



Chapter 6 Berlin

Of course Heydrich did not send Ernst straight to Admiral Canaris. Canaris, as the head of the *Abwehr*, the military intelligence unit, was far too canny to accept unknown personnel. Instead he was provided as a routine assignment of personnel to Colonel Oster, Canaris's chief of staff. Oster was a close friend of the Admiral's, and was also under suspicion. Ernst was given the identity of Lieutenant Osterecht, who was a real man but who seemed to have been lost in some distant action; Ernst was in effect taking over the man's career, assuming verifiable credentials. If the real Osterecht ever turned up alive or dead, Heydrich would try to conceal the information until Ernst could be withdrawn. Thus he traded his black SS uniform for the gray Wehrmacht uniform.

The *Abwehr* offices were in a shabby apartment house beside Berlin's Landwehr Canal. The building was officially designated 72-76 Tirpitz-Ufer, but it was nicknamed the "Fuchsbau"--the Fox's Den--because of its labyrinthine passages, innumerable doors and gloomy offices. The *Abwehr* offices were on the third floor of Fox's Den, and were shielded from unwanted visitors by a folding metal grille.

Admiral Canaris's office was at the end of the passage and had a small outer office maintained by his serious secretary Wera Schwarte. Oster's office was down the hall, with his assistant, the civilian Dohnanyi adjacent. Ernst was given a quick tour upon his arrival, meeting the Admiral only to shake hands, before being shunted down to what seemed like the smallest and gloomiest of the available chambers where he would be working.

Ernst had of course done his homework, and knew Oster's background. The man had been decorated for gallantry several times during The War, and was a hero. But he was also temperamental, volatile, arrogant and cynical. It was said that Canaris believed that Oster's exterior concealed a serious-minded man who subscribed to a simple and straightforward code of soldierly and Christian conduct. But others considered him to be a superficial careerist, irresponsible, careless, brash and peremptory, who would not last a moment without the Admiral's support. He seemed to be obsessed with women and horses, with an insatiable appetite for new varieties of each. His womanizing had led to the end of his army career in 1932; only Canaris's intercession had enabled him to return to the service in 1937 as an *Abwehr* officer.

But it was not Ernst's business to remark on any of this. It was his business to do honestly and well anything that he was assigned to do, and to make mental but no other note of whatever he learned about the ultimate loyalty of those with whom he worked. He was a little fish in an alcove of a pond which was not enormous. At a later date he would report what was relevant to Heydrich, his only concern being accuracy.

His actual assignment was in *Abteilung* II, the division of the *Abwehr* concerned with Sabotage, Subversions and Special Duties. Within this he was in Section II, under Lieutenant Colonel Erwin Lahousen, an Austrian who had joined the *Abwehr* after the Anschluss.

Lahousen was glad to see him. "We have a lot to do, and too few competent people." He lifted a brow at Ernst. "You are competent?"

Ernst spread his hands. "I hope so. I have not before done precisely this type of work, but am a quick learner. I'm still not sure why--"



"We did put out a requisition. So your training is not sabotage? That does not necessarily reflect on your competence. It may be that someone saw such promise in you that he could not let you miss this opportunity. Do you have any special abilities?"

"Some. But I have to say that it may not be competence that brought me here. I had what I prefer to term a personality conflict with my commander."

Lahousen shook his head. "We know about that sort of thing, here; if you follow orders you will be all right. What abilities?"

"I have studied both American English and Spanish, and believe I speak those languages well."

"Trilingual. That must be it." The colonel signaled a man in the hall. "Fetch Heinz."

In a moment a somewhat stout man appeared, evidently long out of training. "Heinz, we have here a man who speaks American," the colonel said.

Heinz turned to Ernst. "Good morning, comrade," he said in accented English.

"Don't call me 'comrade!'" Ernst snapped in the same language. "That's a Communist."

Heinz smiled. "And you could pass for American," he agreed. "You sound just like one, arrogance and all." He turned to the colonel. "He is good, sir. Better than I am."

"Fetch Eva."

Soon a middle aged woman appeared. "Senora," Ernst said, standing.

"You are from Spain!" she exclaimed in Spanish.

"No. I studied it, and i like to be competent in what i do," Ernst explained.

She turned to Lahousen. "Like a native," she said.

The colonel smiled. "We shall surely have good use for you. But right now we are in need of a planner for commando operations. You will be that."

"In what theater? It makes a difference."

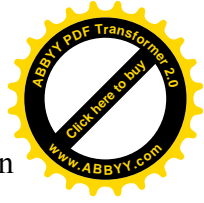
"Polish."

"But I don't speak--"

"There will be those who do. You can get started without them."

So it was that Ernst found himself studying maps of Poland, and researching the German/Polish border. They were planning to take Poland! He had suspected it, but had not expected such abrupt confirmation.

Ernst did his work, and knew it was good. He had organized outings as a Youth leader, and



nderstood how things fitted together. But one thing was missing. "I'll need to see some of the terrain personally," he told the colonel. "There could be things the maps and reports don't tell us. One road blocked by temporary construction, and--"

"I anticipated that need," Lahousen said. "It is time to consult with the Colonel."

