’t reacted at all to his colour. “Although we have the plans of...my counterpart’s original work, building the

equipment is going to take time, the more so because we have had to...ah, remove a number of key scientists.”

Roosevelt nodded. “I can’t think why they would not turn the weapons on the Germans directly,” he said. “How many do they have?”

“Mr President, don’t start a nuclear arms race,” King said grimly. “They’re concerned about blasting Germany off the map, literally. I cannot explain how the anti-nuclear feelings got into modern society, but they did. Everyone is convinced that using nukes will cause the end of the world.”

Groves frowned. “It’s a weapon,” he said. “What’s the point of building a weapon that we will not use?”

Roosevelt shook his head. “Our priority is to develop our own, for possible use against the Germans, the Japanese or the Russians. General, I want private updates on progress, whatever happens.”

“Yes, Mr President,” Groves said, and left the room.

“So, Ambassador, we are at war,” Roosevelt said, as soon as they were alone. “Do you think that the Japanese will jump on us?”

King, somewhat regretfully, shook his head. “After the British wasted a chunk of their fleet?” He asked. Roosevelt, who knew something about the sea, scowled. “They still, in theory, have the ability to hit the Philippines, but Macarthur is digging in and the longer they wait, the stronger we get.”

Roosevelt scowled. “Between you and me, we have to enter the war,” he said. “Preferably before Macarthur gets himself shot in the back or something. We can’t keep pouring troops in now we’re going to be committed in Europe, but we can keep some elements of the fleet at Pearl, on constant alert. Perhaps the Japanese will save us the trouble of declaring war on them. If we keep sending supplies to China...”

“A waste of time,” King said softly. “Mr President, both sides in the morass of Chinese politics are hopeless. The Communists will give the nation to Stalin, given half the chance, particularly since Mao snuffed it. Those sudden outbreaks of disease are only helping the Japanese.”

“I wonder if that was Uncle Joe,” Roosevelt said. “Ever since the Russians and the Japanese ended up in bed together, they’ve been sharing information – perhaps even dividing China between them. The Soviets have quite an advanced biological weapons program, according to the future knowledge.”

“They have every interest in doing just that,” King said. “Stalin is systematically eradicating threats to the Soviet Union, from Afghanistan to the Poles. He’s thinking long-term, and we can hardly focus on defeating Germany. The war is a long way from over, Mr President.”

**Country Hospital  
London, United Kingdom**

**5<sup>th</sup> October 1940**

Smith opened his eyes. His mind felt terrible, lying in bed, with some of his family watching TV while watching him. He gasped, coughing, and a nurse was by his side at once, passing him a glass of water and helping him to sip it down.

“Don’t you worry, Prime Minister,” she said. Her voice was warm and bouncy; Smith hated it at first hearing. “You’ll be up and about in no time.”

Smith coughed. “What happened to me?” He asked, through coughs. “I dreamt that we were back in the Second World War and...”

The nurse’s eyes, dark brown in a brown face, gazed down at him. “It wasn’t a dream, sir,” she said. “You had a heart attack after the Germans bombed Dover. We brought you here and kept you under while we tried to perform some repairs.”

Smith felt his chest hurt. “How long?”

“Three months,” the nurse said. His grandson appeared at the side of the bed. “A lot has happened since you left. Charles Hanover became Prime Minister, and he’s done a good job.”

“That’s right,” the grandson said, ignoring all the nurse’s attempts to shut him up. His voice bubbled with enthusiasm. “We’ve sunk a Japanese fleet, we’ve taken North Africa, the Russians have invaded the Middle East – and we nuked Germany!”

Smith felt his chest tighten again. The instruments started to bleep alarmingly. “Get the hell out of here,” the nurse snapped, hitting the emergency button. Smith felt his vision darken; with the last of his strength he tried to gasp out words. It was hard to say anything; he could hardly breathe.

“I can’t hear you, honey,” the nurse said. “Don’t try to speak.”

Smith ignored her. “Tell Hanover,” he said, through mounting pain. His voice was breaking; it hurt to speak. “Tell him...we are both damned.”

## Epilogue

### Nr New York America, USA

The factory was brand spanking new, a masterpiece of British technology and American labour. Jim Oliver, now designated Bracken's representative in the United States, studied the factory with interest. Now that America had finally declared war on Germany, orders for the new tanks and computers were pouring in. The Americans didn't care that the most important components were made in Britain; they just wanted as much as they could.

