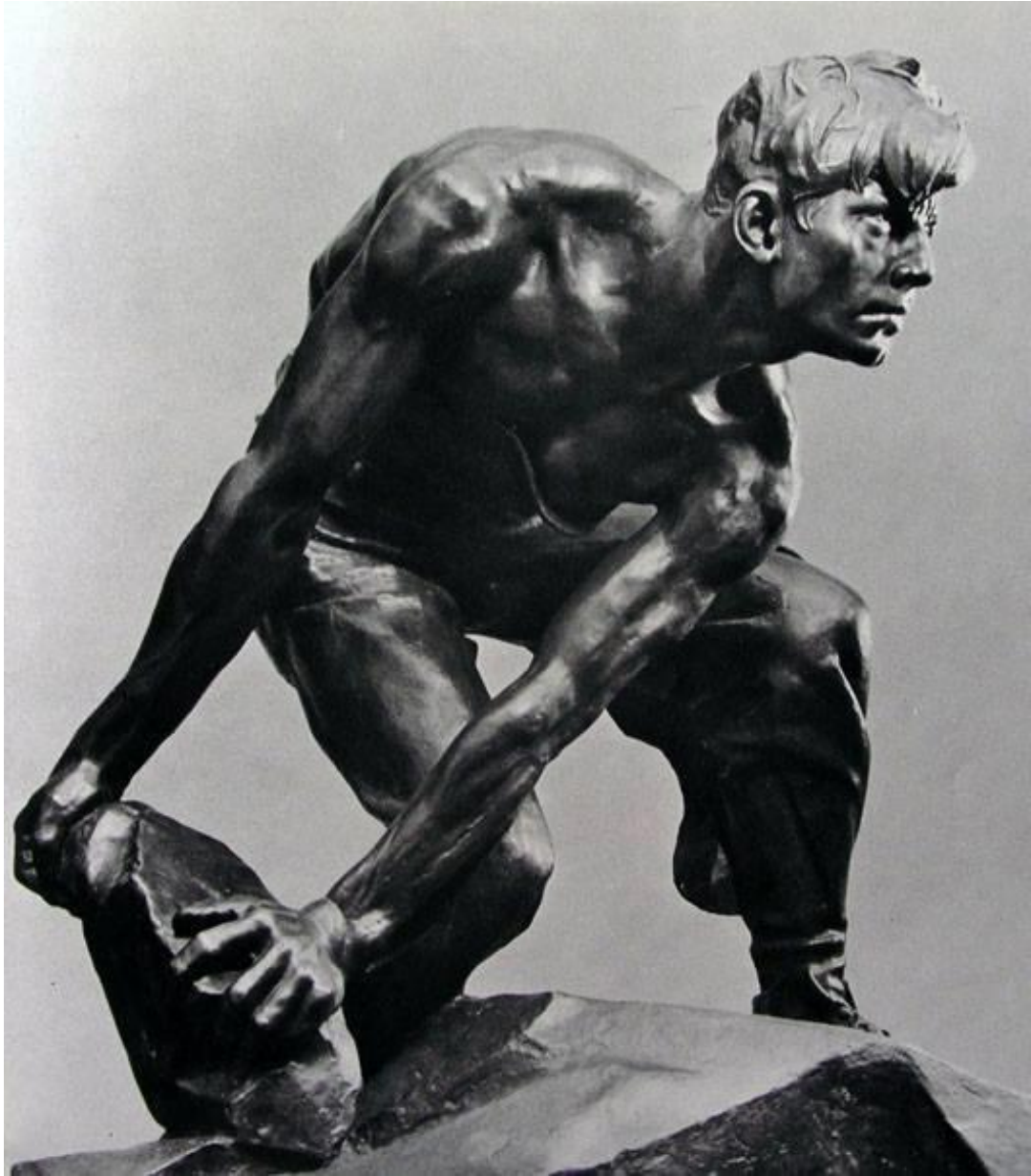


WORDS UNSPOKEN



A NOVELLA

GAITHER STEWART

WORDS UNSPOKEN

A HISTORICAL NOVELLA

CREDITS

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A veteran journalist, essayist, and internationally recognized novelist, Gaither Stewart serves as The Greenville Post European correspondent. His latest novel is [Time of Exile](#) (Punto Press), third volume in his Europe Trilogy, of which the first two volumes ([The Trojan Spy](#), [Lily Pad Roll](#)) have also been published by Punto Press. These are thrillers that have been compared to the best of John le Carré, focusing on the work of Western intelligence services, the stealthy strategy of tension, and the gradual encirclement of Russia, a topic of compelling relevance in our time. He makes his home in Rome, with wife Milena. Gaither

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Dear Reader,

Thank you for your interest in this excellent collection by Gaither Stewart. It is important from a contextual standpoint to inform you that there are three integrated aspects of *Words Unspoken*. First, it has a deep historical footing. Second, Gaither Stewart was an active correspondent and witness to much of this history, meaning there is personal, experiential, insight here as well. Third, Mr. Stewart selected this fictional genre to help the reader live the events and atmosphere of the post WWII era. Fiction is an excellent mechanism to allow us to step into characters and to see through different eyes. So, Gaither Stewart invites you to step into another time and into other lives, and we hope there are lessons here that sensitize us to a deeper understanding of our current milieu. For frankly, there are disturbing similarities to current social dynamics of these two tumultuous eras.

Respectfully,

S Rowan Wolf, Ph.D.

Editor

Foreword

Many historians perceive of history as a determining force that individual lives merely illustrate. As far as my own attempts at fiction about reality are concerned, I agree only partially. Although pieces of history and much “place” decorate my fiction—often called historical fiction—my major attention goes to fictional people who, I believe, make history not only true but also realistic. Fictional personae illustrate not only what people of the real-world experience but show what they feel, the turmoil and conflicts that real people experience in their daily lives. History presents the facts. Fiction offers the reality for which most fiction writers strive. Fiction writers can reconstruct events as well as historians but also put real people in imaginary situations in a way historians cannot. Fred Weinstein in his *History and Theory* writes that while non-fiction gives you the facts, fiction gives you the truth. History tells you what happened; fiction tells you how it felt. So readers must wonder where history ends and fiction begins.

Moreover, pure history also has its limits. As in the example of the aftermath of war, there is no getting around the reality that the victors write the history of what has happened, their versions of history. Yet, both the victors and the defeated are living people, not just inanimate objects. Only in the very long term of the great sweep of the history of epochs can people be reduced to mere illustrators of history. After all, conquerors like Napoleon believed that ‘history is the tale of the victors’. Decades ago I was fixated on the determining role of ‘historic Rome’; today, as I come to know the historical significance of my adoptive home city, Rome emerges as proof that “pure” historicism has no heart. How can it have a heart when, as Walter Benjamin reminds us in confirmation of Napoleon, “*It marches with the victors.*” While the history that people have lived challenges the imaginative capacity of historians to account for it, it is fiction that offers the heterogeneity and discontinuity that history written by historians cannot. (Weinstein)

Most novelists agree that fiction in general offers true, real and realistic history: Gore Vidal, Saul Bellow, E.L. Doctorow, Graham Greene, Norman Mailer, John Dos Passos, Robert Musil, Günther Grass, Carlos Fuentes, et al, believe that only fiction can bring readers closer to the subjective perceptions of people in history. As Nicola Chiaromonte writes in *Paradox of History: Only in fiction and the imaginary can we learn something real about individual experience.* ⁽¹⁾

The title of this novella, *Words Unspoken*, occurred to me before I wrote one word of the text. I was reading a novel when suddenly, apropos of nothing, these two words popped into my head: Words Unspoken. Words Unspoken. The two words remained fixed in my mind. Nevertheless, I too later wondered why these words as the title for a work of fiction. Though the title *Words Unspoken* rings peculiar, as I got used to the title’s words I became cognizant of just how many words in our lives do remain unspoken, dark and untellable like some of our own acts, or acts of those

we love and admire. Some things *are but* will never be known unless they are revealed in words. But not everything that occurs to us that can be reproduced in words can be actually said. Perhaps only alone in the desert can you speak all those words that must remain unspoken in our daily lives.

I had been thinking of a story set in postwar Germany where I lived from the years when the immediate postwar period was just ending. I had tampered mentally with a story about the return home from the Russian front of a German veteran at the end of World War Two. My story, *Words Unspoken*, would begin with the returnee's leap into the frenetic atmosphere of a destroyed Germany. At that time I received as a gift the wonderful eight hundred-page, historical novel, *Europe Central*, by William T. Vollmann, concerning chiefly Germany and Russia, two countries at the center of my literary interests. Had I not read that book first, my story would have been different.

I have attempted here to depict with historical fiction a small part of the *sweep* of history from the battle of Stalingrad in 1942-43, through the Cold War, and until the collapse of East European Communist governments in 1989. The one story I had in mind became three, which plus selected historical facts combined to form this novella. In this story a small number of persons do illustrate—in a limited manner—that tightly packed half century of history: the final years of World War Two, the division of both Germany and Europe itself into two parts, the creation of NATO and the European Union in West Europe and the Warsaw Pact in East Europe, the Korean War, the explorations in space of the USSR and the USA, the Vietnam wars, the fall of Communist-led governments of East Europe, the US/NATO wars against Yugoslavia.

Simultaneously with these and other world-shaking events, also occurred the great *swerve* of the post-WWII United States of America during which people of the USA, Europe and the entire world became aware that everything, every aspect of life had rapidly changed from what it once was. This was the period of the *bestialization* of American Corporatist Capitalism. So today the realities of very real people of our own times who have experienced these bewildering events crammed into such a restricted period can easily be depicted. And as usual it is in the fiction of writers like those mentioned above where the reality of that swerve emerges most clearly.

PART ONE: THE POWERS OF LOVE AND WAR



Figure 1: Soviet soldiers attack in Stalingrad. RIA Novosti -<http://visualrian.ru/ru/site/gallery/#44732>

Stalingrad. Stalingrad. Stalingrad changed everything in Helmut Seifert Hartmann's life. Since his return home from the war Helmut had never felt emotions of normal human warmth. None of the personal kindness he had expected. Instead of warmth and healing, he felt only chaos in the postwar atmosphere. Something almost otherworldly. And yet much as it had seemed in Russia. He was aware that the very ugliness of his experiences had changed him too. He still felt war and fire and death and the smells of war in his every breath. To returnees like him the everlasting peace politicians spoke of meant little. He was just a war-shattered, sex-hungry survivor from the war in East Europe where among the young men inhabiting the cellars of the German-occupied part of Stalingrad cold and rats and smells had reigned. Ach, the smells. *Zapach vojny*, the smell of war, he repeated as he often had in Russian. Nights. In the cellars of Stalingrad. Today, in the corners of the homeland he sought the fire of life. ⁽²⁾

At the same time, the shortage of men at home had created the pain of loneliness for German women ... women alone and lonely but each harboring love to share ... and no men to whom to give it. The men had all been far away. On a front somewhere. And few were the men who returned home whole. Human relations in Helmut's view were as convoluted as his in the cellars in the East with the soldiers and the rats and the smells of war.

Things had gone haywire in Central Europe. War costs everyone, he told himself. Russia was devastated. And war had ravaged the homeland as it did all of Europe; the whole continent was in shambles. The stench of charred wood and crushed stone of the bombed-out cities permeated the life of people ... of existence itself. Soldiers had all noted that special thing about total war: the smells. War had its particular smells, smells that in their lives would never be smothered.

Nonetheless, in the postwar life in the cellars of the demolished cities of the homeland the unbounded urge for life degenerated into promiscuity infecting men and women alike ... and flowered to the beat of flowing beer and schnapps.

Stalingrad. Stalingrad was dank, dark and cold cellars and cold men. And rats. Rats smelling the men's blood. Huge, dirty rats. Rats crawling over him in the night. And back home, too, lived life continued to bloom in the cellars. And rats too. As in Russia, the above ground was destroyed. But nonetheless, full of drink and lust for life, time and again he and one or the other of the lonely women threw themselves into the grass behind one drinking hole or the other ... into the wild wild grass. One into the other. Men and women without names hungry for the fire of life reunited.

'Me! Who walked back from the East Front! I made it back. I got back whole. A whole man. Today, at home again, I walk across Munich's Viktualienmarkt and Marienplatz as if on display. I am in demand. As if all the other men had fallen in Stalingrad. And here we are starting over.'

In Munich like elsewhere the lonely women and scarce men created a volatile situation of morbid rapture. Five years of unleashed rapture. Short years. Eternal years.

The sick rapture would never end, I thought then.

Until Ute came into my life. From the start I loved her name. Ute. A meaningful name. Of constancy, intransigence and perseverance. Qualities not in great demand in the period of irrepressible frenzy for life, a time when personal willfulness was truly truant. Like the military sniper in Stalingrad says before he pulls the trigger: It's nothing personal. I learned what that meant. But Ute put an end to that impersonal life: she was the new German woman.

I entered the Alter Wirt for a beer. Just another place in this Munich suburb I called Grunwaldgrad. But as always looking for someone. Anyone. She was sitting at the table just opposite mine. Grünwaldgrad, I called this suburb of Munich! We looked at each other. Currents tinged with the unknown and sensuality passed from one to the other. Her short dark hair, the smoothness of her face untouched by make-up made her different in every way. She was alone. Hardly a surprise. I had learned that every aloneness is similar in its loneliness. In a Stalingrad cellar, a Munich basement club, or in the Alter Wirt beer hall. I knew that beautiful woman knows aloneness.

It's Saturday afternoon in a late Munich summer. My day off. I carry two beers to her table. She smiles up at me. Few words are spoken. Unnecessary words remain unsaid. After a while I suggest a walk, a *Spaziergang* along the banks of the Isar. Munich summers are so short. We should take advantage of it. But Ute wants to go to Schwabing. So *Zum wohl!* We drink up. And off to downtown we go.

Marienplatz is in *Trümmerhaufen*. The tram ride through the ruins and rubble of a once great city quotes the cost of war. Words are unnecessary. Frauenkirche, our Notre Dame, a shell-symbol hanging over it all. Main street leading to the Stachus is a passageway cleared of rubble. And lined by ghastly ghostly shells of the city's gutted churches, The *Hofgarten* is just a façade, the silhouette of the remaining half

dome of the former Army Museum jutting up in the mist behind it. The *Siegestor*—the Victory Gate—sags in defeat.

The empty shells of the ‘Thousand Year Reich!’ about which we joked in the cellars of Stalingrad. A thousand years and never again a thousand, our philosopher quoted Nostradamus. Yet already at the end of the first winter in Russia the soldiers felt the end. Moscow and Leningrad had not fallen. German soldiers perceived their defeat rushing toward them, like a troika in flames. And Russians felt it too. Russians always knew it. Just a matter of time, they thought, and the Russian winter. Not only their force.

The tram stops right in front of my favorite Leopoldgastätte. The place a survivor too, a relic of the past. *Gott sei Dank*. Ute and I, Munich beer and Steinhäger. *Zum wohl!* Chugalug. Ute hardly blinks. We sit at my usual table near a big window facing Leopoldstrasse. My necessity. I fear the shadows of rear tables recalling dark cold cellars and the stink of war.

Ute tells me about her home. The swinging swaying suspension railway—the *Schwebebahn*—runs up the Wupper Valley toward Düsseldorf, flying over the ruins of the industrial Ruhr. An air train. The transport system of the future ... until the day they transported a smallish elephant in it. It fell into the River Wupper ... and the *Schwebebahn* remained like a Futurist Installation.

I tell her about Stalingrad cellars and how they flew me out with the last transport from the encircled Sixth Army. General Paulus and 240,000 soldiers stayed behind. Then they surrendered.