He brought Ernst to Colonel Oster's office. There was a board bearing the proverb AN EAGLE EATS NO FLIES. Two men were there: Oster, whom Ernst had seen but to whom he had never spoken, and a civilian. Colonel Lahousen, realizing that there could be awkwardness, made a quick introduction. "Sir," he said to Oster, "I have brought Lieutenant Osterecht to confer with you and Captain Dohnanyi about the next stage of our operation. He needs authorization to inspect the terrain in person."

"Now that is an amusing coincidence," Oster said. "My friend was just about to travel in that direction. The Lieutenant can accompany him, in case he needs his shoes polished. I will suggest this to the Admiral."

The colonel smiled, acknowledging the humor, but Ernst could tell he didn't appreciate it. It was the type of humor directed at underlings whose opinion didn't matter. Since that was a fair description of Ernst at the moment, there was nothing to be done about it. Oster lacked the authority to make assignments, but did control access to Admiral Canaris; therein lay his power. Ernst had quickly discovered how important personality was, here; it seemed that almost every officer had to be polite to an obnoxious superior.

Ernst did travel with Dohnanyi, and found the man surprisingly compatible. He had a good car and a civilian attitude. "I'm not a captain," he said as they drove. "I'm actually an anti-militarist crammed into the unaccustomed uniform of a wartime supernumary and assigned the rank of captain purely as a matter of protocol. I feel quite out of place in an Abwehr headquarters geared towards military order and efficiency."

"I am in the military," Ernst said. "But I feel out of place in the Abwehr myself. It is quite different from what I have known."

"To be sure! It must seem strange to you to hear officers cursing the military."

"I have not heard any--"

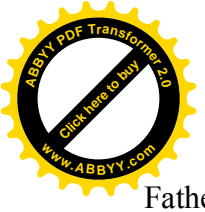
"You are too kind. A number have been cashiered from the service, and restored only because of the Admiral. They hold grudges against the system. I understand you had trouble in your prior unit; perhaps that is why you were sent to this hotbed of dissention."

"No one has said that to me," Ernst said carefully. Was the man fishing for some disloyal statement from him? Testing him, the way they had tested him in his foreign languages?

"And you do not know that many of us staunchly oppose the Hitler regime?"

Ernst was shocked. "I can not believe that! The Führer--"

"May be a madman. He is bringing us to a war that can destroy us. Do you think this present mission is for peace?"



This had to be a test! If Ernst failed to protest, he would be turned in for disloyalty to the Fatherland. Yet the man sounded sincere. "I think this mission is for war, yes. Because a great nation must be prepared for anything. If Poland attacks us--"

Dohnanyi laughed. "Scant chance of that! I am sure you are not that naive."

"I do not question the decisions of my superiors. If it is decided that Poland represents a threat to--"

"Nor that naive, either. You know we are preparing to put down Poland, which has been a nuisance for a long time. And that we are even now preparing a nonaggression pact with Russia, and will let them have the far side of Poland."

Ernst was amazed. "Poland, yes, I had gathered that there would be action there. But the Führer would never make a pact with the Communists!"

"But it is true. Hitler is doing it, and I fear disaster for our nation. But it is the regime I serve, and so like you I obey directives. Now we shall inspect the border, and I shall get us across so that you can ascertain what you need of the other side."

"Across?" Ernst asked blankly. "Just like that?"

"Why did you think Colonel Oster had the Admiral send me with you? I have connections in Poland. I am a lawyer, and a good one; I do business there. I have a pass."

So it turned out to be. The border guards allowed the car to pass, and they checked the necessary sites. Ernst had assumed that they would have to sneak across by night between roads, but they drove openly. He was amazed at the sloppiness of the border security.

Meanwhile he pondered the man's words and attitude. Was it possible that there was such a hotbed of treason that its participants were open about it? If so, they were fools. But as he talked with Dohnanyi about other things, he became aware that the man was highly intelligent and possessed of a lawyer's powers of reasoning. This was no fool.

That brought up the question whether this was a trap. Did they suspect that Ernst was really Heydrich's agent? If so, they might expect him to report Dohnanyi, and thus reveal himself. That would cause the lawyer trouble, but would protect the others, because Ernst would never get any evidence on them after his report. But if he played along, pretending to harbor subversive notions, Dohnanyi might report *him*, and they would be rid of him. Either way, no important conspirator would be endangered.

The more he pondered, the more certain he became: Neither Admiral Canaris nor Colonel Oster was a fool, and both well understood the mechanisms of secrecy and spying. They had to be testing him, and his response would determine their acceptance of them. This applied regardless whether they were loyal to the regime or traitorous. So he had to find a way to reassure them without getting himself in trouble. And gradually he worked out a way to do that.

When they returned to the Abwehr, Ernst reported to his immediate superior, Colonel Lahousen. First on the terrain: he had learned what he needed to, and could now complete the planning of commando missions to the region.



"And what of your companion?"

"Captain Dohnanyi was a pleasant companion, but careless in his speech," Ernst said. "I could not take anything he said seriously, for if I did, I would not have been able to travel with him."

The colonel nodded. "Civilians tend to be half crazy, sometimes," he remarked. "It is best to ignore them."

That was all. Ernst did not get in trouble. That was in itself significant, because his proper duty should have been to report Dohnanyi for speaking treason. Colonel Oster had to know the nature of Dohnanyi's remarks--indeed, had probably instructed the man to make them--and Ernst had elected not to report them. Not quite. He had claimed not to take them seriously, but actually he was covering up for the man. That suggested that he had some sympathy. That would have been grounds to remove him from the Abwehr--had they wished to do so. He had become their tacit accomplice in silence.