Oliver smiled to himself. The factory was equal opportunity; blacks and whites mingled in relative peace and harmony. The future Ambassador to the United Kingdom had insisted on it, as part of the agreement to supply the new tanks to the American Army, and Oliver had agreed. Security around the factory was tight, both through some British muscle and some locally recruited men. Even if the Ku Klux Klan had decided to make its displeasure known – another black church had been burned to the ground only last week – Oliver was confident that they could be beaten off. *This* era hadn't invented the super-lawyer yet; there would be no complaints if they shot Klansmen to death on their own property.

The ripples of the Transition were still spreading, he knew, and he was riding the waves. It was amazing how many Americans were prepared to buy older computers, such as the utterly-primitive BBC machines from 1986, and many British companies were becoming rich by flooding them over to America. The Bracken Consortium was in the lead; buying old mobile phones and transporting them to America.

He chuckled to himself as he left the room, heading for his private office. Smuggling was bringing in even more money; funds that government auditors would never know existed. The Government would get a great deal of money out of the Consortium, enough to fund the purchase of coal and other equipment from the Americans, but there would be plenty left over for him. Hoover had been delighted at the chance to purchase some electronic surveillance equipment; the FBI was very fond of him at the moment.

And, of course, there was the knowledge of the future. His people were meeting famous actors, singers, writers and many others, offering to fund them in exchange for a share of the profits. Many of the younger ones had no idea that they were earmarked for a percentage of the profits from work they had yet to produce; unscrupulous directors and producers had unaccountably failed to inform them of their sudden riches.

His mobile phone buzzed. His technicians had rigged up a private network for New York, one allowing his people to avoid using the British-supplied network that was covering the entire United States. So far, no one even had the technology to look; he suspected that MI6 had rigged up their own network as well. Already, he was reaching across the country, building up influence in the right – and wrong – places.

"Yes, Cora?" He asked. Cora was a young Negro girl – an African-American, in the parlance of politically correct 2015 America – whom he'd hired as a general secretary. She was smart, clever, determined to better herself – and easy on the eye as well.

“Sir, there is a man called Roth here to see you,” Cora said, and Oliver felt his blood run cold. “Shall I show him in?”

“Please, do,” Oliver said, drawing on the reflexes of a lifetime avoiding the law to hide his sudden fear. “Show him in, then cancel my next appointment.”

Cora opened the door. Her dusky brown skin contrasted sharply with Roth’s blonde hair. It was Roth, no doubt about it, and Oliver’s mind turned to the hidden pistol in his desk. He nodded politely to Cora and waved her out, before activating the electronic dampeners. If Roth wanted to record the conversation, he would have to work at it.

“You’ve done well for yourself,” Roth observed, as he took a seat without bothering to ask permission. “I must admit...from smuggler to businessman, you’ve made a hell of a jump.”

“Thank you,” Oliver said. “I believe that I paid you for my release...”

“Ah, but you never gave us anything really useful,” Roth said. “You showed us how to make V1s, and helped us to build some prototype jets, but nothing *too* treacherous, eh?”

Oliver ignored the sally. “What are you doing here?” He snapped. “You might have noticed that your country is at war with this country!”

Roth shrugged expressively, smiling. Oliver could have sworn he saw fangs. “Oh, you know Americans,” he said. “There is no security here at all; your factory is the only place in which I felt secure. Everyone obsessively minds their own business, as if it were a crime to consider security important. And, this Hoover, the closet homosexual...imagine the response if scum like that took on the duties of protecting the *Reich*.”

He smiled wryly. “For your information, I am here as part of a delegation from Sweden,” he said. “The Swedes are quite desperate to avoid...being invited to join the Workers Paradise, and as your people are too far away – and in any case failed to help Finland – they’re cuddling up to us. Sucking our cocks, I believe you would put it.”

“You’ve been spending time with one of us,” Oliver said. “Which one was it?”

“None of the people we captured,” Roth said. “You’ll be pleased to know that Professor Horton’s wife is with child.”

Oliver shrugged. “I never knew the guy,” he said. “So, what do you want?”

Roth smiled. “It’s quite simple,” he said. “We want you to spy for us.”

Oliver shook his head. “No,” he said. “I have work to do here.”