“But I broke through,” I whisper. “Like a Galapagos turtle, I made it through. Back to German lines.”

“Why you, do you think? And not other baby turtles? Chance?”

“Military intelligence was my job. The *Abwehr*. Too valuable to leave me there for captivity. After making me talk the Russians would shoot me like they did the SS men who’d tortured and killed their people. And I didn’t know anything of interest to reveal. That would make the torture worse.”

“Now you’re here ... a hero. You made it back.”

“I’m not a hero. I just made it back. I walked to the West, Ute. But I stopped on the Elbe. And with the remainders of our armies—with the old men and the boys—I fell back. And back and back. Until it was over. I made it through to the Amis. Got through again. They sent us POWs to America. Picked beans in North Carolina until they sent me back home. Back to München. I’ve always been lucky. Nearly always.”

“It kills me how you always made it through. Turtle man! And now? Why in Grünwald?”

“Got a job across the river. Electrical company!”

“Pullach, eh? The spy nest. Gehlen! Everybody knows that. Or they know and don’t know. Ah, those spies! Late for spies now, no?”

“Never too late ... for spies, is it?”

“I read a film résumé that would interest you. The Gehlen Org story. Someone killed it while the two pages still lay on my desk. There one day, gone the next. Top secret”

“Top secret, yes! Gehlen Org is another Ami plot!”

The Fräulein brings us more beer and Steinhäger. Smiles at us. Lovingly. It was always in the air at the Leopoldgastätte. Sex ... and echoes of loves we once knew.

Ute Friedrich is a light-haired *Rheinländerin* of twenty-six years. Were she a man, she would still be a Prussian pig for Bavarians. But since she is a beautiful woman, she is instead an *Ausländerin*, a foreigner. She says she feels neither. Her family had been well-to-do before the war. Property holdings in the Wupper Valley and interests in Düsseldorf. Well-off. When her father didn't return from the war, her mother gradually sold off property so that their lifestyle remained about the same, providing Ute a Schwabing apartment while she studied Germanistic at Munich University. Now she lives in München-Pullach with a three-year old daughter and is a screen writer at Bavarian Film Studio in Grünwald-Geiseltal.

“Gehlen and Pullach seem to link us,” she says. ⁽³⁾

“Link us? Does Pullach have something to do with it? Pullach is just a place?”

“Silly! Of the link we both feel ... one to the other.”

“How are we linked, Ute? You have your life. You, a well-to-do career woman from the Rheinland, a film writer. And me, a Sudeten German from the cellars of Stalingrad. Are we linked? By Gehlen and Pullach?”

“Cynic! I meant the war. Gehlen and evil and the war. And Stalingrad cellars. All that made you different. You don't get out of such things unscathed.”

“Unscathed! Certainly not. But Gehlen's not the point.”

Careful, Helmut Hartmann! Links are links, so don't ruin this because of my proclivity to pardon Gehlen personally just because he too had betrayed the Nazis who had destroyed my generation. Several generations ... only to make even greater concessions to his own egomaniacal opportunism and maybe to a greater evil in his urge for power. Ute knows the truth. She knows Major General Gehlen sold out everything to the Amis. Although the transformation from sanity to madness of our generation was swift, the change back to sanity is an endless process. Civilian life is not easy either.

“You know what I mean! An all-important *what*. Gehlen and Pullach mean cynicism. And it can make you incapable of love. Real love. We forgive too much in our times, don't you think, Helmut? We forgive the Nazis. We the German people forgive ourselves.”

“Ute! Please. *Ich bitte dich*.”

I hear the forlorn tone in my own voice. The despair that she's right even though we both seem to feel enjoined to follow our instincts to let ourselves be enveloped in the succor of ... of nascent love. So, for a while we sit quietly, both of us thinking, thinking, thinking. Thinking of how things might have been. People do that often in these times: think of how things might have been. We sip our now stale beers, awkward and in uneasy indecisiveness. And casting surreptitious glances one at the other as if real love in these postwar-torn times were something unprecedented. Or something undeserved. Or danger itself.

On the tram back to Grünwald she tells me about her relationship with another student at the university. An American! By chance, he was an Ami. At twenty she was pregnant. But he never knew. He left her life and never knew his daughter. And now we *are* speaking of love. Yes, I was thinking of the love so lacking in my life. Signs of our times. After the mayhem, everybody is subconsciously looking for love. One of the few real life values left. The only way back to normality ... to normality after the brief glories of conquest and occupation of Europe to our cellar lives of impending defeat under the ponderous buildings of Stalingrad in the East ... and the eternity in the cellars of our newly destroyed world at home. The normality that seemed unobtainable after a life imagined by madmen. A life built on unjustified illusions, then dismantled on the tremors of ravaged hopes ... and which for many terminated in their irremediable death wishes.

But Ute knows the answers. She's never forgotten love and selflessness and the power to transcend tragedy.

Back again in the Alter Wirt in Grünwald. Coffee and Weinbrand on the table. An east wind has come up outside. Cold is coming. My cigarette lighter flicks a nervous flame. It always works. Thirty times in a row. It could do a hundred times straight. In the cold cellars of Russia we competed. Winner takes all. My Zippo always won. Won what? A slice of horse meat at the most ... or maybe rat meat.

"How did you get into all that?"

"All that what? You keep saying that."

"Gehlen's Intelligence. Stalingrad. The turtle that got through?"

"I was Sudetendeutsch until they resettled many of us in Germany. So many of us here that we called it Münchenbad ... after your Karlsbad. I always knew the spa by its Czech name."

I think: 'Maybe it saved me too ... to meet Ute Friedrich.'

I digress to the spa just to postpone love talk and to try to say something sensible to a normal German woman. Karlsbad or Karlovy Var, as if that name were something to clutch at and cling to for a generation that went wrong.

"I called it Karlovy Var as I learned it in elementary school in then Czechoslovakia. So did my mother. But for my fanatical father the spa was always the German, Karlsbad." ⁽⁴⁾

"For mine, too", Ute says, now again looking at her watch. "Their generation! We went there summers but I hardly remember it. Mother said he just had to take the waters once a year. Always in good health ... yet he never came back from Russia. I think I was six the last time we saw Karlsbad ... Karlovy Var."

"You sound like me today, interviewing the returning POWs from Russia ... who think they're being interrogated. That's my job ... talking about the East. For the Amis. And espionage, sometimes finding Russian deserters to send back to Russia as spies for the Amis."

"Should you be telling me all these things ... must be top secret?"

"Oh, it is. I assure you. Top secret. But talking about it makes me feel free—and generous—just to say it out loud. Back then, back before the real war in the East began—peace pact with Russia or not—our invasion of Russia was around the

corner. Everybody knew it. Russian speakers were needed. So since I already spoke Czech they sent me to a top secret language school in Oberammergau for Russian studies. Nearly the same language, they thought. Many many months, day and night. It was urgent. I spoke like a Russian. So Gehlen and the Amis want me so I ...”

“Helmut! Please stop! You have to stop ... for now. My daughter. A babysitter. It’s late. I have to go home. To Pullach.”

“I’ll drive you.”

“No, no, I have my car. Uh, tomorrow, if you like. Here?”

“Why not where I live? The Schloss Hotel. Just around the corner from here. Great view of the Isar Valley. Good restaurant. Tomorrow is strawberry day. Strawberries and whipped cream! Can’t imagine I’m even saying such things. Back then we lived in mud and ice and ate rats in the cellars of Stalingrad. A realm apart from the rest ... a filthy battleground that was our residence during the day. At night a kingdom belonging to the black rats and now it’s bizarre that in the Schloss Hotel I request the smaller berries, tastier and tenderer than the big enticing ones. And I want my shirts ironed just so. Man is truly schizophrenic. Man can get used to anything ... for survival.”

THEN THERE IS THE POWER OF WAR

I, Helmut W. Hartmann, Sudeten Deutscher, WWII, German *Abwehr* Military Intelligence in the East, flown out of Stalingrad in January 1943 and now an agent in top secret Gehlen Org, recognize the two real societies of this post-war Germany: on the one hand, the overwhelming majority of the defeated and only partially repentant society. And on the other, the occupiers, the Amis—not the French plural of friend—but the derogatory Amis-Americans. For we of the Gehlen Org know who really won the war: the Russians won the war. Not the Amis. The Amis occupied us but the Russians defeated us. That division still exists in some of our minds.

But in me something new churns. New visions take form. Ute’s presence in my life has pointed out a new life direction. A new path. Something I’ve never before perceived. Never imagined. A feeling of potential fulfillment. Of totality. An almost unbearable sensation. After the everlastingly hopeless cold and *zapach voyny* of Stalingrad’s cellars, I had never had an idea, not even the presentiment of the existence of such a feeling. Survival was my one and only life goal. Arrival in Munich as a resettled German from former Czechoslovakia: survival. War: survival. Rat-filled Stalingrad cellars: survival. Survival at all costs.

During the next nights we wake with heads together on the same pillow, mouths close, her breath, my breath. Moments when hardly even the shadow of memories remain, the fleeting perception of the suspicion of something of the past, a vague remembrance of cold and rats flashing across my mind before dissolving again into her breath. I had always told my comrades that something of our pasts—of our collective pasts—resists seclusion and solitude. That something always remains. Somewhere in us. So on those dark gelid mornings they would ask me the Shadow as they called me, Herr *Schatten*, if any *Gespenster*—ghosts of the night—remained.

They knew that my own personal *Gespenst* was only a black rat. One of the *Gespenster*-shadows running over me in the night. And now, some mornings, on the balcony looking out over the Isar Valley toward Pullach, she sings, deep, guttural, no hint of melody, drunk on love and hopeful sleep deprivation and we never think of sleep. No wasted time for us, yet we believe we have an eternity ahead. And on our pillow, I don't see ghosts or black cellar rats. Ute's breath holds them at bay.

Over breakfast she asks about Gehlen. Hesitantly, she asks. No secrets from you, I reassure her, in one sentence purposefully breaking all the rules of my profession.

"What kind of a man is he?"

"Mysterious. But a child. Or a rat. Secretive by nature. Cynical. Believes in nothing but Reinhard Gehlen. At first, his Foreign Armies of the East Intelligence and also the *Wehrmacht* Intelligence in the East, of which I was part tried to report the real truth to the Führer. The Leader didn't want negative truth. Unfazed, General Gehlen began working for himself. Mentally he began preparing to change sides. Was he a Nazi? I suppose he was. But already in 1942-43—like many top staff officers—he knew Germany had lost the war. Just a matter of time, he and the others believed."

"How did he know?"

"Ute, after that first winter, we all knew. Germany wasn't ready for Russia. Germany would never be ready for Russia. We didn't even have the right clothing. How could we beat the cold? The Russians just fell back ... and waited. And they died for their land. Oh, how they died. By the millions. Civilians too. The SS men just killed anyone or everyone behind our lines. Did you hear about Zoya? No, how could you? A heroine in the Soviet Union. At eighteen she was a partisan behind our lines. When the SS hanged her, she said: 'There are two hundred million of us. You can't hang us all. They will avenge me. Stalin is with us. *Stalin s nami*. Stalin will come.' And even the SS knew they couldn't hang them all. You can't defeat people like that ... and the cold too."

"We had a few people like her right here in Munich. Sophie Scholl. Guillotined her! Not far from here."

"Good ... but not the same thing. *Komisch*, whatever we Germans speak of, we always come back to such stories. Sometimes I wonder why and how I got through and survived. And all in one piece. Oh, Ute, stay close to me."

Ute smiles her crooked smile that is becoming familiar. Her unique, unbounded and incomprehensible smile. One corner of her upper lip raised slightly higher than the other. And then the flick of the tip of her rose-colored tongue. The things Ute does! But how I love that tongue flick.

"Anyway, Gehlen began collecting data, saving maps, stashing away the true information about Eastern realities. At war's end, probably even earlier, he found his new sponsor: the United States. By 1946, his Gehlen Organization, Gehlen Org, was set up in Pullach, across the Isar River from where we're sitting now and where you live. It's staffed by Nazis and infiltrators from the CIA who are more Nazi than the Nazis themselves."

“Helmut, you *are* in the wrong profession.”

“Profession? It’s a job. I was never a Nazi. I got into Gehlen’s intelligence service thinking I was serving my country ... well, sort of my country. At least my people. But I never learned anything else. Only war! That’s what my generation knows. War and more war. War and survival. We didn’t learn other things ... Real life things.”

“You definitely are in the wrong job.”

“You’re right but I’ve never known anything else. Still, I’ve got to get out of here.”

“Good idea! That’s something to talk about.”

“Talk? They hear me talking like this, I’d not only be out of a job, but really ... really out of everything. Did you know? —I mean, how could you know in your film studio dedicated to what’s fictitious, how could you know of a hit list of two hundred people right here in West Germany to be eliminated? Easy to get on that list. Deserters are the first. They kick me out of there, Ute, I might as well go back to Russia. You don’t just resign and leave them. You don’t get fired with a separation settlement either. Very powerful people down there in our Pullach. Evil people. And they made the CIA ... as much as the CIA made the Gehlen Org! Violence is doubly terrifying when it’s in your own house. You become a prisoner in the prison you helped build. They emasculate you. They unman you. ”

“Can you write, Helmut?”

“Write what? Situation reports? Russian troop displacements? Reserve strength? Troop morale in the Russian Third Infantry Division in Stalingrad? Leadership of Russia’s Tenth Army? Oh, yes. Maybe even dispatches from the Eastern front. But write? Screen scripts? No way.”

“Journalism, I mean. War stories. The cellars of Stalingrad. Eating rats. You have so much to say. Life experiences. Your stories make my scripts banal. Insipid and puerile. And all without that suffocating atmosphere of hyperbole we use there in Geiseltal.”

“How? Where? And you don’t even believe it’s impossible to leave Pullach?”

“I believe you can. Leave, I mean. Others do. Even CIA agents leave and then write books. You can too. I’ve read about them.”

I don’t answer. But I know the rules. In peacetime I had just continued along the same old fucking rat-infested trajectory. Now, love flowers and changes everything. And so, the weeds must die, I think poetically.

“I will introduce you to an old friend at the *Münchener Anzeiger*. Then we’ll see. You have a life story to tell. Fiction too, if you like, based on your horrible life experiences. That kind of thing. For that you need magazines. I know a few. You might even go to Russia yourself instead of sending others ... see what’s happening there now ten years later.”

“Nasty, Ute! Nasty,” I respond, for a moment my voice quivering. With ... with what? Indignation? Hopefully not pride. “But you’re right and I’m wrong.”

“Welcome to a new world, Helmut. The real world.”

“Now I hope to get fired ...and not unceremoniously assassinated.”

For all the wrong reasons I had thought there was nothing to be undone in me. Ute and love undid me in no time. A few words demolished me. Was I not a man of one piece? Of a morally rigid rectitude? I had few expressible convictions but admittedly an unspoken acceptance of things as they stood. There must have been in me a terror of the unforeseen disaster of Germany, a history which time could still turn around. Yet, before Stalingrad, I hadn't even perceived the dwindling sense of sublimity that our real history had always promised.

HANNICHKA

The first time I saw three-year old Hannah, I called her Hannichka. She laughed. So for me she has always been Hannichka. But I couldn't see Hannichka when and as I wanted. She and Ute had to remain secret. I wasn't sure why I felt that way, but I knew if our relationship were public Ute would be investigated; mysterious people would question her neighbors and enquire about her at the film studio. I wanted none of that for her. No, Ute must remain secret. So I couldn't just drop in after work—when there was an after-work. No, I had to drive my service car to Grünwald first. Park. Enter the Schloss Hotel. Have a drink. Wait a while until I knew the watchers were satisfied. Then change cars. In the hotel garage I have an old Opel from my father. And then I could drive back to Pullach. What kind of life is that? Inconsolable thought. Caught between the anvil and the hammer. The flimsy glories of the plane tree-lined streets of my past were false images, belied by the stench of the rat-infested cellars of Stalingrad. Confining and dangerous to stay in Gehlen Org; suicide to leave. Escape was a chimeric hope to clutch at. For what was I except an old agent from the East, potentially, perhaps inherently a danger to the new masters.