Except for his secret existence. There was a telephone in Berlin which was safe, and a time when special calls were to be made, and he used that phone at the proper time for his first report directly to Heydrich.

"The civilian Johannes Dohnanyi is anti-military and says that he staunchly opposes the Hitler regime," he said when Heydrich came on. "He speaks treason--but he may be testing me. I have not reported him, and so I may be compromised. As yet I lack evidence on Oster or Canaris."

"I know about Dohnanyi," Heydrich said. "Leave him alone. Oster will trust you if Dohnanyi does--but Dohnanyi may indeed be testing you. Stay with it."

Which was exactly as Ernst had expected. In this respect he had done right.

He could not say that he really liked this kind of intelligence work, but at least he was successful in it. So far. If he became unsuccessful, he might wish he had remained in America.

Early in May the Admiral's order came down: prepare for "Contingency White." This meant that Abwehr I was to increase espionage operations in Poland, to determine the strength and dispositions of Polish army units, while Abwehr II was to prevent the demolition of communications, industrial centers and avenues of transportation which would be of use to the advancing German troops. It was no secret now, within the unit: Poland was the target. Invasion seemed incipient.

Ernst had helped identify two strategically vital communications links: One was the bridge over the Vistula River at Dirschau which carried all rail traffic from Danzig and East Prussia to the Polish interior. The other was the Jablunkov Pass in the Beskid Mountains along its southern border, whose tunnels contained twin rail tracks and connected East Germany, Southern Poland and the Balkans. Abwehr II was supposed to attack these positions before the first shot was fired, and overwhelm their defenders by surprise during peace.

But it had been ascertained that the Dirschau bridge was set with explosives designed to destroy it. Since a defender could detonate the explosives at the first sign of trouble, this made the matter delicate.



Ernst discussed it with others, and they finally worked out a suitable plan: they would infiltrate a combat team by barge at another place, whose members would travel separately to a rendezvous, abduct prominent figures among the defenders, and would force them to disclose the location of the explosives. Then they would sneak in and defuse the explosives before the overt attack on the bridge. This would require fine timing and coordination, but should be possible if they prepared well and had no unanticipated misfortunes.

The plan for the Beskids was simpler. This relied on S-groups in the area. S stood for *Spannungsagenturen*--agents already established in the country. They would take the command areas, destroy the detonators, and then occupy the tunnels and remove the explosives. After that it would be a simple matter to defend the tunnels from Polish intrusions. The Poles would soon be distracted by the main attack on their country.

But there was more. There was a sizable Ukraine contingent in Poland that chafed under Polish domination. A third point of attention was to use this Ukrainian element to mount insurrections against the government as soon as formal hostilities commenced. That would divert some Polish troops, possibly saving many German lives.

Finally, there was a mysterious request by Heydrich, Ernst's true superior, with the backing of Hitler himself. This was for Abwehr assistance in carrying out a very special operation for the Reichführer SS. This was for a hundred and fifty Polish uniforms, with the proper weapons and paybooks to go with them, and three hundred and sixty four men to be temporarily attached to the SD. What was going on?

It was the civilian Dohnanyi who set Ernst straight on the matter. The man was temporarily adrift while Colonel Oster entertained a buxom young woman in his closed office. "Our vegetarian leader is a dirty player. Didn't you know? Those are the men and materials to be used in the pretense of a Polish attack on the German radio station."

"But why do anything like that? It is senseless."

"You retain a certain priceless innocence. That will be the pretext for the outrage we shall evince. We shall have to teach those vandalizing Poles a lesson. They will attack us first, giving us leave to conquer their country."

Ernst was suitably appalled. He could not believe it. But as the request was honored in detail, he realized that it was. Germany was going to manufacture a pretext for war.

In July Ernst was given a ten day leave. Perhaps the Abwehr still did not trust him, and wanted to see where he went. So he did not go home. Instead he remained in Berlin, where he happened to know that a certain group of girls who had graduated from a female Youth Group were celebrating. He went in civilian clothes and picked up a young woman he happened to see, who he knew was now eighteen.

"Ernst!" Krista exclaimed, surprised.

"Better to pretend you don't know me," he said. "I may be watched, and I am not supposed to be here."



"Then what are you doing here?" she demanded.

"My hand still tingles from your touch. I could not stay away."

She glanced down at her blouse, remembering. Then her gaze lifted. "Exactly what kind of girl do you take me for, stranger?"

"A pretty one."

After a bit of banter, she allowed him to treat her to a meal at a restaurant. They sat at a small table in a corner, and under the table, concealed by the overhanging tablecloth, her legs twined around his. "Oh, Ernst, I have thought of you every day! I would go with you in a moment, if I could."

"And I with you," he agreed. "But I have other duties I can not even tell you about."

"Training must be severe!"

"It must be. I wouldn't know."

She gazed at him, understanding that he was in no regular unit. "When will you be able to marry?"

He spread his hands. "I fear our world will change before that happens."

"And I fear you are not joking. Ernst, I know a place. We can go there, tonight--"

"How I wish I could!" he said, meaning it. "But others would know, and your reputation would be soiled. I will not do that to you."

"How can anyone know, if we do not tell?"

"I met a man who--who knows too much. He told me your secret."