“For your criminal masters?” Roth enquired. “My dear Jim, what would happen if we were to...reveal your actions to your own people? I believe they still hang people for treason, don’t they?”

Oliver felt his face go white. “Sometimes,” he acknowledged.

“You have nothing to bargain with,” Roth said. “I don’t think that revealing the link between our embassy in Ireland and Spain – which is now one of our allies – will benefit you in any way at all. They doubtless already know about it. What else can you tell them?”

“I have money,” Oliver said. “You could live the high life here...”

Roth slammed a hand down on the table. “This is not about money,” he said. “This is about the life or death of the *Reich*. You will cooperate, or you will be exposed.”

“I could call the FBI now,” Oliver said.

“And then they’ll take you into custody,” Roth said dryly. “Please” – clearly noticing Oliver’s hand moving towards a hidden weapon – “don’t try to kill me here. If I don’t come back, my friends will be *quite* happy to tell the British Government everything from a safe distance. Of course, there will be no such thing as a safe distance for you.”

Oliver picked up a bottle of whisky and poured himself a glass. “I suppose I have no choice,” he said, his mind rapidly running through possibilities and coming up a blank. “What do you want me to find out?”

“Why, everything,” Roth said. He passed over a folder. “I imagine that you can supply us with more CDs, or even some more...direct method of transmitting information,” he said. “Your nation’s air defences, your technology, atomic science...everything.”

He grinned. “Welcome to a life of service for the *Reich*,” he said.

**To Be Continued...**



## Appendix One: Britain, Post-Transition

The discovery that all of Britain was back in 1940 shocked the government and the people, the more so because of the discovery of a German aircraft appearing over Britain. (It was later theorised that the aircraft had been caught up in the temporal shift – examination of German documents revealed that no aircraft had been probing Britain that night.) Fortunately, the British Government was quickly able to establish the truth of the matter, and to take command using Defence of the Realm Act powers, which ironically dated from 1940 and before.

Food rationing, under a series of very tight controls, was instituted at once, using the social security network as a backbone. While this proved to be unpopular in many of the middle and upper class regions, it was very popular with the poor, many of whom hadn't received so much food before. (Many of those who might have caused trouble were swept up into the army before July was out). Although a thriving black market sprang up, it was limited by the economic shambles and the sudden loss of most of the Internet, which had been partly based in 2015 America. While the British possessed a capable Internet infrastructure, rebuilding the Internet over Britain took time and effort.

There was surprisingly little panic, mainly confined to regions that would have faced a German invasion and *were* bombed by German aircraft during the Battle of Britain. What panic there was appeared among tourists – including one caused by a rumour that all Germans would be returned to Germany to face Hitler – and members of the ethnic communities, who had been suddenly cut off from their families on the other side of the world. They rioted in places; riots that were crushed with considerable ruthlessness. (Post-September, much of the Muslim population of the UK would be invited/encouraged to move to the Republic of Arabia). On a lesser scale, Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis attempted to influence the new provisional government in India – several thousand would take up permanent residence there later.

The government acted quickly to freeze the growing economic crash, particularly in companies that were based in the United States, before thousands of people were forced suddenly out of work. Despite claims of growing socialism, all changes in work status were frozen by governmental decree in July, forcing companies to continue paying their workers, which (intentionally) forced them to adapt to the post-Transition world. Several American and Japanese factories, subsidies placed in the UK to enter the EU trading area, quietly declared themselves independent of their parent companies and took possession of their own property. This was aided by the beginnings of the war and the demand for new equipment.

War production, never a high priority since 1982, was kick-started by the Transition. British aerospace companies were ordered to begin producing missiles and aircraft, finally beginning mass-production of ASRAAM missiles and aircraft of various types. Although the British shipbuilding industry was moribund, production of ASW craft was given a high priority, along with transports for food from Ireland and America. Expansion of oil tankers and other ships into mini-aircraft carriers was also pushed forward, as the much-delayed super-carriers had not been on Britain at the time of the Transition.

In effect, the economy was damaged, but a mixture of private initiative and government spending at the right time prevented total economic collapse. Once communications with the British Empire and the rest of the world were opened up, the British found themselves in a

position to develop powerful trading networks – assuming that they survived the war with Hitler.