One Sunday Hannichka and I leave her mother breakfasting on the Schloss Hotel balcony and set out by tram for downtown. Destination Blumenstrasse and the *Marionettentheater*. As the Strassenbahn winds its way along rubble-lined streets, where, I know, a kind of parallel life is going on in the cellars, Hannichka frowns and comments on the *fallen down houses*. Destroyed cities strike children. Good she wasn't under one of the fallen down houses. By now they've transported much of the detritus of former Munich to a growing hill on the old city airport of Oberwiesenfeld from which you get a sweeping few of the razed city of the Wittelsbachs.

On the street Hannichka holds my hand. Handwritten words on walls read *Down With Hitler- Nieder mit Hitler*. Church bells everywhere. Catholic Bavarians! The first thing they did after the bombs stopped falling was repair the church bells.

Hannichka pulls my hand and looks up at me: "*Glocken! Schöne Glocken.*"

I'm not Catholic. I'm not anything but I love the *Glocken* ... at a distance when they're soft and inviting. Not overhead, where they sound like artillery about to strike.

"We'll tell Mami about the pretty bells," she reminds me.

At Sendlingertorplatz a legless old man is sitting on a board. Hanging on his chest is a placard with the message:

Forget the color white

Choose red

The color of love

When I put two marks in the wooden plate, Hannichka asks what I bought. *Liebe*, I say. Love. She looks at me funny and holds my hand tight. A cool wind has come up. Rain is on the way.

Fischer, Seine Frau is playing in the puppet theater. The miniature opera house is packed with kids. The fisherman's wife wants it all: Mayorship, Presidency, Papacy.

"Oh," goes Hannichka when the witch flies across the boards to the far side of the stage to berate the fisherman. "*Ist sie gemein?*"

"Mean? I think so, yes," I say hesitantly. "Maybe a little cuckoo, too."

Hannichka looks me in the eyes seriously, nods, then smiles and taps her temple with a forefinger.

All the kids are yelling comments to the puppets moving so lightly, barely touching the boards. Pure grace. Speaking mostly Bavarian dialect. Hannichka understands. She would yell too the next time.

Soon we would learn most of the repertoire. *Kasperl* and his adventures, *Hänsel und Gretel*, operas for children. Hannichka cries and laughs and claps and I hug her, and it's like hugging Ute.

Hannichka and Kasperl and the *Glockenspiel* convince me that Ute is right. This is real life. The war is over. I've got to get out of it.

TEMPORARY RESOLUTION

"Ute, I have wartime friends in an Alpine village in Italy who still invite me there to the hidden valley called the Valtellina. They were saved by Italian Communists interceding in Moscow on their behalf and repatriated in 1946. We can leave it all behind us. I have some hidden funds. You have enough. We can live well there. You can write. I can try to write. Hannichka will live a normal life."

"Will you feel safe there? That is the question. For you, for me, for Hannah."

"Yes, Ute. We'll vanish, for now. Our Europe is huge. Its expanses. From Gibraltar to Greece, from Palermo to Berlin, from London to Sofia. The Alps and the Carpathians. The plains of Serbia, the steppes of Russia. The world's greatest cities are in our Europe. DeGaulle's Europe reaches to the Urals of Russia. Those unimaginable distances ... most marking our continent that our leaders have failed to delimit ... Napoleon wanted to. Then Hitler. Put it all under one roof. It never worked. We will be concealed somewhere in the immensity."

"Yes, my love, but huge in comparison to what? For a script I'm working on I had to study world atlases. I found that Europe is small. Actually, Helmut, we're not even a continent. It's clear and visible. You just have to look."

"Not a continent! Then what are we? What is the meaning of those words 'on the Continent'? You think we won't be safe down there, across the Alps ... inside the Alps in the Valtellina?"

“Oh, yes, we will be safe and secure. For now. Today, distances are still great. But tomorrow things will change. Wide highways and fast trains and cheap airplanes will change everything. And other Napoleons and other Hitlers and DeGaulles will come along and try to get us all under one tent. They’re already talking about a union. Borders eliminated. One currency. Then you’ll see how tiny this tip of the Euro-Asian peninsula called Europe really is. And Helmut, who really cares about us Europeans? Oh, we’re quaint all right, our many incomprehensible languages and folksy ways and the taint, just a breath of danger attached. Foreign tourists love this bunch of once rich and divided countries with no voice in the real world. You think the so-called Cold War has anything to do with Europe? Europe is just the battleground, as usual. Oh, yes, it’s a question of power, you know better than I. But it’s not a question of Europe. Europe is war territory. A war zone. For the war between the Amis and the Russkies.”

“Then no one will even think of us hidden away in those southern Alps. As if we never existed.”

PART TWO: OPERATION NIKU



Figure 2 By Ion Chibzii - Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu, at the Chisinau airport - 1" (August 1976).
https://www.flickr.com/photos/ion_chibzii/6157690329

I met Ramon on a bright October morning at the hour I like to watch the changing colors of the mountains. I was standing near what people in this Alpine village call the ‘holy place’, a spot marked by a red and blue ribbon fixed on a low stone wall running along the edge of the road on the hill above our house down in the village center.

It was still quite early. Quiet reigned everywhere on the hill overlooking the valley called the Valtellina. I’d been observing a man strolling up the road toward me. I had only glimpsed him a couple of times entering a house two doors down from our home on Via Piazza. At some ten meters distance he grins at me as if I were an old friend and says *buon giorno* in a crisp yet somehow lazy Latin manner ... so different from the speech of the serious mountain people of Montagna, a people whose seeming completeness in their insouciance and their isolation from the rest of Italy is still inexplicable to Ute and me.

After an exchange of greetings, he speaks in such rapid Italian that I understand only that he’d seen me and *la bambina* walking up our street. “Oh, pardon! *Che lingua parla?*” he asks, leaning toward me and speaking louder than usual as people do to foreigners. “*Inglese ... English?*”

When I begin in my slow school English, he hears my accent and guesses correctly: “*Deutsch!*”

His name is Ramon. Ramon Dumitru speaks excellent German ... but he's not German either. So that I wonder how it happens that this non-German is living in this small Alpine village and how it happens that he speaks German so well. Ramon is about my age, and from his surname, Dumitru, he can only be Romanian. He's of average height with longish light brown hair and blue eyes making him look Scandinavian. A handsome man and apparently a man of some means, he lives with a good-looking Italian woman, not a native of the Valtellina either.

Now I'd known Romanians in my *Abwehr* Intelligence unit in Russia and there were Romanians in the Gehlen Org in Munich-Pullach ... from which I am fleeing. So having him as a neighbor in tiny Montagna is, to say the least, alarming: like policemen intelligence people don't believe in coincidences. And mysterious Ramon, man of several languages and considerable experience, is my neighbor!

So as we talk about where we come from it becomes clear from his allusions that Ramon too is connected with the Gehlen Org. And that he too has lived in Munich. And because he mentions Pullach, which in Munich is almost synonymous with the secret spy world. That realization makes me uncertain whether I should avoid him or gain his confidence and friendship.

From where Ramon and I are chatting, down in the valley the River Adda appears narrow, speckled with rocks jutting upward out of its shadowed swirling blue-silver-white waters. Although it resembles Munich's beloved Isar, I've come to dislike the Adda despite the river's attempts at mystery to overcome the reality of its brevity and the feebleness of its fluvial character. As it fights its way through the city of Sondrio below us the river appears uneasy in its confinement in the narrows between steep cliffs on the one side and solid rocky banks on the other. And uncannily it transmits its uneasiness to me. After issuing friskily from the Alps high above Stelvio Pass as if in search of freedom and after brashly cutting its way through the valley, farther to the west the Adda becomes navigable, stooping to offer cheap tourist jaunts, before, humiliatingly subdued, its waters fall meekly into Lake Como. I dislike the River Adda because it resembles the Europe in defeat that shows in European faces. The defeated Europe I am fleeing from.

Ute, three-year old Hannichka and I left Munich in late September in the event-filled year of 1955. And even though the war had ended ten years earlier, the sensation of defeat still infected the nature of Europeans: so many historical events were taking place in the world that year that most people felt small and fearfully alone. After the conflagration of world war, the countless millions of dead and suffering and ubiquitous destruction, there were millions of lonely and uprooted people still wandering around Europe. It seemed the whole universe was displaced.

Like the day I met Ute in the Gastätte in Munich-Grünwald, she'd still retained a fragment of her inherent aloneness even though she had her small daughter, Hannah, the generation of the future. And since the cellars of Stalingrad, aloneness was my very nature, too. I was the personification of aloneness.

Now today in Alpine Italy, where everything is different, we are again displaced, yet our togetherness is our defense against the pandemic malaise of loneliness. In that sense at least our separate lonelinesses are over and done with. Moreover, the presence of Ute's daughter simplifies such matters also for us; for Hannah is three-year old happy that we are all together ... and I believe because she now has a father. Actually, the only person she misses from Munich is her faithful baby-sitter-friend; she still wonders why Gudrun didn't come with us.

Ute and I had each arranged our personal affairs in such a way that we could simply drive away from Munich into the night: Ute became a freelancer for the film studio; while I—despite my qualms because of the nature of my work in top secret intelligence from which separation is rare—had dared resign with a mere registered letter mailed just before our departure ... actually the kind of rupture you prefer in life. A registered letter bears heavy. It marks an end.

We traveled in Ute's roomy Opel, the car crammed with our stuff and skis on the roof. We passed through western Austria, into Switzerland, southwards past St. Moritz and the four-thousand-meter-high Piz Bernina, its peak a peculiar bluish red in a spectacular dawn sun. We entered Italy's Valtellina at the town of Tirana before turning west to our new home in the Alpine valley. On the map the valley called Valtellina appears as a long appendage to the belly of Alpine Switzerland, a long and narrow valley delimited in the south by the Orobie Mountains—beyond which lies classic Italy—and the Rhaetian Alps in the north, on the flanks of which lies the village of Montagna hanging over the city of Sondrio.

Now, a month later, Ramon steps unwelcomed into my life. A symptom, a signal and reminder of the severe and brutal rules of the life from which I am separating. So, Ramon is often on my mind. What to do is the question. Though I'm not exactly on the run, I don't want my presence here advertised either. Discreteness is the rule. And, except for Ramon, my new life is a discreet life.

Sometimes I get up early mornings in order to see the unblemished whiteness of the light the sun casts on the mountain tops surrounding us, gradually eroding the resistance of the mountains to the loss of their pristine blue of the first dawn. That's the moment when I perceive that the dawn's clarity might complete the healing of my Stalingrad wounds. For colors in the Alps are different. Stronger in their brilliance. And early mornings is the time when any change might magically materialize. The time when the sun of the Valtellina begins its daily battle against the silence of life

that to us newcomers seems to withhold more than it shows. A people harboring invisible lives.

Montagna is also like the silence of a life not yet lived that you can feel during cool moonlit nights. In the Alps, the blue of morning is an uncanny moment for me personally. The moment when if you listen to the air and the color you can come to believe the ancient legend that all things lost can be found again on the other side of the moon.

It is in the blue of those mornings when the purity of the valley below stares back at you the highflying observer in admiration that I feel most strongly that this is the time when Ute, Hannah and I have the chance to cut out new directions in the enduring postwar: just our being here in these chaste sparkling mountains offers us a new life. A life so different from our lives in Munich that I believe we will eventually succeed in shedding the look of defeat concealed underneath the superficial gaiety marking European faces of our times. The sham that marked my life, too, before Ute. So I put my hopes in a life among a people in whose vocabulary words like Iron Curtain and Cold War will one day no longer exist.

Ramon and I meet often on the hill at the 'holy site', the name by which he said the priest at the Chiesa di San Giorgio and now most villagers call the place on the wall where we're talking. Sacred because it was here that a young Russian painter from Paris performed a miracle: he tied the shoelaces of the ragged village idiot who'd never before spoken and who from that moment began speaking perfect Italian. Right here. At our meeting place.

"A Russian? Here in Montagna? Pretty odd."

"Odder than you and me being here? Two spies!"

"Ramon, you're a spy. I'm not. At least not anymore."

"*Smotri*, Helmut! The whole fucking world is upside down. "

"Very true! But I'm not a spy. You are!"

"Anyway, there was this kid everyone called the village idiot because he couldn't speak. And because he was dirty and dressed in rags. So one day this Russian guy is sitting here on the wall when the idiot walks by, his untied shoelaces flapping. The Russian gets him to sit down and tries to teach him to tie his shoelaces. The Russian finally ties them himself and the kid starts talking, BUT, the idiot doesn't want to learn to tie his shoelaces. He wants the Russian to do it. So the Russian does, every day, every day the ritual, and they become pals. Then the priest pronounces it a miracle and calls this spot sacred. He's still waiting for recognition of the miracle from the Vatican."

"So what happened to the Russian and the idiot? Where'd they go?"

“No idea! There was some car accident involving the idiot, so maybe the Russian took him back to Paris.”

Or, on some afternoons, we meet in Grigione’s bookstore just across the road from our observation point. The bookstore is more a meeting place than a commercial activity of which in Montagna there are only the caffè and a tiny, unattractive trattoria. The store interests me in particular because the proprietor too had lived in Munich for twenty years and had returned to his home to open his dream bookstore ... not so much to sell books, Grigione says, as to collect them and live among them.

Still, I ask myself if Grigione’s presence here, all his books and German newspapers, are coincidence, too. Or am I paranoid?

Ramon is a different story. It becomes clear that he’s a very ambitious man—a typical Romanian characteristic he himself once said. The sky is the only limit for him. And he is prepared to risk everything to get there. Now I think he just wants to become an influential rich American... as if he were no longer accountable to his former self.

For that reason, his apparent patience with life in this village is out of character. He’s always waiting. Waiting and waiting. So I wonder for what? And in any case, why here?

The day at the holy site I mentioned Stalingrad, he reacted in a curious manner to my admission of my *Abwehr* background and that I was in the cellars of Stalingrad before the surrender of the German Sixth Army. In his soft, almost sensuous manner he revealed that like many of the 580,000 Romanian soldiers in Russia he too had been in Hitler’s army at Stalingrad, but that unlike the hell it had been for me, it was a wonderful time for him: he’d been assigned to General Reinhard Gehlen’s *Fremde Heere Ost*, FHO (Foreign Armies East) a German parallel intelligence organization. He never ate horse brains broth or rat steaks.

For myriad reasons—my *Abwehr* background, my Gehlen link, my coming here from Munich and my presence in Montagna—Ramon believes I am still linked to Gehlen. For he too is hiding ... from something or someone. And in his mind so am I.

UTE FRIEDRICH HARTMANN

Sometimes Ute falls into an impenetrable silence, a sense of stillness within her, a sort of total lifelessness in which she doesn’t speak at all. In such moments she doesn’t want to be talked to by others whose words meet a silent stone wall ... as if spoken in some Andean dialect. Then, abruptly, the moment passes and she starts again in her usual reflective manner.

One day when I asked her what it was like in the homeland during the last days of the war she emerged from such a silence as if she'd been thinking precisely about that period.

"After the bombings, I felt ... I felt unraveled. Totally. So at the end the thing I most wanted was silence, the silence of other unraveled people like me." She pauses, reflects and says mysteriously: "I aspired to the presence of those words that are never spoken."