She stared at him. "Secret?"

"Gypsy ancestry. But it can never be proved, and it doesn't matter to me. Only if I wished to marry you, without his approval--"

She continued to gaze into his face. "I can tell you mean it," she said. "You do know, and you do want to marry me, when you were unsure before."

He nodded. "I do. But only when it is right, for both of us."

Her legs moved against his. "I know you mean it, Ernst," she repeated. "I thank you so much for telling me. It has been a burden."

"No need to be, between us."

"At least we must find a place where we can kiss."



That much they managed to do.

On August 23 Dohnanyi's prediction about the pact with the Communists came true: Germany signed a nonaggression treaty with the Soviet Union. Ernst deeply distrusted the civilian's politics, but the man had been right about everything he had said. That suggested that he would continue to be right. But what an awful thing: a deal with the Communists!

In this time of frenzied preparations, Ernst was sent to brief the Admiral on the readiness of each aspect. Canaris was a rather short man, white haired, with bushy eyebrows and a ruddy face but a general air of frailty and shabbiness. He did not look at all like a powerful Reich officer. Even before an underling such as Ernst he seemed somewhat reserved. He was, Ernst knew, a hypochondriac who would not tolerate a sick man in his office. Colonel Lahousen had a cold, which was why he wasn't here; Ernst was healthy.

The Admiral also disliked men who were too tall. Ernst was no giant, but he was substantially taller than Canaris. He tried to diminish his height so as to avoid giving offense.

The man's desk was covered with papers. The Admiral didn't sit at it; he preferred the couch, where it was said he liked to take naps. It was clear that the stories about his lack of interest and aptitude in the bureaucratic process were true. Ernst wondered how the man had ever won the iron Cross First Class he wore.

In addition, the admiral's two wire-haired Japanese Dachshunds were in the office. Canaris loved animals. Seppel and Sabine were the bane of the Abwehr staff, as they regularly fouled the carpet. But woe betide anyone who spoke harshly of the dogs in the Admiral's presence!

But Ernst suffered a change of awareness the moment the Admiral came to grips with the details of the assignments. He picked up on the key elements instantly. "How many combat operatives do we have in place in Poland?"

"Thirteen hundred, sir. They are spread across the country--"

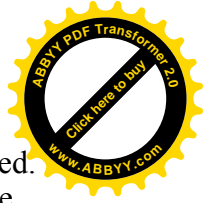
"Yes, but not all are truly ours. You are counting the forestry staff of Prince Henckel-Donnersmark? They may be invaluable for local information and support, but they aren't trained operatives. You have not given them more than minimal information?"

"That is correct, sir. Only the operatives trained here have real information, and of course even they do not know our specific targets."

"At least they will know better than to waste any bombs on forests. We do not want to harm any wildlife."

Ernst started to smile, then saw that the Admiral was serious. He despised anyone who hated animals. He also did not trust anyone whose ears were too small; fortunately Ernst's were not.

His gaze strayed to the Admiral's model of the light cruiser Dresden, his shelf of books, and the trio of bronze monkeys: See All, Hear All, Tell Nothing. That was certainly the motto, here.



"The Dirschau bridge--coordinating separate groups may be impossible," the Admiral continued. "Too many things can go wrong. The people we abduct may lie to us, and there will not be time to be sure of their information. We must try to get the information separately from two, then compare notes. If the two stories differ, seek a third source. Don't risk it without confirmation--we'll only get the bridge and ourselves blown up."

"Yes, sir," Ernst said, impressed. He had spent weeks working out this plan, and Canaris had spotted its weakness without seeming to think about it.

They reviewed the other projects, and the Admiral's commentary was similarly incisive. He suggested several additional targets for sabotage which Ernst duly noted to relay to Colonel Lahousen. He demonstrated the ability to juggle many options simultaneously. Whatever doubt Ernst had had about the man's competence evaporated; now it was clear why Canaris ran the Abwehr.

In fact, Ernst found himself liking this intelligent, energetic man. What did a sloppy office mean? It was ability and dedication that counted, and Canaris had these qualities in full measure.

"Well, I must go see about fomenting insurrections in the British Empire," the Admiral said at last. "There are Irish who are extremely unhappy with their masters. I only wish Hitler hadn't made that deal with the Communists. Now we have to abandon our support for the Ukrainian independence movement. At least we can help Ukrainians flee the Russian advance. It is terrible the way they suffer under that regime."

That was the end of the session. Canaris had said nothing subversive, except for his criticism of the deal with the Communist regime. Ernst could hardly fault that; he agreed. If that was the worst to be said of the Admiral, the man was clean.

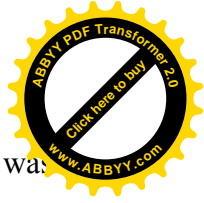
Everything was set for operations against Poland to begin on August 26. But the evening of the 25th the Führer ordered the attack delayed. This threw the Abwehr into a spin. It was too late to convey the order to all of the operatives, some of whom checked in only occasionally, for the sake of security. The fake Polish attack on the radio station was halted, but a related attack on a German border station did occur. There was some gunfire but fortunately no loss of life. Radio contact had been lost with one of the combat groups assigned to take the Jablunkov Pass. The next day they learned that the unit had made two unsuccessful attempts to take the pass, before retreating to the Slovakian border under heavy Polish fire.