**Contemporary Personnel:** Once contact with the remainder of the British Empire (no longer a going concern in 2015) was established, the British discovered that they were responsible for nearly one hundred thousand people who had been away from Britain at the time of the Transition, and expected to be allowed back into Britain. Matters were not helped by the fact that many of them possessed racial views that lead to conflict; the first attempts to resettle Contemporary personnel was not a great success. The existence of future ‘twins’ (see below) meant that there was no way that the problem could be swept under the carpet, although some figures in the government wanted to do so. In effect, the new (2010) anti-immigration laws were being applied to people who *were* British citizens, and local authorities were not keen on inviting them home.

As a temporary solution, the British Government placed the fighting forces on the army payroll, and worked hard to retrain them with the latest fighting technology. Contemporary forces were assimilated into the army, with seniority recognised up to battalion level and then on a case-by-case basis, and reequipped as equipment became available. Although Contemporary forces were not capable of keeping up with the 2015 Regulars, they provided much-needed stiffening power for the battles in Australia and North Africa. They also served as occupying forces for Algeria, although they were withdrawn once the Provisional Government was ready to take over.

In the longer-term, the British government encouraged the immigration of Contemporary forces to South Africa, where they were warmly welcomed, and Australia. The Australian Government, in particular, offered citizenship to any Contemporary who fought in the defence forces that were being built up before the Pacific War, an offer that was warmly accepted by thousands.

(A small number who had relatives (occasionally duplicates) were sponsored into Britain by them and granted citizenship. While this had many amusing consequences, they remain outside the scope of this article.)

The most notorious case, that of the former King Edward, made headlines in late 1940. Edward (and Wallis) had heard about the more tolerant judgement of his marriage and believed that he had a right to the Throne. Despite some support from Contemporary aristocrats (those that had survived the Transition), as King Charles was not highly regarded even by 2015 people, Parliament quickly ruled against him. Despite this, he quickly styled himself King of Contemporary Britain and returned to the Bahamas.

**Contemporary Ships and Equipment:** A considerable amount of Contemporary warships (five battleships, one battlecruiser, two carriers and numerous smaller ships) had also remained behind, as had a considerable amount of war material. Almost all of the material was sent to Australia or India as the crisis in the Pacific built, but almost all of the warships were retained.

Modification began almost at once, expanding the capability of the former Mediterranean Fleet (Cunningham) and Force H (Somerville). Although the carrier *Ark Royal I* (duplicate names were referred to as I and II) possessed no useful aircraft, she could be adapted to carry Harriers fairly easily, as well as a basic radar/sonar system. Almost all of the warships were

fitted with commercial-grade radar sets, as well as sonar, and equipped with mass produced machine guns for close-in antiaircraft work. While plans were put forward to equip them with Metalstorm units, this was never completed until after the Mediterranean War (round one) was concluded.

Ironically, Contemporary units managed to survive the Mediterranean War far better than modern units, being armed and armoured to stand up to German air attacks. With the exception of a handful of submarines and the aircraft based in North Africa, the brunt of the Mediterranean War fell upon Contemporary units, which mended the rift between the two sides of the Royal Navy.

## Appendix Two: German Responses to the Transition, 1940

The Germans were the first 1940 state to realise what had happened, through the combination of a 747 jet and passengers managing a crash-landing in France and a number of clashes between the modern RAF and the *Luffwaffe*. The supremely adaptable Herman Roth, an SS officer who passed outside the notice of history, understood some of the implications of the Transition before anyone higher up in the Nazi hierarchy, fast enough to ensure that the RAF's strike on the crashed jet failed to do more than destroy the jet itself. The jet had been stripped of everything that might be useful; the details of the jet's construction – common equipment in 2015 – provided the German aircraft engineers with useful tips.

Having sorted out the information and equipment that they possessed – including information sent to them via an agent in Britain – the Germans began a program to avoid repeating the same mistakes as the last time World War Two was fought, aided by a history professor who was unlucky enough to fall into German hands along with his family. In addition, German ranks were ruthlessly purged – with a handful of exceptions – of men who would later betray Hitler. Only Rommel and Himmler, for different reasons, escaped imprisonment or execution.