"Which words? Which words do you mean? And was your American conqueror -friend also unraveled?" I asked anyway ... as I always do when the film of separation sheds her eyes and I feel a certain jealousy of exclusion from the her of those times.

"Oh yes, he was unraveled. And how! But he was just too, too ... oh, how can I say it? Too innocent. Too American. Too young ... both in years and experience. He didn't know what war was. He'd never known bombs falling. He didn't understand things like we do. He was searching, I suppose. He was good and decent... but too young in every way. Young like I imagine most Americans are. And he had no real center. No roots holding him in place like we once did. I liked him a lot but I would never have married him and gone to America with him. What would I, a European to my quick, do there? Submit to another? No, I wasn't ready to abandon my own self. I was pregnant but I sent him away so I could have Hannah alone.

"But what about love and romance and all that in your life. Didn't you miss it?"

"Oh, yes, of course. But love? I have always needed love. But I came to realize that I can love only a man who still wants to change the world. Who wants to make things better ... and who doesn't expect my submission. Maybe I too am just a fragment. Maybe we all are. But I want control of the fragment that is me."

"So what about me? You show that you love me ... though I don't want to do anything to change the world."

"I think you do. You just don't know yourself ... not yet. The world has had its way with you ... until recently. Now you've said: *genug!* Enough! You showed you are one of those who want to go beyond. (Go *jenseits*, she said, meaning out there into unexplored territory.) Some women don't like that. It seems too abstract. I do though. And you changed all our worlds when you broke through and brought the three of us here to this village, to this valley where things are quiet ... but mysteriously, maybe secretly, alive."

"I was just running. But then, Ute, it was the right thing to do."

"The right thing to do, the right thing to do! Of course it was. Helmut, I recognized you when I first saw you. When you came to my table that day in

Grünwald carrying two glasses of beer. That look in your eyes of the man constantly reviewing his own life. *Ecce homo*, I thought. And then, Helmut, your father-daughter relationship with Hannah cemented also our relationship.”

Ute was right. I wanted to be together with her and loving her I also wanted Hannicka to be my daughter. So we married and I adopted Hannah. And we became the Hartmanns ... in Germany. But in Italy, Ute retains her name: Friedrich. She likes that. But her daughter is Hannah Hartmann. I like *that*. Complex laws indeed!

This morning, again, after a long silence at her desk during which she hadn’t moved even a hand, Ute said: “To think that we’re only a day’s drive from our old home but that our new home in the Valtellina is itself a world apart. Melancholy. Silent. Maybe lonesome. Officially, a *depressed area*. And—just imagine, this isolated valley hasn’t known real war for centuries. Only Mussolini’s defeated Fascists wanted to make a new country here. But that was just a dream.”

“Hmm!” I muttered and waited. There was more to come. Extraordinary the duality in that woman!

“So why do I suspect that a feeling of hopelessness lies underneath these people’s veneer of joy and exuberance? Helmut, I sense in them the spirit of a conquered people. Like us in that. People here are separate, yes. But they’re not a race, nor a nation. Yet they are at least a people. But then maybe all Italians—also those down south beyond the mountains—are like these people. They’ve been conquered so many times that ...”

“Yes, Ute, but they’re still here. Italy absorbed the conquerors. Phoenicians and Arabs, Swiss, Germans, Austrians, Normans and Spanish. Some conquered and victimized peoples do that. Over time the victims prove to be stronger than the victimizers and suck the essence of the conquerors ... and their features, too. Like the Norman blood running through the veins of those blond and blue-eyed Sicilians I read about? And those of the dark skins of their Arab conquerors.”

“What a mishmash our Europe is! Because the conquered also take on some of the characteristics of the conquerors. Some of them anyway. Like Italian guest workers in Germany, the *Gastarbeiter* ... they seem arrogant and superior but submissive at the same time.”

“Not the Russians though. Maybe they’re the exceptions. Not the ones I encountered anyway. They are a people, a nation and even nearly a race. *Russki Narod*. The Russian people. How many times I heard it. *Russki Narod*. The invaders arrive and they conquer only scorched earth. No sustenance for invaders there. *Pustaya Territoriya*. No invaders can undo them ... not like the occupiers have undone us. Why we’re even becoming more like them, the charmless but powerful occupiers. For a while the Russians were conquered and slaughtered, but they never

surrendered. They never surrendered anything of themselves to us Germans. Nothing. Only *pobeda* counted. Victory. There were some traitors, of course. There are always some weak of spirit. And then, remember, even Gehlen himself was a traitor.”

“Helmut, you’ve never told me how it really was in Stalingrad. You don’t like to talk about it. But I need to know. How can I know you if I don’t know this about you?”

“Stalingrad. Ute, I talk about it with myself non-stop. Stalingrad. I see images. Random images. Flashes. Fragments. Forty below zero, denim uniforms. A slice or two of bread per day. Some soldiers used their entrenching tools to crack the skulls of frozen horses to make a broth from the boiled brains. Then, the war. How can you operate a submachine gun when your hands are completely numb? How can you take shelter from the cold anywhere when every building is in shambles? Wouldn’t a fire attract too much attention from the enemy? The snipers. Theirs and ours. A terrible kind of war. You’re eating frozen horses’ brains, and the next second you’re dead. If you take refuge in the sewers where everything is frozen Russian patrols find you ... since no able-bodied German soldier would protect you down there. In those times Russian war prisoners were left to freeze and starve to death within open-air enclosures ... after having been stripped of their *Valenki*-winter boots. Reports of cannibalism among them. Later on also among Germans within the Pocket of Stalingrad. But of the 90,000 Germans that surrendered, most died of typhus in the POW Camps. Still, curiously, some of us in Stalingrad remained fatter than others. Then we discovered the ring of cannibals. My rat steak was likely a human steak. Oh, Ute! It’s just too much to put into words. Better such words remain unspoken.”

“Easy. Easy,” Ute said softly. “But about conquerors and the conquered, we Germans are different! We too absorb our conquerors, but we become much like them. Not people here. Here, underneath, at their quick, people here in the mountains and valleys are resilient and resistant and complete. No one is like them ... except maybe your Russians. Still, in their sense of completeness, they’re careless. An indifferent kind of carelessness as to what is happening across the mountains to the south ... or now that I think about it also carelessness even about those secret armies lurking in Italy’s hidden places that you talk about with Ramon.”

“Oh, Ramon! Incomprehensible Ramon.”

“I’ll never trust him. And I can’t understand your tolerance in his regard.”

“Maybe tolerance, Ute ... but little trust. I don’t understand him. Therefore, my suspicion of who he really is. No trust in him whatsoever until I learn what his game is. And, Ute, I’ll find out one way or another.”

The month of October passed. Time seemed strange in those days. Clocks didn't go. Time fell off, as if forgotten. Until one evening we went with Ramon and Giuliana to dinner in the neighboring mountain town of Teglio, where by chance my Communist friends live. Ramon said we had to taste the *pizzoccheri*, the pasta specialty of the area. Our first time! Hannah knew the word and called the town by its name in dialect, *Tei*, like the older kids in the kindergarten. Incredible how small kids can learn a foreign language so quickly; even if she had no idea what the word meant. She just parroted the others ... and soon the word fell into place.

Teglio is a very old town. Also a town of stone. Stone walls and streets where in the mysterious darkness of winding alleys and artistic arches the dark courtyards give off emptiness and loneliness ... even the negation of life. Where for long moments I hear only the sliding of my own feet on the stones. The smelly brown-red flames of the torches illuminating its ancient streets make you aware of the deepness of the dark mountain night. In the crisp air the bougainvillea hangs heavy, sad and colorless in the shadows. Their world of shadows is frightening. And I hold tighter Hannah's hand. I still have the curse of dark and cold cellars. The antediluvian silence of the timeless obscurity of Teglio's non-illuminated alleys recall the terror of late night ruins of Stalingrad streets where time had stopped. And I shiver inwardly.

We enter a sprawling cobbled piazza from which wider streets branch off. The little mountain town has suddenly become vibrant and alive with people and cars bringing loud diners from villages stretched across the flanks of the Rhaetian Alps. A fountain-like pond in the center is illuminated by low-hanging street lamps to exhibit groups of white and pink water lilies, uncanny flowers that emanate no scent at all. I look down at Hannah. She is frowning and says that the lilies look sleepy. "*Sie wollen schlafen*". And after a hesitation: "*in questo chiasso.*"

"They're sleepy ... in this noise," Ramon translates both languages automatically.

The restaurant is animated. Waiters rush back and forth, getting the pasta to their regulars first. I look around the room, searching for the once familiar faces of my friends, uncertain and a bit forlorn that I would not recognize them after all the years. Then over the *pizzoccheri* we talk randomly about our new home, the mountains and the valleys while I peer about the space, from one table to the next.

Ramon and I gradually drift back to the war. Both of us Stalingrad veterans. Both of us with links to German Intelligence and with Gehlen. In veiled terms we recall how each of us experienced it and how we remember it now, ten years later. My memories: horror. His: adventure and excitement. Yet somehow our memories overlap, perhaps because of our similar origins: I, from the ethnic German part of Czechoslovakia and he, from nearby Romania.

What interests me is how Ramon sees the war now. War in general. The thing is he's not anti-war at all. Yet he's so charming—probably deceptively so, because, I realize, I've never seen any signs of genuine kindness in him. Politeness, yes, But little real kindness. Little real warmth. Cold underneath his words. He seems to constantly suppress a wild ferocity toward the world ... like the cruelty Romanian soldiers in Russia displayed toward the conquered. Although the war treated Ramon well, he still has a terrible hate in him. So, he seems shocked when I blurt out my anti-war feelings.

He and I truly see the world with different eyes. While I speak of my attraction to the idea of the collective of the Russians and all that implies for postwar Europe, Ramon professes a total individualism. He thinks it is the war that made of him a complete and accomplished individual. And he has no illusions whatsoever about the collective, whether, as he says unambiguously, of the Stalin or of the Hitler stamp.

While I feel the ugliness and the horror, the uselessness of what we both experienced, Ramon sees it as a breakthrough for himself, the chance for a new understanding of life. Still, Ramon remains undefined for me ... and unconfined in his ambitions. He has already grasped chance. *Carpe diem*, he says, is his motto. *"Enough of a life of blind abstractions. Enough of feelings of hanging suspended between the two worlds of the old, brutal pre-war and the new problematic postwar. There are three drives in man, Helmut: ambition, a great idea and inspiration. I choose the first. No more suspension for me; no more abstractions; only reality counts. Communism, capitalism, fascism—even freedom—are just chains. Ramon ist und bleibt Ramon. One individual. Here I am, complete and done. Enough submission. Enough of just letting happen whatever seems destined to happen. I am for me."*

He pronounces his vicious convictions in short phrases, in a low voice, in German, his Latin eyes gleaming, his facial features momentarily transfigured. Then he stops to translate to Giuliana, who has sat silently, a permanent look of bewilderment on her face that she was hearing such talk here in Teglio. Heavy talk. Heavy like the pizzoccheri we are eating.

I start to object, then shrug and turn back to the too heavy pasta. You can't argue with ambition. Ute, who usually listens to such talk in silence, opens her mouth to protest but then she too remains silent. Her silence rings like a message to me: 'Don't ever trust that man.' Meanwhile, Hannichka has dropped off to sleep, her head in my lap and I stroke her hair absent-mindedly.

"Ramon," I say to change the subject, "I've wanted to ask you about your travels. One day you're here, the next day you're gone ... and you're gone for some

time. Giuliana gets lonely, you know.” We’ve gotten to know Giuliana during his absences. And she loves Hannah and Hannah, her, which has endeared her to us.

“My parents in Romania are old. I have to take care of them. I go to visit when I can, see to what has to be done ... and I put things in order,” he says in his ambiguous manner.

“So why not take Giuliana with you?” Ute asks naively. She doesn’t suspect that his visits to Romania—if he goes only there and not also Munich-Pullach—are not family visits at all.

“Oh, it would be boring for her,” Ramon begins, his light eyes turning steely as if unseeing while his voice remains low and surprisingly melancholy. “And then Romania is so complex ... now.”

I’ve never believed for a minute that an ambitious man like Ramon spends all that time taking care of his parents ... who anyway seem well off, now. I suspect his work has to do with American and Gehlen relations with Romanian Communists.

“Oh, Gehlen and CIA people too know about my friends in the Romanian Communist Party,” he says in German. “They approve of it. Want me to go ahead with it. They’re curious about my predictions of a brilliant future for an ambitious guy I know pretty well, named Nicolae Ceausescu.” ⁽⁵⁾

He had told me that the Romanian Leader, Gheorghiu-Dei, was not well. Many changes will happen in Romania when he dies. And I believe the new Romania to come is part of Ramon’s job: courting Ceausescu, who just last year was named to the Politburo. Now, for whom would Ramon do such tasks? For Gehlen of course. And for Gehlen’s bosses, the Amis. U.S. policy is to drive a cleft in the new Warsaw Pact of Communist East Europe. And Ramon is one of their doubles. A double agent.

Ramon had also told me that Romanian Communists are divided between the “home Communists” in contrast to the “Muscovites” loyal to the Moscow hard line. Ceausescu would become a popular man in the West—but a maverick in the East because of his “opposition” to Moscow. “Nicky”—as Ramon sometimes calls him—believes Romania should be a world power.

Ambitious Ramon sees himself on a future Ceausescu team. A Trojan Horse in Communist Romania. Ceausescu like Ramon wants to be part of the West. Ramon is pissed that Westerners don’t even know that Romanian is a Romance language ... thinking it’s Slavic. Spoken Romanian sounds Italian though the grammar is different, and words have different meanings. He likes the example of going to Roma ... or Bucharesti. Italian: *Oggi vado a Roma*. Romanian: *Astazi plec la Bucuresti*. He has me repeat it over and over until I hear clearly the Latin language in the phrase.

“Romanian is a Romance language, Like Spanish and Portuguese. Like Italian itself,” he adds. “And we belong in the West.”

“Speaking Italian came to me over night,” he once told me, “as it happens to most Romanians living in Italy. Shows how close our languages are. Crazy, when you think about it. But after all we do belong to the West. Niku thinks the same. He wants to head the Non-Aligned movement. Wants Romania—*his* Romania—to be more than a satellite of the Soviet Union.”

One day from my window I saw three men get out of in a black suv parked in front of Ramon’s house. So I waited. Sure enough, when they came out, there were four: Ramon, elegantly dressed from head to toe in black, did not look happy. He kept looking over his shoulder and saying something to Giuliana standing in the doorway. From my front steps I waved. He only blinked in recognition.

Spontaneously I thought: Gehlen people.

Ramon returned three days later. That same afternoon we met at the holy site. And point blank I asked him where he’d been. Almost carelessly, he sat down on the wall just next to the red and blue ribbon marking the sacred spot.

And he looked up at me and said: “I was in Pullach.”

Some time passed. Then I said: “So?”

“So, there were also Amis present,” he said and grinned evilly. “And now I’m top priority.”

“Top priority? What does that mean?”

“Before—I learned—they’d just scanned my reports and filed away my stuff about the man in Bucharesti—Nicolae Ceausescu,⁽⁶⁾ the man I’ve mentioned to you. Now they’ve decided to make a big investment in him. And I’m a double.”

“Why that? Why him? And what kind of investment?”

“Even though my previous reports were ignored, big changes are coming. Nicky—Niku as they prefer to call him—has become official. ‘Operation Niku they call it’. And I am the point man in the field ... for a while at least. I suspect only for as long as they need me.”

“So you’ll be leaving us and Montagna?”

“Not for now. I’m more secret here.”

