

CHAPTER 10

Koblenz, Rhineland Region, Germany | July 1920

“**T**he political situation appears to continually disintegrate in Germany. As a military officer, where do you stand, Colonel?” Fleming asked his friend Lieutenant Colonel Ritter von Strobel of the Reichswehr. They sat outside on a pleasant summer evening enjoying beers at their favorite venue the Gruenewald Taverne.

“The situation to be expected. Germany lost the war. The victors took their revenge. As a military officer, I continue to do my duty. The Army is the only institution holding Germany together.”

By early 1919, the strength of the German Army, the Reichswehr was only 350,000, reduced through demobilization from several million. More than 250,000 of those demobilized enlisted in the volunteer Freikorps paramilitary units. The German government supplied and repeatedly used Freikorps formations to put down communist uprisings after the war. The terms of the Treaty of Versailles required Germany to reduce its armed forces strength further to 100,000 by March 1920. Demobilized former soldiers of the Freikorps forced to disband. Yet as militant former soldiers, now mostly unemployed, many joined right wing political organizations.

The Social Democratic Party of Germany, the German Democratic Party, and the Christian democratic Centre Party, dominated the new Weimar Republic coalition government.

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In March, the beleaguered centrist government faced an attempted coup by rightwing nationalists, monarchists, and many within the military. What became known as the Kapp-Lüttwitz Putsch was an attempt to take over the government by Freikorps troops and units of the Reichswehr. Spectacularly, the coup failed with the population going on a general strike, including most government bureaucrats. With every facet of German society paralyzed, the coup collapsed. Still plagued by communist popular uprising, a left wing revolt following the general strike broke out in the Ruhr Valley.

Fear of a populist takeover of Germany remained the greatest fear of the both the centrist government and ring wing factions. The government reshuffled some ministerial positions, removed the putsch leaders Kapp and Lüttwitz from their official positions, and amnestied the other participants. Having made peace with the right, the government now unleashed the Reichswehr and Freikorps coup perpetrators on leftist strikers in the Ruhr Valley.

Fleming's question therefore held significant weight for his friend holding high military rank.

Strobel continued, "I did not support the Kapp-Lüttwitz Putsch. A return to an autocratic militaristic government will doom Germany eventually to another war. We must break that cycle and find the means to coexist with other European countries."

"What about the Ruhr uprising?"

"Necessary to put it down. Communism threatens not only Germany but hope for a peaceful Europe."

"Do you then favor a democratic republic?"

"Is this the sort of intelligence you report to Washington?"

Fleming smiled, "Of course. Not actually intelligence though. Just my gathering of the opinions of others. The kind of intelligence usually ignored unless it fits preconceived bias."

Strobel smiled and nodded his agreement. "To your question, I favor a democratic republic. The problem however, this current government has little chance of success. Those that understand economics point to the debt caused by the war and the impossible reparation demands. Inflation already on the rise. Soon this will limit the ability for people to buy food. Unemployment re-

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mains the most pressing problem. The same circumstances that brought about the fall of the Russian Tsar. Germany could suffer such a popular revolution. Starving people are apolitical."

"I agree. The problem remains the French and Belgians. They understandably demand compensation for invading their countries. They also fear a remilitarized Germany."

"Therein lays the problem. Equilibrium on the international scale is a chimera. Tell me, Major, what is the American mission in this occupation of the Rhineland?"

"Just policing a demilitarized zone to protect France and Belgium from German remilitarization. Garrison duty. The worse kind of duty for a soldier. As head of intelligence for the AFG, I do nothing of real meaning. Best I can do is to communicate my observations. Probably nothing more than what Americans read in newspapers."

"Dealing with you Americans and the British is much different from the French and Belgians. I too am a soldier. Doing what I feel is honorable duty. Yet like you, gathering soft intelligence of questionable value."

"Good evening, Colonel. So nice to see you again," Eva Gruenewald said coming up to the table standing next to Fleming.

Strobel smiled broadly. "Major Fleming has excellent tastes. Everything about your establishment is delightful, Frau Gruenewald."

"Thank you, Colonel. Please enjoy your evening, gentlemen." To convey her possessiveness she touched Fleming's cheek with the back of her hand as her usual gesture of affection or possessiveness.

As Gruenewald walked away, Strobel turned to watch her behind. "I would come here just to watch her walk away. Makes garrison duty more bearable I should imagine."

Fleming laughed. "Eva is a real beauty. Intelligent but the war has left emotional scars. With you, I can delve into sensitive German political and social subjects. Not with Eva. She wants to argue anything conflicting with her views. Accuses me of not understanding Germany. She subscribes to the stab-in-the-back view. Hates the French. Makes an exception for me as an American.

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"Speaking of provocative subjects, her brother is a member of the paramilitary Sturmabteilung branch of a right wing political party in Munich, the NSDAP. Their leader gets lots of play in the newspapers. What can you tell me about them?"