The immediate German response was to diversify their industry and move at once to a 'guns and guns' economy, particularly in the wake of the first British cruise missile attacks. Production of the Panzer IV, and then later the modified Panzer V (which has features in common with both the Panther and King Tiger of OTL) was standardised as quickly as possible, removing the need for superlatively-trained workmen. German propeller fighters, including ME-109s, were also mass-produced, along with a new pilot-training program. Considerable resources were also poured on a 'semi-V1' cruise missile, but until 1941 the V1s remained very unreliable, showing a 30% launch failure rate and only 5% impact rate. Until 1941, in addition, the V1s were effectively being fired blindly at Britain; civilian airports were targeted, military airfields were hardly targeted. (This was later discovered to be because of the 2015 airfields not having existed in OTL 1940; the Germans launched at 1940 locations.)

The Germans did attempt to mass-produce a modified ME-262, a jet fighter, but apart from a few prototypes they were unsuccessful. The original design had been improved by hobbyists over the years, but it still required more materials than Germany – even with access to Soviet supplies – could spare. A handful of fighters were produced for special missions, but the bugs were never fully worked out.

Finally, despite considerable protest the *Kriegsmarine* abandoned any surface program after most of the fleet was destroyed with ease. Production was concentrated on u-boats, attempting to minimise the sound emissions, but the electric-powered ships were never a match for modern submarines from 2015. Once the sonar barrier was established, only a couple of very lucky u-boats were able to make it into the Atlantic. As priorities changed, the Germans abandoned naval programs almost completely.

Longer-term, the Germans concentrated on nuclear, biological and rocket weapons, using the information they had discovered onboard the 747 to force their own programs forward. Jewish scientists were recruited (this truth was kept from Hitler) into the project and used to turn the details in the recovered information into reality. Again, concentration was focused on turning the project into an engineering challenge, rather than developing a whole new

field, and progress was steady. The most optimistic estimate placed the German K-Bomb (*Kern Bomb*) in 1942.

Although the RAF attempted to damage the German economy, the strikes were never as effective as they might have been, largely due to domestic political concerns. For example, dams and slave labour camps were never struck, nor were factories plastered with the level of firepower required to seriously degrade them for longer than a few days. In essence, the Germans managed miracles of short-term production, but at the cost of limited long-term success.

Politically, particularly since North Africa fell to British forces, Hitler worked to pull Italy, Spain and Vichy France into the Tripartite Pact. Although a semblance of independence was permitted, all control remained firmly in German hands, working towards a final German victory. Ironically, this helped the Italian economy; many of the bureaucrats who had strangled it were summarily dismissed or shot by German planners. One particular benefit from this was the development of advanced radar; an Italian had invented the best radar set in 1940 and this was placed into mass production at once.

On the global stage, the alliance with Japan was confirmed and a new alliance was formed with Stalin, who was aware of the judgement of history. Although all sides saw this as a temporary expedient, this new Tripartite Pact managed to work together in reasonable harmony. Cooperation, however, was hampered; several of the best Russian generals of the Second World War were fingered as later traitors by the Germans, weakening the Soviets in the long run.

### Appendix Three: Soviet Responses to the Transition, 1940

It was not until nearly two weeks after the Transition that Stalin realised that something had happened, and only then through the Germans and French Communist sources in France. (Later, Soviet spies in the United States would also provide a stream of data, although many had been removed or isolated.)

Hitler's flunky, Ribbentrop, approached the Soviets soon afterwards, offering an alliance against the future. Although Stalin was eager to accept – historically the Soviets *had* attempted to join the Tripartite Pact – joy turned to alarm when they read the German computer files on the Second World War. Although Stalin believed the German claim that the Russo-German war had been caused by Allied manipulation, the Soviets started a very careful defence program.

The strategic decision to concentrate on the Stalin Line, a line of defences in pre-1939 territory, doubtless made the task of defending the USSR easier. The joint – and very private – agreement with the Germans to literally exterminate the Poles was executed by the NKVD, which had been tripled in size following the discovery of those who would later betray Stalin. Units from the southern SSRs and Siberia conducted most of the 'slash-and-burn' missions, units of doubtful loyalty that were considered expandable. Polish resistance was brutal, but succumbed to overwhelming firepower.

In addition, a political decision was made to settle the tensions in the Far East, following the Nomonhan Conflict. The USSR gave up some ground to Japan; Stalin had concluded that it could be recovered when they were ready, and Soviet support for the Chinese – communist or nationalist – was terminated.