“Like me, eh?”

“They didn’t even mention you!”

Still, his story rings outrageously crazy. Oh, the eternal femaleness of intelligence agencies: always searching for the grand project, the great operation, the person to change the course of history ... like the other half of their souls. And they expect to find love there ... for their efforts. On the other hand, they are infected with the eternal duplicity of maleness: war and blood ... and the same search for love. Yet, for their reasons, whatever they are, they’ve let me go. I’m free. But they’ve found a double! A feather in their caps.

So today I feel good and secure in these mountains hanging over the Valtellina. We will stay here in this land surrounded by the Alps. Our sanctuary. And refuge. Where the greatest noise—Hannichka's *chiasso*—are the infernal bells of the Church of San Giorgio. So that I've come to feel that those turbulent bells mark the regular passing of time, the regular manner in which we want time to pass. Regularly passing time is emblematic of the security fragile humans search for—and, for Ute and me, a reminder of our reality ... and at the same time, of who we are. They measure and synchronize our lives with the passing of time, here so uniform and unvarying. If it's true as Dostoevsky said that time itself is both illusory and eternal, I too am admittedly still in search of a perfect time. And perhaps San Giorgio's bells moderate time's mystery by lying to us that time is even, regular and always the same. Sometimes I am soothed by the church bells insisting on that constancy. Other times I am disturbed by time's very passing—each clang marking another fragment of the time of our unreal uprooted lives—after all, only a one day's drive from home.

PART THREE: THE POWER OF WOMAN



Figure 3: Gudrun Ensslin, extracted from *Das Abonnement.jpg* and edited for effect

On their return home the Hartmanns did not expect to find the same Munich they had fled from two decades earlier. Nonetheless, they were surprised to find what seemed another city altogether. But then, they realized, they *had* been gone twenty years. Those years had transformed not only the visible city they had known but had also erased that unseen but perceived air of defeat and prevailing gloom of resignation on the faces of München's people.

During their absence—their exile, Helmut called it—the piles of ruins and skeletons of bomb-demolished buildings of the devastatingly foreign city of then too had disappeared. Now, the palaces and great buildings—in regal Munich called *palast* and *palais*—had been recreated in all their magnificence ... precisely as they were before the war. Yet, the old men on their fourth mass of beer in the big hall of the Hofbräuhaus on a Saturday morning swore that this was not the real Munich either, the Munich of when Mensch was Mensch and a mass of beer was a full liter, and—back in the good old times—when even the beer was sweeter.

None of the three had dreamed of a return to Grünwald and Pullach ... least of all Hannah, who didn't remember where they had lived before Italy. Only from hearsay was she even German. For Helmut and Ute, too, that former life was over and done with. Again in their homeland they were beginning everything anew. And as Ute noted, Helmut acted as if he'd never had an enemy in the world. Yet, he too, the repeat returnee, had his black memories. His private black holes. Remembrances of the bad times. Of totalitarianism in his world and of what for a time had seemed the absolute evil, the embers of which he felt smoldering in his depths. The combination of the same circumstances had hindered his return for the two long yet short decades in Italy.

He said he didn't desert his home country as he thought he should have. On the contrary. He'd felt he was the abandoned one. He'd thought he could never forgive his homeland for its betrayal. And even less than others could he forgive it its evil. Unfeeling evils in the homeland and in the unspoken words of the contagion it emitted spreading across the Atlantic ... only a pond it turns out separating them one from the other. Only an easily traversable pond. One evil had produced another.

For at least the first ten years abroad he'd been vocally bitter. Today, that bitterness had matured like smoldering embers to combat level. Society was changing. He was rebelling against that evil still circulating ... as it had before his exile, refusing to eliminate itself and become extinct.

And today, yes, as through a veil darkly, he repeated to Ute, he could see his own rebellion swirling and whorling in the Teutonic air.

He and his family were starting over. And they were fortunate ... in many ways, Helmut recognized. They were free of economic restrictions: they could choose any part of the city they fancied to live in ... space was the foremost requirement. Helmut Hartmann was now an affirmed journalist; Ute Friedrich, a screen writer. And Hannah, a twenty-three-year-old beauty, newly graduated from Milan University who wanted to live her own life, continue with her painting, and above all learn what her Germanness really was. And what it meant to be a German today. Were all Germans still either devils or rehabilitated angels?

The Hartmanns settled in a big duplex penthouse on the corner of Teng- and Elisabethstrasse in the heart of the academic, cultural district of Schwabing: Hannah upstairs with a light-filled studio and her privacy; Ute and Helmut downstairs where they too had separate studios.

Now, Helmut thought, after my youth in Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia, after dislocation and resettlement in Germany, after Stalingrad and Gehlen Org in Pullach and after the Valtellina in Italy, I finally have a set location. And the keys to it. It's mine. It's ours. So now the rest is all up to me. And perhaps with help from fate or the omnipresent *sudba*, the sound of which he loved in Russian. I'm not done in ... nor am I done yet. I'm only starting out in life. A beginner. A *pivello*, as Hannah said in Italian of herself.

MUNICH

The city. Hard to get a handle on. Again he walked the city. From palais to palais, from bridge to bridge along the banks of the Isar. The new luxury apartments in Bogenhausen replacing the rundown postwar *plattenbau* blocks. Not only the physical city was different. Helmut, man of several countries, felt different.

The city. Helmut felt like a transplant, a *Zugereister*, as Münchenerers called new arrivals. He saw things today in a different light. People of the city were different. They had forgotten the bombs that destroyed their city. He had been sort of Czech, Czech-German, German, Münchener, sort of Italian. Now he walked the city he loved in search of his own Germanness. He saw Hitler's places clearer than before under the rubble. He saw the beer gardens. The Oktoberfest. But avoided the beer cellars that real Germans loved. He rode out to the airport. World travelers, these Germans. Stared at lines of people at the racetrack placing their bets. Münchenerers all? He walked to Nymphenburg Palace to see the Amalienburg, the rococo hunting lodge in the palace park. Jammed with foreign tourists. Took the tram back home

The city. September mornings seemed cooler than before their life in Italy. Only occasionally sunny. The usual dark clouds hung forever in ambush. Clouds that might unexpectedly part and a rare deep blue sky would peep out and sunshine crash down onto their corner of Earth and turn the Isar waters to silver. The constant rain and sudden sun and showers were like everything else; life was so unpredictably different from the southern Alps of his last twenty years.

Real Munich was not the city Helmut had conjured up in his imagination while in exile. Today he didn't know what to make of the city he had loved in that crazy postwar way. No more than he had known what to make of the real Italy, the Italy down there over the pre-Alps to the south of their Valtellina home. His contact with "real Italy"—as he called it—was chiefly Milano while Hannah studied there and he and Ute visited her. But Munich was still part of him. And he'd once been part of it: he'd been at the parades celebrating its 800th anniversary; at other parades the day the one millionth Münchener was born; he'd followed the reconstruction of the war-ravaged Bavarian State Opera House. Now it was all reality. The Königsplatz was again like before the war.

Wherever he had been in the East or later in the Alps or Milan, it seemed his way had always led back to *föhn*-blown Munich—protective eye shades against that warm southern wind from the Alps, air purifiers, and endless anti-allergic Pernods notwithstanding.

Milan-Milano had reminded him of his imaginary Munich, the trams winding their way over narrow cobblestoned streets through both cities, both their cathedrals heavily damaged by Ami bombs. Or maybe it was only their same initial M. And the night train of Wagons Lits running between the two cities. In any case, now, in reality, they did not seem so different one from the other as he had once imagined. They were sitting near the big window in Ute's studio on one of the dark mornings that Helmut thought of as symbolic of Munich. From the fourth-floor lookout he was

watching Hannah rush down the wide sidewalk of Tengstraase in her firm, self-secure gait.

“Ute,” he said, following Hannah’s familiar figure nearing the corner, “I can hardly believe this young lady and university graduate is the three-year old I used to take to the Puppet Theater. Time got away from us, now that we’re back home again, the twenty years in Italy seem to have hardly happened. Just another memory ... of a place we used to know.”

He frowned at his own words, cleared his throat and lit a cigarette, the snap shut of his Zippo lighter ringing louder than usual as if it too doubted the count:

“Twenty years, Ute! Twenty! And our child is an adult.”

“That’s the way time is, Helmut. It’s never even and regular as we like to think. It’s our clocks and calendars that confuse us. And day and night ... and the seasons. It’s our life, yes, but all its images still end up in scrapbooks ... with the rest of life.”

“Right. But still, still ...” He lost his train of thought. Ute was so philosophic.

“Still what, my love?”

“Well, circumstances change so fast. Us, for example. While Hannah was growing up, you and I did so many things. Think of that a bit. And we just stayed on in Italy that was never ours. Year after year, another decade, then another. We could have come back home years ago ... but didn’t. Why didn’t we?”

“Well, there were Hannah’s schools and her friends and then just a way of life ... we got used to it.”

“But you and I? We never really amalgamated. We lived in Italy ... even though the Valtellina didn’t always seem like Italy. We adapted. We know our way around there; we know Italy, but we remained who we were: Germans.”

“But also Europeans!” Ute added.

“Makes you wonder!”

“What do you mean? Wonder what?”

“Wonder about being also Europeans. Seems like many people are perplexed about what it means ... to be a European, I mean. Every day I ask myself if I even want to be one any longer.”

“Still, some people do want to change things around. The whole system, I mean. Nazis destroyed our generation and now they’re coming back to power. And not only here. Crazy, no!”

“New Europe is at the city gates!”

REVOLUTIONARIES OR TERRORISTS?

From Italy, Helmut Harmann had written about the Red Brigades. His own newspaper, *Münchener Anzeiger*, called the anti-capitalist *Rote Brigaden* “terrorists”. But not Helmut Hartmann. For him they were a “resistance movement”. Revolutionaries. Like in Russia. Like in France. In wartime Italy too. Resistance was resistance to aggression. Resistance against enemy invaders. To mad Nazis they considered terrorists to be punished, again and again for such thoughts. While rumors circulated about assistance from the Palestinian PLO and from Communist East Europe and while millions of Italians lent the Red Brigades their moral support, his Romanian friend, Ramon now a big wheel in Ceausescu’s socialist government in Bucharest—who still came for short stays in Montagna—swore that no one in East Europe would support “Red Brigade terrorists.” Especially not since the Italian Communist Party too had disowned them. Deserted by the official left, the extreme left *Brigate Rosse* ended up alone.

In those post-1968 years, Helmut, writing from Alpine Italy, had concentrated on the Red Brigades. Now, back in Munich, he zeroed in on their cousins in Germany, the Red Army Faction, or RAF. He knew their history well. Both revolutionary underground organizations were born between 1968 and 1970, part of the backlash to the US war in Vietnam, RAF chiefly because of the return of so many Nazis to positions of power in West Germany. After his return to Munich in 1975, Helmut also traveled around Germany, frequently to Italy, and occasionally to Paris to speak with Italian left-wing revolutionaries who’d been granted asylum in France after the crackdown.

Had he himself not fled from Germany to Italy in the first place because of the widespread Nazi presence in power in Germany, especially in Gehlen’s organization where he worked? He knew first-hand what was happening in Germany. But then came the disillusionment at the CIA-Gladio-Fascist power in his country of exile. His journalism by its nature was of the investigative type: his goal, he told Ute, was to uncover the real power centers in new Europe: political power always infiltrated opposition groups like the Red Brigades, like RAF. Political power turned them and used them against themselves ... and the nation. History shows it, he thought: the worst enemy of revolutionaries is within themselves.

He loved the quote from a letter Gudrun Ensslin—co-founder and the intellectual brain of RAF—wrote to her companion, Andreas Baader: “... *what’s been missing in the European fight for socialism over the last 100 years is the element of ‘madness.’*”

HELMUT SEIFERT HARTMANN

Winter. The low December sky, dark and dreary. From his window he observed the winter east wind blowing from Elisabethstrasse. Small trees near the corner bent nearly to the pavement under the force, then magically rose again straight up during a lull. Visibly cold out there. Down on Tengstrasse a man wearing a winter coat and a Russian Ushanka hat pulled down over his ears leaned forward into the wind in a mighty struggle for supremacy. Had he too been in Stalingrad? The man was carrying two bottles of milk, one under his arm. Suddenly Helmut knocked on the window and shouted:

‘Careful, the bottle’s slipping.’ It did. *Kaklop kaplash* on the sidewalk. A pond of milk and glass surrounded the lone man like a stranger in a strange land looking in consternation at the spreading white mess as Helmut’s philosopher friend in the Stalingrad cellar did when his tin filled with horse-brain broth had slipped from his cold numbed hands and spilled; finally the man on Tengstrasse just shrugged and looking over his shoulder and wiping at the white on his shoes hurried on hoping no one had noticed.

That day Helmut had closed the door to his office-study in order to be alone with his ruminations. Again, as often of late, he recited to himself the only words he recalled of a poem by Jaroslav Seifert, the Czech poet his father had loved and even named his own son after him. *Sometimes we are tied down by memories/ and there are no scissors that could cut/through those tough threads/ or ropes.*

Now what did the poet have in mind when he added those two last words: ‘or ropes’? Why ropes? Black Nazi ropes? Ropes of habit? Of ingrained beliefs? Of Self? Of veils through which to see only darkly? Or ropes of total insulation ... stopped up with fingers in my ears? Things at times seemed so ... so amorphous, so without any form or structure at all. Inchoate objects about to become something.

In any case, after the cold cellars of Stalingrad, Helmut Seifert Hartmann came to love in a special way the poet’s words: *I believe that seeking beautiful words is better than killing and murdering.* And he saw himself as in a portrait, the portrait of a man who felt fortunate simply because he’d never killed anyone in the war ... never even shot the pistol which was just part of his *Abwehr* uniform.

With mounting dissatisfaction he turned away from the window and remembered there had been times when he admitted that he just didn’t give a fuck if they lost the fucking war. As a matter of fact, he’d hoped they did. But then, as he had in Stalingrad, he remembered fondly his father’s telling him again and again that in the 1920s his poet namesake was enthusiastic about the Russian Revolution and had joined the Communist Party. And secretly Helmut Seifert Hartmann regretted

that he had never had such a chance. An unhappy thought that never abandoned him. One of those hidden desires, words never revealed, words never spoken. For most certainly he *had* hoped to jeopardize the interests of his times, in which he, fortunately, was seldom the right age—either too young or too old. Only right on time for a dark cold rat-infested basement in Stalingrad where you could die either of starvation and cold or a sniper's bullet.

From the start he had never intended being a mere newspaper reporter. He might speak of himself as a reporter, but he knew he had too heavy a load of experience to even think of just reporting. To hell with conciseness and synthesis. Above all, to hell with impartiality. Roaming around in his fervid mind there were too many straightforward words that had to be spoken. Unambiguously. He'd written enough useless fact-filled reports for the Abwehr Intelligence to last him a lifetime. His postwar life was now over and gone, too. Gone, yet still present. For in a sense it still existed. The shadow that remains from disappeared objects and times and persons. Their shadow was still present. Stupid lifetime. Stupid experience, his military service. And Gehlen. Especially Gehlen. Another time of which he never spoke. In particular not of the Gehlen time. A part of his life hidden away somewhere between his subconscious and—if it existed—the unconscious to which Freud referred. Hopeful monster of an idea! In his active memory at least Gehlen time was definable: the most evil part of his life experience! However that may be, he repeated, the sum of those experiences are mine alone.

But, one thing is clear, he thought, slapping one hand into the other: 'Stalingrad made me into what I am today. For good or for bad. At least that. So unlike his Romanian friend in Montagna, Ramon, who had described Stalingrad as wondrous adventure—after it was over.