"Thugs. Uneducated working class. These SA storm troopers are mostly refugees from the disbanded Freikorps. Their leader, Adolf Hitler was a corporal in the Great War. A demented little *arschloch*. Energizes his membership by fiery oratory generating a mob response. Violently anti-communist and anti-Jewish. Herr Hitler preaches the German Army was never defeated. The fighting stopped by treacherous defeatists from the left and of course the Jews. He is an ultranationalist."

"Do they represent an important movement?"

"Not at this time. These Sturmabteilung however make them unique. Recruitment is easy with so many unemployed veterans without prospects. A chance to put on a uniform and feel important again. A chance to take out frustrations violently against perceived enemies. Who is to say what a political party with a private army might achieve?"

"I ask because, Eva's brother is a member of this group."

"Well, if she sides with her brother, I suggest you avoid discussing their political ideology. It will not be conducive to your romantic relationship, my friend."

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A month later, Fritz Reiner returned to Koblenz to visit his parents. Like so many others, their circumstances difficult. His father unemployed following injury at his railroad job. His mother semi-bedridden with kidney disease. Reiner contributed what he could from his meager salary working for the NSDAP. His family circumstances further fueling his hate.

Obsessed for years with Eva Gruenewald, Reiner spent each evening at the tavern since returning because of his mother's declining health. He was doing more than stalking Gruenewald. Having learned from a waitress that she had taken up with an American Army officer, his obsession turned darker. Every night he came to drink beer while waiting for the American.

Twice he observed the American sneaking off with Eva

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Gruenewald up the outside stairs to her apartment. Camped outside he seethed with rage as the lights went out. Both times the American remained for several hours before leaving in an American Army sedan.

After a week, Reiner could not constrain himself. After several hours of drinking, he drifted off toward the rear of the building as Gruenewald closed the tavern. Waiting for Gruenewald to ascend the stairs, he waited twenty minutes. Slightly drunk he hoped that Gruenewald might have by now undressed getting ready for bed.

Reiner knocked on her apartment door.

"Spencer, is that you?" She said through the door.

Reiner said nothing.

Moments later, Gruenewald opened the door. "What the hell do you want, Fritz?"

Reiner stepped forward forcing his way inside the apartment.

Gruenewald retreated. "Get the hell out of here!"

Reiner guessed correctly. Gruenewald stood there in her bare feet wrapped in a robe. His stare gravitated to her exposed cleavage. The effects of alcohol and being this close to Eva Gruenewald likely naked under her robe proved too much. His swift movement caught Gruenewald by surprise as his hand grasped the belt to her robe pulling it open as she stepped back. His eyes widened as she stood there with breasts and pubic area exposed.

Instead of worrying about covering herself as Reiner moved closer, she raked his cheek viciously with her fingernails.

"Ah!"

Her attack enough to draw blood and stem his advance allowing her to quickly retreat to the kitchen. Finding a butcher knife, she turned on him while pulling the robe around her with her left hand.

"You fucking pig! You think I would ever screw you?"

Clutching a handkerchief to his cheek, Reiner said, "But you are screwing this American. Does he pay you for sex?"

"Not necessary. I fuck him for free. I even suck his cock to get him very hard. He has a beautiful cock. Circumcised, not the disgusting foreskin covering the head of the penis like you Aryan assholes. Perhaps he is Jewish. That would be something.

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Tell Klaus I am fucking a Jew. Imagine him having to explain his sister sleeping with a Jew. Piss on both of you and that Jew-hating piece of shit Adolf Hitler he talks about in his letters.

Reiner took a step toward her.

Holding the large knife, she did not retreat. "Come any closer and I will stick this between your legs, Fritz"

"I will tell Klaus his sister is a whore to a filthy Jew."

Still enraged, Gruenewald lunged forward sticking the tip of the butcher knife into Reiner's forearm.

Reiner stumbled backwards quickly opening the door. "It does not end here, Eva. Scum like you must be eradicated."

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Reiner immediately returned to Munich. Eva no longer a sexual obsession instead became an object of personal revenge. He adopted as reality Eva's sarcastic reference to Fleming possibly being Jewish. His rage over rejection further distorted by the conviction that her American lover was Jewish. In his anti-Semitic fog, no greater sin.

Fritz Reiner and Klaus Gruenewald shared a small apartment in working class Munich, not far from NSDAP headquarters at Schellingstrasse 50. Walking straight from the train station, he was waiting when Gruenewald arrived.

"Ah, you are back, Fritz. How was the trip? Did you look in on Eva?"

Reiner shook his head and sighed. "Yes. However, I have distressing news, Klaus."

"What? Is she all right?"

"Nothing like that. Unfortunately she has taken a lover."