"The vegetarian lost his nerve," Dohnanyi remarked cynically, referring disdainfully to Hitler. Ernst wanted to hit him, but kept his peace, knowing the man was needling him. "At least it shows that we underestimated the Polish will to resist. That must be corrected."

"Agreed," Ernst said. He talked to Lahousen about strengthening the attack units wherever possible.

On August 31 the whole thing began again. This time there was no reversal. They received the coded signal *Grossmutter gestorben*, "Grandma's dead," and the invasion was on for the first of September.

On that day Admiral Canaris assembled his senior officers and delivered an inspiring pep talk.



Ernst was present only as an unofficial doorman, to see that no unauthorized personnel intruded. He was amazed at the Admiral's demeanor and delivery. He pledged them all to unconditional loyalty to the Führer, concluding with a rousing "Heil Hitler!"

Almost all of the Abwehr operations in Poland were successful. Unfortunately the Polish defenders had been alerted by the prior attack in the Beskids, so that it was impossible to capture the tunnels before the explosives were detonated. And the Admiral's cautions about the trickiness of the Dirschau bridge mission proved to be well taken; the defenders were able to blow the bridge. But Abwehr agents did manage to occupy the rail junction at Kalthof, save many industrial operations, take nearly all the coal mines of Upper Silesia, and take Katowice before the German troops arrived.

There were further requests for Abwehr activities, and the commandos received praise from many sources. Canaris was very active. He traveled to the front every week, and intensified his plans to encourage insurrections in Ireland, India and Afghanistan. But the devastation of Poland, particularly Warsaw, affected him deeply, and Ernst and the others were aware of this. Canaris helped at least one Jewish dignitary to flee the country, and a Ukrainian Bishop to do the same. He really did care about the people.

But was this any signal of treason? Ernst doubted it.

Meanwhile, Ernst had plenty to keep him occupied. His work in the planning of commando raids put him into contact with an ugly aspect of the Abwehr: the Geheime Feldpolizei, or GFP. It had been established as a police force within the Wehrmacht during the German involvement in the Spanish Civil War. It worked closely with the Gestapo, and contained many members of the SS. The Abwehr was cooperating closely with the SS, and some units were virtually indistinguishable: a given soldier could have crossed over between the SS and the Abwehr and hardly noticed the difference. At times Ernst wasn't quite sure for whom he was working, as he met with representatives of each.

In August the SS VT had gained power; some of its units were assigned to the Wehrmacht to participate in the invasion of Poland. They had not, in general, distinguished themselves. The overall report from the Wehrmacht was that the SS units were not prepared to function as part of a division, suffered inordinately heavy losses, and that their officers were incapable of commanding them in complicated operations. A spokesman for the SS VT retorted that the Wehrmacht had starved them of supplies and refused to allocate sufficient heavy weapons to their units. But Ernst was privately pleased to learn that Steiner's units, where Ernst had been training before Heydrich had taken him for this intelligence mission, had distinguished themselves. Steiner was being proved right!

But once Poland fell, the GFP began arresting as many Poles for sabotage and insurrection as they thought fit, and turning them over to the SS for execution. The practice was so widespread that finally Heydrich himself had to intervene. "Carry out your own executions," he radioed on the twentieth of September. Ernst hoped that this would result in fewer executions, because many of them seemed unwarranted, but it didn't. He was privately disgusted with the thuglike GFP.

The SS commanders, stung by the less than ideal performance in Poland, pushed for the formation of an SS division with its own heavy weapons and supply services. But the Wehrmacht, sensing competition, opposed this. Pressure was intense, and finally Himmler authorized a doubling of the size of the SS VT by incorporating concentration camp guards into it. On November 1 the *SS Tötenkopf* or "Death's Head" division was formed. The whole was unified under a new name: the *Waffen SS*: the "Armed SS."



Then the relationship between the Abwehr and the expanding SS was strained. On November 9 there was an attempt on Adolf Hitler's life. This sparked a frenzied investigation. The Führer was convinced that British intelligence was behind the plot, though there was no evidence to support this. Admiral Canaris had been trying to institute sabotage in England, and had been establishing British connections; could there be double agents among them? The SS thought there could be; Canaris vehemently denied it.

Ernst believed the Admiral. There might be those in the Abwehr who wished Hitler ill, but not Canaris.

Meanwhile, there were frantic preparations for the next major project: the assault on France. Abwehr II was called on to formulate plans for sabotage operations in Belgium and Holland. France's formidable Maginot Line prevented a direct assault on that country, but the defenses of the small nations were much less significant and could readily be breached. Ernst had to research new places and new personnel, and was kept busy for months.

But he did get occasional breaks. He learned that Krista had become a military secretary and was working in a Berlin office. Having met her for the first time, in the guise of Lieutenant Osterecht, he could now date her more openly; their hometown connection was not obvious, and so would not give away his nature as a person other than the one he claimed to be.

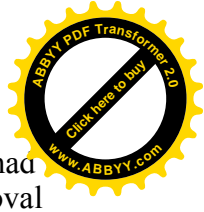
She was beautiful, as always. It was a genuine pleasure to be with her. He knew she had arranged to work here in Berlin so as to be near him, and that both flattered and pleased him. His lingering doubt about marriage with her was fading; he had encountered no other woman as appealing. Yet a tiny reservation remained, and it did not relate to her possible Gypsy taint. There was something that made him unwilling to let himself go and love her completely.