But the pure experience of Stalingrad, the gritty-gritty part, the rats and the cannibals, tough but life-determining experiences—no actual report writing from a cellar!—had left him exposed, transformed and transfigured. Converted to something, or to someone else. Never would he lose the memory of it. Oh, no! Never. He struggled to hold tight to that memory ... in all its nuances, all its ramifications. Stalingrad was the long moment that changed him ... and its memories became his memories. His right. His possession. His obsession.

Yet, he told himself, he didn't think that his experience was exclusive to him. Selfish. Bourgeois individualism—a word he'd begun thinking of late. And had even spoken once to Ute, inadvertently. He recalled how she had looked at him in a funny way.

Komisch! Still, in the end the mind gets its own way. *Bourgeois individualism*, he repeated to himself. Yet, others had a right to his thoughts about his experiences,

too. The Buddhist part of him wanted to share them. His thoughts. To transcend the sorrow and evil of his personal experience. But not completely. Not totally. Not expressly so. Share it more simply, but also more complexly. Share a life experienced in a certain way. To accomplish that, he feared, he would have to dig deeper into himself ... to be able to explain it correctly to others. He too loved simple words, everyday words, as did Seifert the poet. He thought in terms of essence, in terms of the core of people and things ... even if of invented people and things even though still, still, still, inchoate and amorphous. But invented by himself. Ex-novo. From nothing to something. Words had to form inside him and emerge from him. Words. Most of which were still unspoken.

Above all, Helmut hoped for an eventual understanding of what his life was really all about. And the words to ignite the fires to light innocent minds and to boil the frog croaking those words inside him. Those would be real mental fireworks to heat the minds of his readers.

As a rule, he was careful speaking about such matters—mad deviations, mad inventions, mad conclusions—even with Ute he was wary. Because then she always said that was why he had to switch to fiction. But the idea was frightening. Not the writing part; the digging into himself was his fear. The fear of learning what he really believed. More scary than was Stalingrad when it was happening. No, it was not the putting it on paper that scared him. He feared he would dig and dig and dig and then find he had gotten used to the idea of a Stalingrad being possible. Normal in the life of a man. That would be disaster.

ERICA-ERIKA

One dark windy afternoon in Munich when you knew the early morning rain was returning, Hannah dropped in to introduce her new friend, Erica.

“Erica!” Helmut exclaimed spontaneously as any German ex-wartime soldier might. “Her name is Erika?” He thought of her name with a “k” instead of a “c”.

They both looked at him funny. As did Ute. He just shrugged, a strange look on his face. He would explain another day about the song.

Erica Valente was from Trento, the twenty-five year old daughter of Austrian parents, bi-lingual like Hannah. They were a striking couple of young women. Dark haired Hannah; blond Erica. Both taller than average Italian women. Though there was something Germanic about them, they both had a flamboyant Italian flair in dress and manners: their skirts a bit shorter, that extra something in dress such as Erica’s red high-heeled pumps and Hannah’s multi-colored silken scarves. Still, Hannah, like

her mother, was a bit more conservative. Today they only exchanged greetings before they disappeared upstairs to Hannah's studio

Back at his desk, Helmut stared out the windows for a long moment, a perplexed frown in his eyes. There was something disturbing about Erica, though he couldn't put his finger on what it was. He sensed discrepancies between her actions and her words. Flamboyantly show-off in one moment, shy in the next, And there was a certain reticence in her words, something unspoken about her. Something like his impressions of his friend, Ramon, the Romanian in Montagna in the Italian Alps: Ramon was ex-intelligence, worked also for Gehlen and for unexplained reasons regularly disappeared from Montagna. Erica's almost imperceptible manner of seeming to withhold her real self could seem to be timidity Though they had just met, he didn't attribute her restraint to bashfulness; she was anything but demure. Such first impressions count, the former intelligence agent reminded himself. Still, in those few minutes together she had made the impression of one who lived life as if on the theater stage. She did smile too much ... though often at the wrong time. And as it turned out she too, like Ramon, disappeared for days at a time.

"Hannichka, you don't help me to *dipanare la matassa*, to untie the knot, that is Erica," he often complained to his daughter, using an Italian expression just to show off his acquired Italian that she knew like the native she nearly was.

"Papa, she's just a happy person. Doesn't know what a bad mood is." Hannah saw only joy in her girlfriend, whose mysterious absences she overlooked.

"Well, the way she just disappears from one day to the next is a knot that needs disentangling. I'm not blind, *Schatz* ... I see you too are perplexed by her vanishing like that. And then she never explains."

"OK, Hannah, where is Erica this time?" Helmut asked his daughter another day when she sat staring at a painting propped on what seemed a lonely easel ... in that moment as extraneous to the unfinished work as it was to her.

"Who knows? She left a note in my mailbox saying not to call her or even ask about her ... that she would see me next Saturday, That is, today. Her usual signature, *see you later, alligator*."

"What's your friend up to, do you think?"

"I can't figure it out. She's always so open. Always. So this habit of just vanishing is simply *bizarro*."

"What do you say we take a walk, Hannah? Think things over. And I want to see Hohenzollernstrasse again."

"Again? Erica lives there, you know. Why? Have you been there before?"

“I lived on this street when I was a student before the war. So did a lot of artistic people in those times. Kandinski lived here. Had his studio down near Leopoldstrasse.”

“I didn’t know that. How wonderful to know.”

“And for that matter so did Werner von Braun, the physicist, once a Nazi, I think, and one of the inventors of the atomic bomb ... but on the side of the Americans. Didn’t seem to care for whom he worked ... on all those nasty projects. Used for mass murder against the Japanese. No morality at all in that man.”

“But the bomb put an end to the war, no?”

“No! Hannah. No! The war with Japan was already won,” he said, clearing his throat ever so carefully. “The Japanese were trying to surrender. Beaten and crushed like we were. The truth is that Braun’s Ami bomb killed the Japanese as a message to the Russians. Not to win the war more quickly. And as a test on real people. That’s why they used it... Why, the Amis would have bombed their ally Russia instead of Japan if they’d had it a bit earlier.”

“Cynic! Anyway, Papi, why this street now?”

“No matter. Just point out where she lives. On Hohenzollernplatz ... I seem to remember. Hey, oh, my God, would you look at that. Even a metro station here on the *Platz*. I loved this street. But it’s so different today The architecture resplendent, the cafés ... and now the traffic that wasn’t here before. And the metro station right here. The best city transportation in the world!”

“No, Papa, she doesn’t live on the square. She has a small flat in a famous apartment building farther down ... at number 58.”

“You’ve been there often, I suppose?” he added looking off down Hohenzollernstrasse as if distracted. Which he was not.

“Yes, many times.”

“Hannah, please listen to me. You have to stay away from there. Let her come to your place ... but I hope you will avoid Hohenzollernstrasse 58.”

“Papa! Why? Why would you say a thing like that? What is it? Are you jealous?”

“Hannah, my dear daughter. Please! Just stay away from her house. It’s a hunch. Things are not what they seem, I know how some things work in this country.”

“Well, you seem to know something I don’t. Much more. So tell me. Then, well, we can talk about it.”

“The thing is, Hannichka, we don’t always tell everything about ourselves, do we? Maybe there’s more to the story. Doesn’t she have a man friend ... at her age and so beautiful ... with the world at her feet?”

“Oh, Papi, don’t be so ... so *albern*. So silly. I don’t either ... have a man friend, I mean. Not right now. Not since ... well, not since Milano.”

They stopped in front of number 58. Hannah pointed out a third floor window. “Erica’s tiny apartment! Great location, no? I just love this street.”

“How many apartments are on her floor anyway?” Helmut asked, studying the width and depth of the building and humming to himself *EEERikà*. “Maybe ... just maybe she has more space than it seems.”

“What do you mean? She has two rooms, the one that faces the street, then her bedroom and bath and the kitchen.”

“Maybe there’s an adjoining apartment. Something bigger. Have you ever seen her neighbors?”

“No, but I don’t get what you’re driving at? I know you have reservations about her ... but why your interest for the other apartments around her? Or is that your old intelligence syndrome showing?”

“Well, Hannah, I do have my past to deal with. But then there’s also my work today. Erica told me she knew Renato Curcio in Trento ... also his wife, Mara Cagol. She also knew Alberto Franceschini. The Red Brigade founders! Then here in Munich appears this beautiful girl named Erica Valente from Trento. Lives most of the time in Munich. Is not even Italian, but Austrian. Has no official job. Happens to be bi-lingual like you, German and Italian. Keeps disappearing. I would bet she knows Andreas Baader too ... and Ulrike Meinhof and Gudrun Ensslin. Ask her about that... And they’re all—the real RAF warriors—but all in prison.

“So now a second-generation Red Army militants—and Red Brigadists, too—have taken over. And I fear they’re supported by Gehlen-Gladio-NATO-American infiltrators who have different tasks altogether. They’re the real danger for you. A police contact told me that even they have orders to go easy on them ... on the second generation. And Hannah, these militants seem more terrorists than revolutionaries. They’re more violent, too ... and less ideologically driven. They don’t care a whit about moral restrictions. Nothing counts but them. And, Hannah—also their controllers. Controllers do exist. And controllers have their controllers ... many from across the Atlantic. Believe me. So that’s why I ask you to stay away from here. You never know!”

“So what? You like the Baader-Meinhof people ... at least in your articles you never criticize them. You don’t call them terrorists, as others do. You criticize our government, say they’re all Nazis. So Papa, where do you really stand?”

“Well, aren’t they? I *am* for RAF. For the real Red Army Faction. But I am NOT for those who become shock troops for the fascist government ... and for America’s interests. Nazis or would-be Nazis actually run things again in our country

anyway ... and it's spreading. This is all so rotten, Hannichka. Just so rotten ... at the very core. Evil. Bad for Germany. And to think I went to Stalingrad for this! And thousands of kids were there too. Kids went to die in Russia on orders from these people. Adult Germans were guilty, yes. Many! Most! They didn't just permit Hitler and the Nazis. They became supporters. They shared Nazi victories. Read our writers today. Read Böll. Read Günther Grass. Read Ulrike Meinhof! Nazi hosannas filled the squares of Germany, then the squares and the piazzas of Europe. Sang their songs. The good soldiers sang *Erika*, about a little flower, a *Blümlein* in the heather, *EEErikà, und das heist... EEErika*, even if thinking of a girl back home. And people sang the Nazi anthem, the *Horst Wessel Lied*, *Die Fahne Hoch, die Reihen fest geschlossen*, nearly all arms raised in the Nazi salute. Believers. Kam'raden, die Rotfront und Reaktion erschossen, /Marschier'n im Geist/ In unser'n Reihen mit.

"They were the system ... along with a lot of other Europeans and Americans. Americans perhaps more than others. But we Germans did much more than just go along with it. We were on the front. German people were the Nazi system ..."

"But not just in Germany, Papa. Oh, no. We're not the only guilty."

"We? *You* are not guilty at all. Erica is not guilty. Your generation is not guilty. Mine is the guilty generation. And not only Germans. Nazis all over Europe and America helped the center. Where do you think all that money and support came from? Anything to smash Communism in Russia. Twenty-six million Russians dead, the Jews, the gypsies, the homosexuals and the political dissidents.

"But also many seventeen and eighteen year olds and younger, Germans and Russians, Italians and Romanians, paid for Nazism with their lives in the East. I had a friend in Stalingrad, who'd been a history professor before the war, in Cologne. He was sick on the subject ... especially after we all knew the war was lost: *Just wait!* he said. *They'll be back. Give them a foothold, just leg room, and they'll return, like Erika flowers in the spring*, He knew his stuff. The most prescient person I've ever known. So today, just as he predicted, the Nazis and their heirs are back! Everywhere. Actually they never left. After all that, they're back in power.

"Nazis are again in German politics today. In government. In business. And many are slipping into the academic world. Many in journalism. They're sneaky, join secret societies, take bribes carefully. But they're there. Where I worked before we escaped to Italy, in the Gehlen Intelligence Org, they were *all* ex-Nazis. Still Nazis. But the Americans there, with their good humor in their bright smiling faces, they were the worst Nazis! Those with all their blessings, with their exceptionalism and their exoneration from the rules of others. And they're still that way! The SS is back. They didn't talk about it but they were that way. When I interviewed war prisoners returning from Russia, Germans like me, they were afraid I was the SS. In Montagna

where you grew up, our Romanian friend became a double, a double agent, sent back to Communist Romania ... by Nazis. A big wheel there today ... and he works for us too. Trust is the word in today's world, Hannah. Trust. But nobody has it. Trust, I mean. Trusts means mistrust. Deception. Trust is an extant word. An unspoken word! Nobody trusts anybody. You know what the greatest modern discovery is? The traitor! Politically correct traitor. That is to say that a traitor is not necessarily your enemy. Not at all. In fact, he's your potential friend. Why? Because in our age, and where I once worked, you want to send him back to where he came from ... as a double! So trust now means untrust. Crazy world, Hannah, dearest. Crazy! Your mother likes to say that the 'whole fucking world' is right-wing. Actually she uses the word 'Nazi' instead of right-wing. People like Ulrike Meinhof and Gudrun Ensslin understand. They are right. And yes, I feel, uh, well, I feel sympathy for them. No, I feel much more than mere sympathy. I feel love for them. But still, I don't want to see you in jail with them now ... though like many people, I admire those who take that extra step ... like Ulrike and Gudrun ... and rebel against the whole system. The whole politically corrupt, Nazi-inclined, Ami-subservient system."

"Papa! Papa! You paint a black picture! A black picture of people ... and of my country. A country I'm just now trying to discover."

"That's both good and bad. Good you are learning the truth. But you must be careful. Very careful. Ok, Schatz, I agree. And there *are* things in life worth suffering for. Going to jail for. In some cases. But not needlessly. You can't help your country from a padded, sound-proof isolationist cell like Stammheim ... unless you're a martyr. Unless you're like Zoya the Russian partisan in Russia: 'You can't hang us all.' In a cell like where they're holding Ulrike Meinhof. Oh, yes, she's a hero ... for today. For a few people. For more than a few. But tomorrow even they too will have forgotten her. And her sacrifice will have been in vain."

"Wait! I have an idea. What do you say—if you can stay away from your canvases long enough. Let's get your mother and lunch today at the Osteria Italiana over on Schellingstrasse. In memory of former times. *Va bene?*

"OK, but Erica is returning this morning. Supposed to come around noon ... if she gets back from wherever she was."

"Good, she's invited, too,"

OSTERIA ITALIANA-HITLER'S FAVORITE MUNICH RESTAURANT

"Beautiful, lovely ladies! Here we are in this fine restaurant that they say Hitler loved. Opened in the early thirties, I think. Nazi place? I don't really know. But the food is good. For years it was the only Italian restaurant in old München-Stadt.

Speaking of Nazi places—words seldom spoken these days—we have to understand the situation in this country after the war ... in order to understand ourselves. To understand other Europeans, and other peoples of the world. That's the key. The Nazi was the key evil. The ur-Nazi, I mean to say. We know who they were! And I don't mean the Aryans. ... and, uh, I really do love RAF!" he said, looking at Hannah, but, thinking of Erica. And that song, *und das heisst ERIKA!*

He felt his loquacity on his lips. The power of pre-lunch vodka, he admitted to himself. The strength of one hundred camels in the courtyard, he thought, quoting to himself the writer Paul Bowles. The women stared at him curiously. Ute, too, but she nervously, urging him to lower his voice.