Although a massive program into scientific research was forced forward, the USSR lacked the priceless technical data the Germans had amassed, and remained behind on atomic power as well as jet engines and other related areas. The Germans shared some information, mainly concerning submarines and other areas that didn't threaten the *Reich*, but it wasn't always trustworthy. Production-wise, the Soviets forced-forward production of T-34s (and finished the JS-1 design), and – ironically – a knock-off version of an AK-47 that had been captured in the Dutch East Indies by the Japanese and passed on to the Soviets as part of an exchange deal.

One area in which the Soviets had an unsurpassed advantage was in the field of biological weapons. The process was forced forward as fast as it could – 'accidents' were covered up despite some exaggerated fears of accidentally exterminating the Russian people – and these were field-tested in Afghanistan in the hopes that the diseases would spread into India. The Soviets also worked on delivery systems, but were forced to rely on the Typhoid Mary principle until rocket systems were ready.

Finally, and with the agreement of the Germans, the Soviets acted to remove foreign threats to themselves. Finland was invaded (with German permission) and the population crushed. Despite the brutality of the Soviet invasion, resistance was fierce and remained in existence for years afterwards. Afghanistan was also invaded on a trumped-up pretext, using programs designed to exterminate the population. This was conducted so well, including biological weapons, that the population was reduced significantly, although in some cases the diseases

spread to Soviet troops. As part of long-term geopolitical desires, Iran was invaded, which brought Stalin into confrontation with British forces.

If the Shah had believed in the threat, it might have been possible for the British to mount a defence of Iran. As it was, the Soviet advance was almost unchallenged – the Iranian equipment was badly outdated – and continued until they outran their own logistics. RAF air attacks made a bad situation worse, but the Soviets were always able to move forward, if only at a crawl. Iranian resistance became better coordinated as the Soviets closed in on Tehran, but the flight of the Shah made further resistance seem hopeless. The Turkish declaration of semi-belligerency, a curious legal fiction, unravelled the entire British posture, therefore allowing Stalin's men to complete their work.

It is curious to note that Stalin never declared war on Britain, despite the clear state of war. Stalin never really understood the forces driving the 2015 Britain, nor that they had no desire to bargain with him, as they were aware of his future broken promises. Despite his alliance with Nazi Germany, nemesis was on the cards...

## Appendix Four: Japanese Responses to the Transition, 1940

Of the three major Axis powers, the Japanese were in the worst position, although they were never able – with the exception of Admiral Yamamoto and some of his clique – to appreciate the sheer nightmarish position they faced. Their limited recourses, limited materials and a vast overconfidence only served to harm the Japanese position further. Of what seemed like impressive victories in the Pacific, only one of them – the conquest of the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) – was strategic in its nature.

Politically, the Japanese faced a seriously difficult choice. Their position was very dangerous; they dared not show weakness in the Far East for fear of tempting Stalin, while they needed to end the China War and they were dependent on imports from the British and Dutch possessions in the Pacific. (Indeed, the Japanese planned an invasion of the British possessions that would have been launched along with Sealion.) In effect, as the American position hardened when the news of the future became public, the Japanese discovered that they had three choices.

1. Withdraw from China and effectively demilitarise, although there would be some room for negotiation. This would have the effect of weakening Japan, and of course there was no guarantee that the Americans wouldn't simply insist on something else, now that they had discovered that blackmail worked. The Japanese might have been willing to step down operations in China – which would have had some support from the Army – but they would not, could not, surrender.
2. Use their military power to threaten the Dutch and British into trading with them anyway, regardless of the American position. While this was supported by some elements of the Navy, this had the problem – as North Africa had revealed – that the 2015 Britain was so powerful that failing to hold a vast area of the Pacific would only make their doom come quicker. In effect, the blackmail would have only been good for a year at most – and then the British would slap them down.
3. War. Snatch the British and Dutch territories that would serve as bases for any counterattack, and just incidentally were rich in the resources that Japan needed, and make a counterattack impossible. Like Option 2, it was one that had to be used *quickly*, before the British position became invincible.

Japanese politics became a great deal more violent as the effects of the Transition rolled on. (The biological attack on China and the occupation of French Indochina took place at this point.) Eventually, the Militarists gained dominance, largely because powerful elements within the Navy and the Bureaucracy might have been willing to negotiate, they wanted something in return; mainly occupation of the Dutch East Indies to prevent later American/British 'renegotiation' of the agreement. The Americans were unwilling to compromise for domestic political reasons.