So their series of dates were pleasant, and he enjoyed them. But he was for the moment satisfied that marriage was not feasible. Not until he completed his mission, and had Heydrich's leave.

In January 1940 reports from Abwehr I convinced Hitler that the British were planning to occupy Norway. Abwehr II was therefore charged with readying commando operations in Scandinavia. Ernst was suspicious that Colonel Oster was not in sympathy with this, and wished to warn Britain or Norway, but he had no sufficient evidence.

Ernst traveled with Johannes Dohnanyi again, because the lawyer had the necessary connections. He learned that the man was into various subversive endeavors, such as smuggling, illegal art deals and graft. But these connections were ideal for the Abwehr's purpose, because they were hidden. Dohnanyi was adept at covering his tracks. So Ernst reminded himself again that this was a little fish, not worth bothering with, and kept silent.

But the man was happy to talk about himself as they spent tedious hours on the highway. It was almost as if he were proud of the defects in his character. He was a brilliant lawyer (others had confirmed this) who at the age of thirty six had become a personal adviser to the Reich Minister of Justice during the Blomberg-Fritsch case. This had occurred while Ernst was in America, so he had not learned of it at the time. Blomberg had been accused of having relations with a prostitute, and Fritsch



had been accused of something done by another man with a similar name; he had been cleared, but had lost his position by then. Since Fritsch had adamantly opposed the expansion of the SS VT, his removal had cleared the path for what it was now becoming. Otherwise there might have been no SS unit for Ernst to join. So he listened with flattering attention.

Dohnanyi had been assigned to review the case and recommend that the charged generals be tried by either a special court, which was Hitler's preference, or a court-martial, which was the military's desire. As it happened, he was an opponent of the Hitler regime, so he recommended for the military. That had brought him into contact with Admiral Canaris and Colonel Oster.

"But why did you oppose Hitler?" Ernst asked.

"I became an enemy of Hitler in 1936, when a rival in the Ministry of Justice discovered that I had a non-Aryan maternal grandfather," the man replied bitterly. "With extraordinary effort I was able to obtain a ruling from Hitler that I should receive no detriment from the doubts surrounding my grandfather's pedigree." Ernst, listening, felt a thrill of nervous agreement; this was what Krista suffered! "That experience made me hate National Socialism. For centuries Germans have been free to have what ancestry we please. Why should some bigoted demagogue come and decide otherwise? What is wrong with being non-Aryan? Are we not all the people we are? To be condemned because of nothing we have done in life, simply because an ancestor had a different belief or came from a different land-- this is unconscionable." He glanced at Ernst. "You argue the other case?"

Ernst knew better than to try to debate a lawyer! He also had doubt of his own, because of Krista and the Jew he had known in America. "I neither argue nor endorse the case."

Dohnanyi smiled briefly. "You are smart. Why imperil your career foolishly? But I am committed; I am the one who was challenged. I began keeping a chronicle of the injustices and abuses of power which came to the attention of my office. As the list grew, I deciphered a system of corruption which I traced ultimately to one man: Adolf Hitler. Read *Mein Kampf!*"

"I have," Ernst said.

"Then you know how he blames everything on Jews. Do you really subscribe to his logic?"

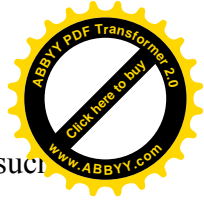
This was dangerous territory! "I prefer not to comment."

"Smart again! Bigotry has been with us always, but he made it fashionable. Now it is institutionalized. It is not merely the Jews; Gypsies too, and others. Anyone who is not a perfectly pedigreed Arian. Is this fair? Is this sensible?"

"No comment," Ernst repeated, thinking again of Krista. He could be getting himself into trouble by not denouncing Dohnanyi, but he had come to know the man well enough to doubt this. The man was not trying to trap him; the man was genuinely outraged. The man was also making insidious sense.

"By 1937 I was convinced that the only way to end this insidious corruption of values was to eliminate its source. I examined several possible sources of assistance for my plans before deciding that the Wehrmacht was the only force capable, and perhaps willing, to destroy Hitler's power."

"You go too far," Ernst said, now quite nervous. "You know I cannot give even tacit consent to such a notion."



Dohnanyi glanced sidelong at him. "I speak merely what I once thought. I am not advocating such a thing now. You are consenting to nothing."

Ernst was uneasily silent. Could this after all be a test? Did Canaris doubt him, and was pushing him more firmly?

"I found it difficult at first to work with the military," Dohnanyi continued. "I believed that there were ardent soldiers and ardent civilians, and I was one of the latter. I condemned the military men for their narrow outlook and cadet-ish conceptions of honor and patriotism. I was a firm opponent of war as a means of settling disputes, but not a pacifist. I was an early advocate of assassination as a means of dealing with Hitler."

"Assassination!" Ernst cried, shocked.

Dohnanyi smiled. "Now you can turn me in and have me executed. I have spoken treason."

What a dangerous game this man played! "You have spoken of the way you once felt," Ernst said carefully. "Obviously you no longer feel that way, as you are now working with the military in support of Hitler's objectives. At this moment we are on a mission to facilitate what the Führer desires."

This time Dohnanyi was silent. He knew that he had gone as far as he could without forcing Ernst to report him.