Helmut peered around the room of big windows, green curtains and red carpets spread here and there over polished parquet floors. He felt they all considered him some newly discovered caveman. Or a madman. The Munich effect, he called it. The restaurant was quiet. Whispers from all corners. A tinkle of glass against glass. Heads bent over plates of pasta. Everyone pretending they didn't overhear him. Here and there a nearly finished tiramisu, an espresso, or simply hypnotically blank white whiter than white tablecloths. He hoped his words hurt. He hoped he wouldn't be welcome another time. No one wanted to hear the words being spoken across the room for all. Words that should remain unspoken.

"Young people of the postwar left are really pissed off at the older generation," Helmut added. "Official *denazification* was a farce. Former Nazis hold positions in government and the economy. The Communist Party was outlawed in 1956. Ex-Nazis everywhere, right down to the local level. They love the judiciary. Everybody knows. Adenauer, the first Federal Republic chancellor until 1963, even appointed a former Nazi as Director of the Federal Chancellery. Conservatives run the media—the important mass-circulation tabloids are controlled by the same conservatives that permitted Allied-U.S. occupation of the country and organizations like that of Reinhard Gehlen where I worked. I used to go to certain offices in the I.G. Farben building in Frankfurt miraculously untouched by Ami bombs. Gudrun Ensslin and Andreas Baader should have bombed it instead of the department store! Europe's biggest, an early multinational, used slave labor from Auschwitz while producing Zylon B to kill them in the gas chambers. Now office space for the victors. Oh, I.G. Farben was never their enemy ... but an ally. So I know what they were doing after the war. Still full of Nazis. This time Ami Nazis. Then and then and then, then came the Grand Coalition between our two main parties, the Christian Democrats and the Socialists of the SPD controlling 95% of the Bundestag. And the former Nazi Party member, Kurt Georg Kiesinger, was chancellor. The real left was horrified. All that meant alliance with NATO and the USA. And then in 1972 the neo-Nazis passed a

law, the *Radicalenerlass* that banned radicals or those of “questionable” political persuasion from jobs in the public sector. And still, there was the reality of the association of large parts of the postwar allegedly *denazified* society with Nazism. No wonder ...”

“Still, Papa, Why RAF? Why all this violence? Why are Germans killing other Germans?”

“Why the violence? People remember that in the 1960s—while we were in Italy—German students engaged in endless debates about the use of violence. There were great demonstrations right here in Munich, too. I took the night train for one of them. Oh, yes, we need a movement, they said. Oh, but please, no violence. Peace marches should be more serious. But what did that mean? Longer columns marching over greater distances? More placards? Louder voices? General strikes? But still, just no violence. Why no violence? Nobody wanted war again.

“Andreas Baader and Ulrike Meinhof and Gudrun Ensslin stopped dancing and drinking champagne and took to smashing that comforting air of non-violence. The RAF of Andreas Baader and Ulrike Meinhof made those comfortable peace marches seem like afternoon tea parties. They exploded that nice tea party atmosphere in Germany ... in Europe. Paris 1968 happened. And they threw cobblestones and called police pigs. But then RAF changed that, too. They show the necessity of violence for the revolution many wanted. RAF was the vanguard ... the one Lenin meant. Quite legitimate, some Germans came to think.

“Why the violence, you ask?” Helmut’s voice had gradually risen.

Ute tried to shush him.

But Helmut Seifert was on a roll.

“RAF people rightfully call my generation pigs. The Auschwitz generation that wanted to kill all of them, too. And so, Andreas and Gudrun and Ulrike armed themselves and then killed, too. Officially RAF killed some thirty-four people from the time of its founding in 1970 ... and twenty-seven of their own fell.”

“Papa, for God’s sake. Lower your voice. They’re all listening.”

“And that my dear is a problem. All the people here listen and whisper... But they’re horrified and ashamed, too. They know it’s true. They’re disturbed, Not by *my* voice. The good German people never raise their voices. The good people don’t—like these here ... the good law-abiding people keep their voices down. So, you don’t know their real thoughts, they too are unspoken.

“But here’s another thing: just imagine if they had raised their voices after the war. What might have happened here in, say the 1950s and 60s, if there’d been no U.S. military-CIA occupation? It’s hard to know for certain but we Germans have to try to understand. The right people have to speak louder, too. For what has happened

here is now happening all over Europe ... And that, my dears, is what our Europe is all about. A Europe 'run' by the USA ... without even the fiction of NATO or European Union, both staggering around in confusion ... already on the verge of collapse. But a Europe without Ami occupation? How would it be? We should try to picture it."

"So how would it be?" Ute, Hannah and Erica talk all at once. People around the room looking their way ... ever so discreetly ... whispering one to the other, overhearing but not really understanding the words.

"Different. I like to think so. I think of a Germany in some kind of a union of European peoples."

"But we have a union!" Ute adds.

"We have a union of bureaucratic governments and institutions creating ever new bureaucracies staffed by super-paid Nazi-inclined bureaucrats. We need something different from what we have ... on this, this gradually disappearing tip—just a tip, mind you—of the huge Eurasian continent. We're not even a continent. Not at all. We're just a tip of land in the world of the planet Earth."

"A real union of European nations is what thinking people want for Europe," Ute said. "Germans, Italians and French."

"But that's not what reformers do," Hannah added with a sigh.

"But it's what revolutionaries demand," Erica murmured, looking at the table and fiddling with a dessert spoon. "I suppose the first step has to be what you said, Herr Hartmann ..."

"Helmut! I've told you over and over, Erica, my name is Helmut. That's another thing we have to get rid of ... our exaggerated German formality. Are you too, of all people, going to call Ute, Frau Journalist Hartmann?"

"Sorry! But I meant it as a sign of respect. Anyway, Helmut, I agree." Then lowering her voice even more: "First, shut down NATO and send Ami troops home, then denazify all of Europe! And pay up for our past imperialism! Then we'll see who Europeans really are ... if they will finally pay in full for the past centuries of Euro-imperialism. There! Well, now I've said it."

The others stared at Erica in silence, she lifted her eyes. Helmut locked his eyes into hers for long seconds before he said: "Thanks for that Erica. I understand ... uh, I understand you. We're in complete agreement. And moreover, we have to keep in mind that thus far this RAF is a very European kind of thing ... chiefly a Central European matter. Do others know about our secret war here in Germany, in Italy, too? I doubt it. Or not much ... or don't understand it."

Another moment passed before he chuckled and added: "Ironical that this conversation is taking place in Hitler's favorite restaurant. The Italian restaurant in

Munich, in Germany. And we just wanted a good Italian meal. Turned out better than we could have hoped for.”

He looked around the table nervously. Around the room. For something to hold onto. “Uh, anyone for another espresso? Or should we order another round of Stalingradskaya vodka?”

ULRIKE MARIE MEINHOF

«Wirft man einen Stein, so ist das eine strafbare Handlung. Werden tausend Steine geworfen, ist das eine politische Aktion. Zündet man ein Auto an, ist das eine strafbare Handlung, werden hundert Autos angezündet, ist das eine politische Aktion. Protest ist, wenn ich sage, das und das paßt mir nicht. Widerstand ist, wenn ich dafür Sorge, daß das, was mir nicht paßt, nicht länger geschieht» Ulrike Meinhof.

(You throw a stone, that is a crime. If a thousand stones are thrown, that is a political action. You set one car on fire, that is a crime. You set one hundred on fire, that a political action. Protest is when I say I do not like this or that. Resistance is when I act so that that which I do not like, no longer occurs.)

For Helmut Seifert the young journalist turned revolutionary was a hero: Ulrike Meinhof, born October 7, 1934 in Oldenburg (Germany), died May 9, 1976 in Stammheim Prison in Stuttgart). Journalist, revolutionary and co-founder of the Red Army Faction. She would be celebrated in song, literature and film because she lived intensely and died like a corralled steer, a prisoner of the state against which she fought. Officially, a “suicide; for Helmut Seifert she was assassinated by the state ... strangled and hanged during the night on the bars of her cell window.

She wrote in an essay in number 14, 1968 of *Konkret* about the Frankfurt department store fire set by Gudrun Ensslin: *The progressive moment in a department store fire is not in the destruction of the goods; it lies in the criminality of the action ... in the breaking of the law. (Das progressive Moment einer Warenhausbrandstiftung liegt nicht in der Vernichtung der Waren, es liegt in der Kriminalität der Tat, im Gesetzesbruch.)*

And in the national weekly, *Der Spiegel*, number 25, of 15 June 1970: “Naturally we call cops pigs. We say the one in uniform is a pig, not a person, and so we have to fight him. That means we cannot speak with him for it is wrong even to speak with such people, and naturally shots may be fired.” (Wir sagen, natürlich, die Bullen sind Schweine, wir sagen, der Typ in der Uniform ist ein Schwein, das ist kein Mensch, und so haben wir uns mit ihm auseinanderzusetzen. Das heißt, wir haben

nicht mit ihm zu reden, und es ist falsch überhaupt mit diesen Leuten zu reden, und natürlich kann geschossen werden.”)

AGAIN IN THE OSTERIA ITALIANA

Helmut and Ute together with Hannah and Erica were sitting this time in a secluded corner table of what they all now ironically referred to as “Hitler’s favorite restaurant.” Only a few days had passed since the suicide-murder of Ulrike Meinhof. Erica looked shaken, bewildered and fearful. Helmut thought RAF, he thought Erica. Never Baader-Meinhof Gang. RAF it was. And Erica was somehow involved.

After a long silence while he gazed at only sullen faces around them, all seeming to be looking at him and waiting, he suddenly shouted: “Ulrike Meinhof was in the direct anti-systemic ideological line of Rosa Luxemburg and Sophie Scholl. Ulrike paid with her life for her anti-imperialism and anti-Nazism—as did Sophie and Rosa—not for her crimes. They are heroes. RAF, I mean. Or nearly all of them. One problem is there are always traitors. And traitors are dangerous,” he said, looking hard at Erica. And in his mind seeing Hannah’s friend’s name written with a “c”. Not the Germanic “k”. Though it would change nothing, nor would it bring Ulrike back to life, still he often imagined Erica, too, as heroic.

“Ulrike led a normal life before her fateful choice for violence. She loved dancing at balls in the Hotel Vierjahreszeiten in Hamburg and drinking expensive champagne. She was sentimental in a bourgeois way” Helmut said, (just as later the artist Gerhard Richter would define her in his comments about his fifteen-painting cycle of RAF leaders, *October 18, 1977* .

“But Ulrike’s mind worked in a different manner,” Helmut goes on, unrelentingly. “She thought we Germans had to change. She couldn’t accept a neo-Nazi Germany. As a student she turned every subject upside down. She was disturbing. Eventually, she became an editor at the Communist magazine, *Konkret*, married its publisher, Klaus Rainer Röhl, had two children. Pages on folio heavy stock of the biweekly were plastered on the walls of student rooms ... like those of Che Guevara today. Editor-in-chiefship of *Konkret* was not enough. She wanted action. Violence was necessary. But Klaus didn’t share her beliefs. They divorced and the magazine dissolved over the use of violence.”⁽⁷⁾

“And Ulrike? Disgusted with the inertia of the left, she joined what became the RAF, went to Jordan for arms training with the PLO and returned ready for action. Armed attacks on capitalist symbols and U.S. military bases—likely the latter marking her ultimate downfall. After two years of preliminary hearings she was sentenced to eight’s year imprisonment. Eventually however she, Andreas Baader,

Gudrun Ensslin and Jan-Karl Raspe were jointly charged with four counts of murder, fifty-four attempted murders and criminal association, But before the trial's conclusion Ulrike was found hanged in her cell on May 6, 1976. She would have gotten a life sentence as the others did. Though she officially hanged herself with rope fashioned from a towel, many Germans never believed it. Her burial in Berlin-Mariendorf six days after her death turned into a demonstration of four thousand people.

“Ulrike Meinhof died young but she left behind a long legacy of writing and films by leading filmmakers like Margaretha von Trotta⁽⁸⁾.... but also, sadness and desperation in our German state.”

GUDRUN ENSSLIN

HELMUT'S NOTES: ANDREAS BAADER AND THE ROTE ARME FAKTION

First of all, Seifert—as Helmut liked to call himself—keep in mind that RAF was a group of revolutionaries, not terrorists. Not a gang of criminals. Second, RAF was run by extraordinary and courageous women—women like also Sophie Scholl during Nazism in Munich, women committed to social-political change—unlike the Red Brigades in Italy run chiefly by men, but who, like RAF, were also revolutionaries. Third, RAF like the Red Brigades was violent. As Gudrun Ensslin wrote: *“Violence is the only answer to violence.”* And: *“This is the Auschwitz generation, and there's no arguing with them!”*

Gudrun Ensslin became one of the most “wanted” persons in Germany. She was born in 1940 in the village of Bartholomä in Baden-Württemberg, the daughter of a Protestant Pastor. At age eighteen she studied a year in the USA in Warren, Pennsylvania, then did American and German studies in the University of Tübingen. After a first marriage and the birth of a son, she met Andreas Baader, widely called a criminal from Munich. He became the man of her life. Student protest against the visit of the Shah of Iran was then a turning point: the acquittal of the policeman who shot and killed a young student, Benno Ohnesorg, outraged her and she moved farther and farther left and opened battle on the “fascist” West German state. She and Andreas firebombed a Frankfurt am Main department store, for which they were arrested in 1968 and sentenced to prison. Gudrun appealed the sentence and was released in 1969. She bolted and went underground and helped Andreas escape. At that point the die was cast.

In May of 1970: she wrote: *I like the great things you can buy in a department store. But when you have to buy them in order to stay unaware, comatose, then the price you pay is too high.*”

Consequently, as the existence of RAF became known for its robberies and violence, the media referred to it as the Baader-Meinhof Gang. In reality, like Josef Vissarionivich Djugashvili (Stalin), they robbed banks to finance their new organization, the Red Army Faction. Andreas and Gudrun were in action until 1972 when they and other RAF members were again arrested.

In a way, the state’s ferocious response to RAF legitimized them ... a disproportionate response. People who might have thought they were just a minor criminal group, an annoyance, became aware of them. People then learned a lot from the great Stammheim show trial of the RAF members. People learned their government considered the RAF such a huge threat to society that it was ready to limit civil liberties to stop them. Actually, (and here Helmut’s notes were underlined): Actually, the Baader-Meinhof Group trial was a false flag operation. For the damage done by RAF was slight as compared to the day-to-day crimes of a whole society. The government reaction to the group’s actions was massive. So how could average people be dismissive of them if their government spent so much energy into stopping them ... then killing them? The Baader-Meinhof trial of Andreas Baader, Ulrike Meinhof, Gudrun Ensslin and Jan-Karl Raspe—after they had been in isolation for three years—lasted over a year, up to the time of Ulrike Meinhof’s death in prison. From May 1975 it went on: hordes of lawyers and judges many of whom ex-Nazis; official leaks to the press of illegally taped conversations between defendants and lawyers; a specially built courtroom on the grounds of Stammheim Prison. For the people this was more than a show trial. It was a theatrical presentation intended to sway a whole nation.

Andreas Baader and companions were all prisoners in Stammheim. In isolation. Soundproof cells. The second RAF generation had taken over the action outside. They were even more violent. Doing what they could for the release of their jailed companions, in 1977 they abducted the President of West German Industrialists and an ex-SS officer, Hans-Martin Schleyer and offered an exchange. The government refused. So they hijacked a Lufthansa Boeing 737 on October 17, and landed in Mogadishu and tried to negotiate with police from there. But no deal. No negotiations with terrorists! Finally, Special Forces erupted into the parked plane, saved the passengers and killed the “terrorists”. As payback, RAF killed Schleyer. Then on the very next day, in the Stammheim prison, Baader and Gudrun Ensslin were found dead in their cells and a third, Jan-Karl Raspe died in a hospital. The two

men were shot, Gudrun, strangled with the cable from a loudspeaker and hanged from her cell's window bars.