At this point, war became inevitable. The Japanese prepared for war with thoroughness and determination, as well as doing what they could to offset the British technical advances. The eleven free divisions of the army were prepared for their missions, which included the seizing of Singapore and the occupation of the Dutch East Indies. While some elements wanted to include the Americans in the target list, they were shouted down; America in the war would guarantee their defeat. One solution would later become a problem; aware that their radio transmissions would be intercepted with ease, the Japanese gave considerable authority to their local commanders. This would come back to haunt them later.



The Japanese attempted to produce biological weapons and atomic weapons, as well as expanding their gas production. In biological weapons, they were partly successful, weakening Chinese resistance with various diseases that killed thousands of Chinese, before spreading west and south. Although strict sanitation was enforced on the Japanese – and ironically duplicated by the Chinese Communists – some unpleasant diseases spread to the Japanese soldiers, mainly through the Chinese women who had been forced to serve as sex slaves.

Despite heroic attempts, the Japanese attempt to produce a nuclear warhead was doomed to failure from the start. Japan understood some of the theory behind atomic science, but lacked the resources to test them, as well as the equipment to build the systems they would need to create a reactor, let alone build and deploy a bomb. While the Germans provided them with considerable theoretical data, they were unwilling to risk shipping the equipment – what little the Germans themselves had – through the guarded North Sea, or over Russia.

If that problem wasn't bad enough, there was a major disagreement between the Army and Navy over the project and its goals. While both sides now *knew* that a bomb was possible, they disagreed over both the ultimate use of the bomb, the politics involved (the Navy believed that the British would respond with overwhelming power and the Army believed that they would hold off) and of the other purposes of atomic power. In effect, what small chance the Japanese had to develop a bomb was sunk by the disagreement between the two services – which kept some of the best atomic scientists in Japan from working together.

The best that could be said of the Japanese war effort is that they went bravely to a defeat that only the most fanatical believed to be avoidable. Although the Japanese were used to limited logistics, and were striking against weak garrisons for the main part, they were not able to defeat the crack troops involved in Singapore, nor were they able to overrun the Dutch East Indies as fast as they had expected. The only major sea battle of 1940, the Battle of the Indian Ocean, was a near-complete defeat; ironically, the only thing that saved the remains of the fleet that had engaged the British ships was a mutual reluctance to press the battle to the limit. The Japanese inability to regard their own position dispassionately – and to recognise the real strength of their foe – made it impossible for the Japanese to adapt before all hell broke loose.

## **Dear Reader**

Dear Reader

Over the years, I have written many – many – stories, some of which I am posting for free here. Please feel free to read them – yes, they're free <wink>. However, I wouldn't say no if you want to tip me...<bigger wink>

This is basically a shameless attempt to win fans. I believe that things like public libraries – and the Baen Free Library – are the greatest ideas in publishing history, because they give readers a free taste of an author without forcing them to pay. If you like these books, please give my Kindle books a shot. And I will give copies for free in exchange for reviews.

More practically, I am releasing these under a creative commons licence. What that means:

- 1) You are free to share these books with anyone you like, provided you don't change the document at all or profit from the distribution.
- 2) You may print off copies of the book for personal use, but you may not profit from doing so.
- 3) You may not change the text of the work in any way, or imply that you wrote the book, or anything of that nature.
- 4) You can write fan fictions set in these universes (if anyone wants to) provided that you do not attach them to this work or imply they are my work. In addition, by writing a fanfic that uses these characters, background information, magic systems, technology, or anything that is related to this work in any way, you waive all rights to that work. (In other words, you can't write a SECOND CHANCE fanfic, then sue me for compensation if I happen to write something similar in a sequel.) It's every author's nightmare to get sued for writing in their own worlds.
- 5) The above also holds for any feedback or suggestions you give me regarding this work on my forums. By offering feedback, you waive all rights to those suggestions and waive all rights to compensation for your help. I love to get feedback, and it's one of the reasons why I am doing this. However, don't sue me if I actually decide to take some of your suggestions.

And with that said...

Have fun! And please let me know what you think.

There will be other books posted. Watch my blog for updates!

Christopher Nuttall, Kota Kinabalu, 2012