The man's contacts got them into Belgium without trouble. Ernst made his notes. Then they went on to Denmark, and from there to Norway. It was a successful mission. Ernst hoped that the man's actions in facilitating Hitler's wishes belied his treasonous dialogue. That way he, Ernst, was justified in not reporting him. But it remained extremely nervous business.

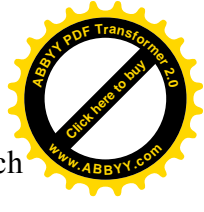
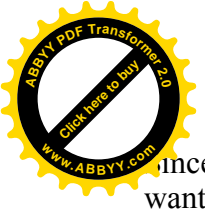
On the first of April, Canaris was promoted to full admiral. Thereafter Oster became a general. On the ninth of that month the invasion of Denmark and Norway proceeded with great success. Abwehr II distinguished itself. Ernst's work had helped facilitate the smoothness of the operation, though he was one among many.

The pace did not abate. On the tenth of May the German armies invaded Holland, Belgium and France. Once again Abwehr II received praise for its successes. But it did receive a setback in Holland. And a more subtle, but worse one in France.

Because someone had tried to warn France of the attack. Telecommunications monitoring had discovered attempts by a German officer to betray the date of the invasion. The French had been too muddled to respond to the warning appropriately; otherwise it could have been a serious matter.

Adolf Hitler himself called upon Heydrich and Canaris to join forces and determine the traitor. Lieutenant Colonel Joachim Rohleder, head of Abwehr III, which handled counterespionage, was given command of the investigation. Admiral Canaris was visibly upset; he was either acting, or he had known nothing of the betrayal.

Ernst remained clear; he had other business to attend. But he kept track of it as well as he could, because if Canaris himself should be implicated, the Admiral would of course do his best to conceal it.



Since he was active in the investigation, he could probably succeed in such concealment. So Heydrich wanted to know the truth, and he was depending on Ernst for it, not the official investigation.

The intercepted telegrams pointed to Müller, Oster's agent to the Vatican in Italy, as the possible courier of the treasonous information. However, it took Colonel Rohleder some time to run this down, and in the interim Müller returned to Rome and probably removed incriminating evidence and covered his tracks. Nevertheless, Rohleder pursued the matter competently, and did determine Müller's guilt. But that was only part of it; Müller was not one who should have known the date of invasion. Who had been the source of his information?

Rohleder was both a believer in the traditional Prusso-German military ideal, and a brilliant intelligence officer. He was appalled both by this betrayal of the German homeland, and by its amateurish execution. He satisfied himself as to the identity of the traitor, and acted in forthright fashion.

He went to Abwehr headquarters in Berlin and confronted General Oster in his office. Johannes Dohnanyi was there too. There he coldly presented his facts and gave his conclusions: Müller and Oster were the traitors. "Now I am going to present my findings to Admiral Canaris," he announced. "I invite you to accompany me, in the interest of defending yourself."

Oster and Dohnanyi protested, but Rohleder was firm. He did make his report to the Admiral.

But Canaris did not accept the findings. "The evidence is inconclusive," he told Rohleder. "It is insufficient to warrant pursuing the matter further."

"But it *is* conclusive!" Rohleder protested. "Some evidence was destroyed, but my documentation indicates--"

"It is not strong enough to allow the good name of the Abwehr to be soiled," the Admiral said firmly. "Would you have us all suffer because of such a suspicion?"

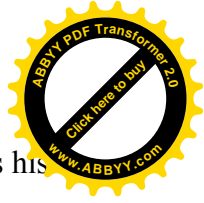
"Sir, I insist that this is a blight on the Abwehr which must be cleansed! It is the Abwehr I am trying to protect! What is to stop this man from betraying us again?"

"I will order Müller to immediately sever all contact with the Vatican," Canaris said. And that was it; he refused to take stronger action.

Rohleder stalked out of the office. He was incensed at this behavior, and he expressed himself freely to others in the unit. This was how Ernst learned the details. The Admiral had to call him back on another day, because there was so much talk and conjecture about the affair. It was apparent that Canaris was not going to act against his friend Oster.

But this was the last time Canaris aided Colonel Oster, and the two were no longer as close as they had been. After this affair, the Admiral became morose and fatalistic. He gave no encouragement to any opposition to Hitler, and threw himself into his duty. But he seemed to have lost his vitality.

"Oster is guilty, but not Canaris," Ernst reported to Heydrich. "He covered for his friend, but he was severely disappointed in his friend, and they are friends no more. Oster betrayed him personally as well as Germany."



"I am not sure," Heydrich replied. "It may be that he values his reputation more than he values his Fatherland. He spared himself embarrassment by covering up."

"Then should he not be relieved instead of depressed?" Ernst asked. "However, he *did* cover up, for whatever reason, so he is guilty too."

"Guilt is not so readily adjudged," Heydrich said. "I am satisfied neither that he is clean nor that he is dirty. I need a clearer indication. Stay with it."

Ernst was glad to oblige. He had done what he had to, and made an honest report, but he liked the Admiral, and saw how the man had been hurt by his friend's betrayal. It was, technically, a crime to protect a traitor, but understandable when the traitor was a friend. The Admiral had done what he believed he had to, and was suffering grievously for it.