The official version of suicide has never been popularly believed in Germany. People believe they were executed, as did I, Helmut Seifert Hartmann: "They were assassinated by the state."

The night of October 18, 1977 came to be called 'Death Night', the night three key members of the first generation of the Red Army Faction died in mysterious circumstances in the Stammheim Prison in Stuttgart. (Helmut Seifert like the author believes he was murdered by the state.) A fourth survived severe stab wounds. The high-jacked plane, the special forces assault in Mogadishu, the death of the revolutionaries, and the murder of Schleyer a former rabid SS officer, marked the climax of the German Autumn and the RAF attacks on the Nazi-infested state. The author finds the most fascinating the figure of Gudrun Ensslin, Baader's companion and co-founder of the urban guerilla "army" ... and one of those who died on Death Night. One of the two women who made RAF. For her the RAF embodied the essence of "the duty of resistance" to the U.S.-created German Federal Republic.

Helmut too now saw it for what it was: contrary to popular thought of Germany as a shining example of post-1945, he saw West German democracy as an ex-Nazi led society. Gudrun's history was the history of her era. The German society the USA had wanted in Germany from Nazism's very beginning back in 1933. The society of those Nazi protégés of the USA who were never *denazified*. Most likely *undenazifiable*. Whose Nazi past was ignored. They were RAF's blood enemies.

"Hannah! Erica! Ulrike Meinhof was in the direct anti-systemic ideological line of Rosa Luxemburg and Sophie Scholl. Ulrike paid with her life for her radical anti-imperialism and anti-Nazism—as did Sophie and Rosa—not for her crimes as such."

"They are heroes. RAF, I mean. nearly all of them. One problem is there are always traitors. And traitors are dangerous," he said, looking at Erica. And in his mind always seeing Hannah's friend's name written with a "c". Not that the German 'c' would change anything or bring Ulrike back to life, but Erica with a "c" it remained.

The End

HISTORICAL NOTES:

(1) Literary historian and critic Nicola Chiaromonte's major work is one long commentary on the role of fiction: the novels of Stendhal, Tolstoy, Roger Martin du Gard, Malraux, and Pasternak. "Only through fiction and the imaginary," he writes, "can we learn something real about individual experience. What we learn is that individual experience refutes historical optimism. Chiaromonte contends that the works of Stendhal et al. make up a tradition: the antihistorical novel, in which the idea of History as rational and progressive is shown to be an illusion. From his own experience in exile in the twenty years of Italian Fascism, Chiaromonte could write this: "In the beginning there was the lie." He believed that the sense of history begins in the lie, "an irresistible prevalence of the false over the authentic, of betrayal over loyalty, of cowardice over courage." His lifetime theme was the relationship between man and the event, between what one believes and what happens to him. Some of his essays included in his collection, *To Believe and Not To Believe (Credere e Non Credere)*, were presented at Princeton in 1966 when he held the Christian Gauss Seminars On Literary Criticism. No one has ever before linked these authors in quite this way; whatever the merits of Chiaromonte's argument as political philosophy, as literary criticism it is a brilliant conception.

In Stendhal's *The Charterhouse of Parma* the young Fabrizio del Dongo sets out to join Napoleon's army. What happens is his farcical search for the war: he is robbed and jailed as a spy, taken in by a woman who outfits him in a dead Hussar's uniform and sends him off to the battle at Waterloo. Fabrizio wanders around the battlefield, alternately delighted and horrified, never comprehending what is happening and if this is really war. And in fact the event as Stendhal describes it is incomprehensible—even, it seems, to Napoleon and his marshals, who gallop around with little purpose or effect.

Though Chiaromonte does not mention Camus in his essay *The Paradox of History*, he was influenced by *The Rebel*; in Rome he spoke to me of his admiration for Albert Camus. Chiaromonte concentrated on art and literature. He did not appreciate high-flown prose style and programmatic detail. Like Camus he stressed limits and consequently Mediterranean *mèsure*. Together they are the *dernier cri* of 20th century literary radicalism: their attempt to derive from art a criticism of politics and an explanation of the apparently inexplicable history of this century.

(2) Helmut still sees Europe the way it had always been and as he thought it was supposed to be. He had lived a life in which the mad visions of a few became the delusions of many, the illusions of the masses and the tragedy of a people. Such was also the foreign image of Old Europe, which in reality was even more corrupt and colonialist-imperialist with an irrepressible predilection for war. Yet, tourists loved it that way, just as did some of Europe's own intellectuals as well as artists of the world who felt Europe was the only place to be. That variegated multiethnic semi-continent of Europe was a world. The so-called Iron Curtain that came down to mark the start of the Cold War after WWII only reinforced the continental image of this incomprehensible Europe, with an enticing ideological taint of danger attached.

(3) At the end of WWII in 1945 the East European expert Major General Reinhard Gehlen became part of the CIA which promptly organized and financed the Gehlen Group, or Gehlen Org, for intelligence and espionage activities against the USSR. The spymaster Reinhard Gehlen had ties to extreme rightist organizations like Stepan Bandera's fascist Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists; Romania's Iron Guard and the Ustashe of Yugoslavia. After Hitler fired Gehlen during the war in Russia because of his negative reports, Gehlen buried in watertight cans his files on the Red Army. On May 22, 1945, Gehlen and top aides surrendered to the American Counter-intelligence Corps. Since the USA needed Soviet military experts, Gehlen was removed from prisoner-of-war rolls and placed in charge of a group of Germans gathering intelligence for the USA. Unrepentant Nazis occupied key posts in his CIA affiliated, anti-Communist "Gehlen Organization" headquartered in

Munich-Pullach. Many people in Munich knew about the Gehlen Org but no one cared a whit. Later, the CIA named Reinhard Gehlen the first chief of the Intelligence Service of the U.S.-occupied German Federal Republic of West Germany, the *Bundesnachrichtendienst*, BND, 1956-68. During the Cold War period he was always a loyal executor of U.S. policies. General Gehlen was a very smart cookie. He died in 1979 in Starnberg near Munich.

(4) Nazi Germany annexed Sudetenland, part of Czechoslovakia, in September 1938 with the agreement of the Czechs who wanted to get rid of the two to three million ethnic Germans living there and with the agreement of the Allied powers of Great Britain and France. Hitler's troops had already marched into Austria in March 1938. Both annexations were part of Hitler's policies of uniting European Germans and expanding the territory (*Lebensraum*) of his Fourth Reich. These millions of Sudeten Germans—many of whom well-disposed toward Nazi Germany—were resettled in Germany proper. In this story, Helmut Hartmann is one such.

(5) Nicolae Ceausescu (1899-1989), a Romanian Communist politician, member of Politburo from 1954, President of the Romanian Socialist Republic from 1967-1989. During the Romanian anti-Communist Revolution in 1989 that exploded in the big city of Timisoara with its strong Hungarian minority, on December 22 of that year he and his wife Elena Ceausescu were arrested in the small city of Targoviste near Bucharest, tried for genocide in a show trial, and executed on Christmas Day of 1989. The author remembers well a planned midnight bus trip to Romania organized by Hungarians for foreign journalists in the country at the time, departure from Budapest on December 22. The trip was cancelled at the last minute because of the intensity of the fighting when everyone moving was a target by one or the other of the many diverse factions. I, like other journalists present in Budapest, was relieved we did not go, though I have always wondered who gave the order not to send us there. Now I wonder if my conceptual Ramon found refuge in America as did a long line of Nazis after WWII. Possible but not probable. Maybe he is back in Montagna that he so loved.

(6) The renowned German painter, Gerhard Richter painted a cycle of fifteen works of the Baader-Meinhof leaders in the infamous Stammheim Prison in Stuttgart shortly before their deaths, and some after they died, all murdered by the state, as popularly believed, or, officially, by their own hand. Known as *18 October, 1977* the works were shown in a widely publicized exhibition in the New York Museum of Modern Art (MOMA). Three young German radicals, members of the militant Baader-Meinhof Group, were found dead in a Stuttgart prison; they were pronounced suicides, but many people suspected they had been murdered. Gerhard Richter, one of the most exceptional and highly regarded artists of the second half of the 20th century, created these paintings eleven years after this traumatic event. They are among the most challenging works of the artist's career, and one of the 20th century's most famous works on a political theme, still highly debated and unsettling to this day. The paintings are based on newspaper and police photographs of moments in the lives and deaths of the four leaders of the Red Army Faction (RAF), the German left-wing revolutionary group that perpetrated a number of kidnappings and killings throughout the 1970s. The bodies of the three principal RAF members were found in the cells of the German prison of Stammheim where they were incarcerated. Richter's reworking of these documentary sources is dark, blurred, and diffuse. The cycle begins with a canvas based on a studio portrait photograph of Ulrike Meinhof, journalist turned radical ideologue, an image that shows her as young and vital, but also, as the artist described, "sentimental in a bourgeois way." Paintings 2 through 7 shift tone abruptly, offering up the dead in paintings based on forensic photographs. There are three images of Meinhof, her body seen close-up, after she was found in her prison cell, the wound on her neck left by the noose visible, though softened by Richter's blur—as if he wanted to provide a buffer protecting us from the trauma of seeing it or offer her a modicum of privacy in death. Two paintings show Andreas Baader, splayed on the floor of his prison cell as he had fallen after shooting himself with a gun smuggled into the prison. Paintings 8 and 9 depict the interior of Baader's empty cell,

the first showing his overflowing bookcase, and the other the record player that was reportedly used to smuggle in the gun with which Baader shot himself, so that these tokens of a classical cultural inheritance and knowledge take on a malevolent aspect. And one picture depicts Gudrun Ensslin, whose body, hanging from the bars of her prison window, was discovered on the morning of October 19. Our shock at seeing these corpses, bodies rendered lifeless from self-destructive violence, Richter suggests, may reflect the way we have weaned ourselves away from recognizing death with “our nice, tidy lifestyle.” appreciation of [our time], to see it as it is.” Paintings 10 and 11 show the arrest of Baader and Meins as it was broadcast on television to an audience of millions, with Meins forced to undress in front of the rolling cameras to show he was unarmed, the trace of his figure a tiny vertical blur in Richter’s canvases. Paintings 12, 13, and 14 offer a trio of police images of Gudrun Ensslin in prison uniform in a photographic lineup, one in which she has enigmatic smile on her lips. And, finally, 15, the largest, depicts the funeral and burial of Baader, Ensslin, and Jan-Carl Raspe, another leader of the group. While Richter had previously chosen images related to Germany’s recent history—he was among the first to introduce subjects from its Nazi past into artworks—he hadn’t done so in many years. The October cycle was, as he put it, “a reversion” in both topic and technique. In remembering this particular episode, he touched on a topic that was still raw, still taboo in public dialogue despite the omnipresent media images that served as source material for the paintings: the dead terrorists remained largely unacknowledged, unmentioned, unmourned. “I was impressed by the terrorists’ energy, their uncompromising determination and their absolute bravery,” Richter reflected on this cataclysmic climax of opposing forces. “But I could not find it in my heart to condemn the state for its harsh response. That is what States are like, and I have known other, more ruthless ones.” Richter may have felt this ambivalence particularly keenly. He was born in Dresden in 1932, the year before the Nazi rise to power, and witnessed the devastating bombing of that city as a young teenager. His first experience as an artist was in the newly founded German Democratic Republic, where he was trained in the propagandistic realism, but—with several trips to the West, including one to take in the great postwar showcase of international art at Documenta in Kassel—he crossed over permanently in 1961, the year the Berlin Wall was erected. His dual formation, split as it was between East and West Germany, left Richter highly attuned to the tensions, ironies, and fractures between two ideological systems, and harboring a deep skepticism about doctrines of any kind. “It was”, he wrote in 1988, “a profound distaste for all claims to possess the truth.” Richter acknowledged how profoundly unsettling he found the events around the Baader-Meinhof Group: “The deaths of the terrorists, and the related events both before and after,” he reflected, “stand for a horror that distressed me and has haunted me as unfinished business ever since, despite all my effort to repress it.” Perhaps as a way of processing things, Richter began to collect materials related to the group, holding onto “a number of them” for years before he began painting the October cycle, filed under the heading of “unfinished business”. In fact, over 100 images related to the Baader-Meinhof Group appear in *Atlas*, Richter’s ongoing scrapbook-like compendium of photographic source material. When he began working in earnest on what would become *18 October 1977*, Richter drew some of his source images from newspapers and magazines or snapshots of television coverage—markers of the pervasiveness of media coverage of the Baader-Meinhof Group during their violent reign and in its aftermath. But others, taken from police photographs, were far less readily available, and serve as tokens of Richter’s preoccupation with the topic and his determined research efforts in preparation for painting. The pictures of Ensslin offers no background information that would convey a politically charged meaning for the picture. The woman appears at first isolated and alone. However, the *confrontation 1*, *confrontation 2*, *confrontation 3* – contain a plethora of sides to be perceived. Richter slows down the progression of cinematic frames to an absolute standstill in the *confrontation* sequence. We see Gudrun Ensslin turning to engage with the viewer in the first piece, then looking at those who are taking her picture, and then turning away with a downcast head. Each picture portrays the same woman revealing different sides of her face while obscuring her meaning. If these frames showing an image were sequenced in milli-seconds as in a film, then perhaps her

mouth would move, or her eyes would convey a sentiment... Richter destabilizes our view of Ensslin by making this very refusal to make meaning into the focus of the work. He punches holes into any possible meaning that the woman could express by leaving the viewer with a refusal to reply which is initiated by Ensslin's refusal to speak in the first place. As a result, the appearance of the pictures is the focal point, or lack thereof, in Richter's art. He intends to paint the appearance of reality thereby capturing the multiple facets of the «passing-by» of experience. However, Richter anchors this moment of passing-by in attaching it to the empathetic experience of man in the *confrontation* series which appears attached to the viewer through the empathetic experience: «art serves to establish community. It links us with others, and with the things around us, in a shared vision and effort». Her moment of passing-by announces our perception of the art in which we confront what she has *already* seen. Thus, her experience finds its anchor in the viewer's gaze.

(7) After Ulrike Meinhof's arrest in 1972, Hermann L. Gremliza founded a new far-left *Konkret* magazine based in Hamburg for which he wrote the introductory column and to which a long line of German leftist intellectuals have contributed: such as Heinrich Böll, Daniel Cohn-Bandit, Rudi Dutschke, Hans Magnus Enzenberger, Jürgen Elsässer. Günter Grass, Sahra Wagenknecht.

(8) Films: In 1981 Margarethe von Trotta's feature film, *Marianne and Juliane*, is a portrait of the incarcerated Gudrun Ensslin. Five years later, Sabine Wegner played Ensslin in Reinhard Huff's *Stammheim*, a detailed account of the trial against Ensslin, Baader, Meinhof and others. In that same 1986, Corinna Kirchhoff played Ensslin in Markus Imhof's *The Journey*. In 1997, Anya Hoffmann was Ensslin in Heinrich Breloer's award winning TV drama, *Todespiel*. Gudrun Ensslin was played by Johanna Wokalek in Uli Edel's 2008 film, *The Baader Meinhof Complex*, the adaptation of a non-fiction book of the same name by Stefan Aust. Wokalek's performance was a nomination for the 2009 German Film Awards and a Bambi award as best German actress. The film was chosen as Germany's submission to the 81st Academy Awards for Best Foreign Language Film and was nominated for the 66th Golden Globe Awards. *Wer wenn nicht wir* (If not us, who), in which Lena Lauzemis plays Gudrun Ensslin, won the Alfred Bauer Prize and the Prize of the German Art House Cinemas at the Berlin International Film Festival of 2011.