Ernst mused on that. It had become known that Hitler himself had halted the attack on the British troops massed at Dunkirk in northern France, allowing them to cross the channel to Britain and escape destruction. It was said that this was because Hitler had respect for the British, and wanted to spare them if he could, hoping they would later choose to join Germany. But had any other person made that disastrous decision, he would have been deemed a traitor to the Fatherland. Was Admiral Canaris different in principle?

Ernst received promotion to Captain Osterecht. He knew he owed it to Admiral Canaris. That made him feel even more guilty, ironically.

In July, not long after the surrender of France, a new and interesting project was initiated. It seemed that Jodl had proposed to the Führer that he undertake a bold new strategy, taking the rock of Gibraltar and closing the Mediterranean Sea to the British. Admiral Canaris was intrigued, for this gave him a chance to work once again in Spain, a country he loved.

On July 5 Canaris proposed that the assault on Gibraltar might be accomplished by the Brandenburg Regiment, which was an elite military commando unit within the Abwehr.

This was placed under consideration. Meanwhile, it was necessary to reconnoiter the situation. Ernst was dispatched to the Abwehr post in Algeciras, near Spain's southernmost point, near the British peninsula of Gibraltar. He traveled "civilian," with an assumed identity. This made him three layered, as he thought of it: the lowest layer was Ernst Best, the middle was Captain Osterecht, and now the top was a vaguely Spanish civilian.

Indeed, his instructions were to evince no interest in Gibraltar. He was to conduct himself in the manner of an officer on vacation. He was not even supposed to report to Algeciras right away, as if he were routinely checking in, almost as an afterthought. But on his way he would check the route the main party was to take, and make note of any potential problems.

He called Heydrich, because this represented a change in his locale for a while and he would be out of touch until he returned to Berlin. "So I will tour the country--I will rent a car in Spain--and then be at Algeciras to help on the mission. I will report to you when I return."

"While you are down there, you can do an incidental chore for me," Heydrich said. "There is an



operation in Spain run by foreigners. They are probably harmless, but if we are to get involved in Spain, we need to be sure there are not spies among them. They have centers in Madrid and Barcelona, and contacts with the British which predate General Franco's victory."

"They could have Republican sympathies," Ernst said, remembering how other countries had generally favored that side. "But surely they have been investigated."

"Surely they have--by the Spanish," Heydrich replied with inherent contempt. "You will not have time to do much, but you can inspect their operation."

"But with only three days at the most, I will hardly be able to get started," Ernst protested. "They will know I am German."

"Of course they will know. You will tell them you have been sent directly from Adolf Hitler to learn what they are doing."

Ernst laughed. But it turned out not to be a joke. Then he realized what Heydrich was up to: Ernst would make an obvious, clumsy investigation, which would set this group's fears at rest--while some other agent, hidden from their knowledge, would do the real investigation. Ernst was a mere decoy. It would be easy enough for him to do.

"I have a contact in Barcelona," Heydrich said. "He will provide you with authority to investigate."

"But the Admiral will know that something is happening."

There was a pause. "True, He is not stupid. Very well, you will do this mission for him. I will have word sent down."

Sure enough, soon Canaris summoned Ernst to his office. "Someone got wind that we had a Spanish-speaking operative going to Spain," he said, disgruntled. "It turns out that Himmler himself has a concern there, so Keitel has directed me to do a spot investigation as long as my people are in the area." He grimaced. "As if my work counts for nothing! As if my people are to be borrowed for trifles. But it must be. You must do some work on your idle time after all."

"I am ready to serve in any capacity, to further the good of the Fatherland," Ernst replied.

"Go first to Barcelona. There is a contact there who will provide you with a car and tell you something about these Quakers there."

"Quakers?" Ernst said, surprised. "I have heard of them. They are in America." For his American friend Lane had a Quaker fiancée named Quality Smith. A really nice young woman.

"They are in Britain too. And in Spain. I have been aware of their activities. They are harmless. It is a waste of time. But Himmler may not be denied. Do this job and report to Algeciras. At least it won't interfere with our real work. It may even help conceal it."

So it was that Ernst took the train through Vichy France and came to Barcelona, in northeast Spain. There he made his contact, and got his car. Then he drove to the Quaker Relief station and



introduced himself.

They seemed genuinely perplexed. "We are merely feeding the hungry children," their director explained. "We receive supplies from England."

"Show me," Ernst said. "Assign a guide to me, who will also take me to the field. To see your various routes, who will explain each part."

"But we have no extra truck to spare! Two are broken, and we are having trouble getting parts. It is all we can do to keep up as we are."

Some token of exchange would facilitate things, Ernst realized. "Perhaps I can be of assistance. I have a car; your man can ride with me. Oblige me in this, and I will put in a word for your parts."

They were quick to appreciate his meaning. They knew how much good or evil the right or wrong word could do. But there was one more complication. "We can best spare one whose truck is down. But that is a woman."

Ernst smiled. "Do you think me a barbarian? I will not molest your woman."

"Of course not," the director said without complete conviction. "But she may not wish to ride with you, even so. She is American, though she speaks Spanish, and does not appreciate Germans."

"Speak plainly," Ernst said. "You know I am a Nazi SS officer in civilian guise. It is my government she opposes."

"That is true."

"Introduce us. If she declines, we shall have to seek some other person."

And so Miss Smith made her appearance. "Quality!" Ernst exclaimed, astonished.

Go to [Next Chapter](#).

Return to [Table of Contents](#).