"A lover? How do you know this?"

"From the tavern staff. Then I watched her. Eva makes no attempt to conceal the affair. Rather scandalous. Consorting with our enemy, Klaus. Her lover is an American Army officer. A major."

"Shit. And you saw him with Eva?"

"Yes. Twice I observed him spending hours late at night in her apartment with the lights out. I confronted her knowing I must provide you some explanation.

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"It went badly. Eva has never liked me. She turned angry. Said what she did was none of her brother's business. Then she said something truly shocking. Obviously intended to hurt you knowing your feelings about Jews. Her lover is Jewish, Klaus. She delighted in describing how they have sex. Described how she liked a man that was circumcised. Scratched my face when I called her a whore."

Klaus Gruenewald stood there dumbfounded. Reiner poured him a glass of schnapps.

Gruenewald drank the liquor down in one gulp. Shaking his head in denial, "This cannot be true, Fritz. Eva is strong minded but I cannot believe she took up with Jew."

"I am afraid it is true, Klaus. She made a point of wanting you to know. Enjoyed telling me intimate details."

Gruenewald replied, "The stupid arrogant bitch. Always flashing her tits and ass, thinking she can control everything. Resents working so hard and taking care of mother. Thinks I should be doing more to help out. Sounds like something she might do to spite me."

Reiner said, "You cannot leave it at that, Klaus. As a member of the Sturmabteilung, you must take action. Should this become known, it will ruin your career."

"So how do I fix this?"

"We kill the Jew of course. After that, you must teach Eva a lesson. I will help you, Klaus. Go to Hauptsturmführer Schreck. Tell him you have an urgent family problem. Your sick mother. We board a train in the morning. I am still on leave therefore I will go with you."

"What do we do when we get to Koblenz?"

"We have comrades from our old Freikorps unit. I have an idea of who might help. Then we find this Jew that is defiling Eva. Together we help you redeem your honor by killing him."

Less than a week after the incident between Reiner and Eva Gruenewald, Fleming left her apartment late at night following their usual intimate liaison. As he walked the short distance to his car, two men in working clothes confronted him. In the light

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of a full moon, both held short lengths of metal pipe. One man repeatedly slapped the pipe into the palm of a gloved hand.

"What do you want?" Fleming said.

Immediately, one of the men moved cautiously toward him. Fleming closed the distance in three steps instead of retreating, surprising the assailants. The man closest attempted to bring the pipe down on Fleming's head. However, Fleming's move allowed him to catch the man's upper arm preventing the blow. With a rapid shifting of his weight, Fleming dropped the man to the ground with a classic judo throw. He followed with a powerful straight on blow breaking the man's jaw.

Rising to confront the second assailant, Fleming met with a nasty blow of a pipe slamming into his lower abdomen as he half turned. Using the same aggressive counterattacking tactic, he captured the assailant's arm welding the pipe in a hold. This time Fleming opted to deliver a blow to the man's nose with the heel of his right hand. Delivered with enough force, the blow crushed the man's nose removing any further resistance as the man fell to his knees clutching his face streaming blood.

Two other men then appeared brandished what looked like trench knives.

Fleming picked up one of the pipes ready to confront them, confident he could contain the situation before matters turned more violent.

However, from off to the side, two additional men appeared both holding pistols. In the bright moonlight, Fleming recognized one as the man Eva shouted at months earlier. The friend of her brother.

Fritz Reiner said, "Very impressive, but it will not save you. We cannot tolerate a Jew defiling Aryan women. Klaus, you may have the honor of killing this American Jew for defiling your sister."

No escape now without escalating this to deadly force. He was not about to be cut up by these goons.

"Wait a minute. Let me explain," Fleming said as he dropped the pipe. Rubbing his right side with his left hand, he groaned and dropped to his left knee. "I think my ribs are broken." The move intended to conceal drawing his sidearm quickly before being shot.

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"Klaus, get on with it," Reiner said.

Fleming looked up as Klaus Gruenewald took several steps toward him pointed a Lugar at his head. With no choice, Fleming reached inside his suit coat and in a fluid motion extracted his .45 Browning firing two rounds into Klaus Gruenewald's abdomen from close range.

Reiner fired one hurried shot, missing Fleming. Fleming replied with a well-placed single round into Reiner's sternum.

The other two assailants took flight. Fleming hesitated from shooting. Unlikely to be successful at the distance. Best not to expand the incident further. The dead and injured assailants easily argued as self-defense.

It was just before the midnight closing of the tavern. A couple of late drinkers and the staff rushed out to investigate. Fleming yelled to the first person to arrive at the scene to call the police. Minutes later, Eva Gruenewald appeared.

Seeing Fleming, she started toward him before looking down at Fritz Reiner with his shirt soaking in blood. Then she saw her brother also a bloody mess and gasped. Holding her hand to her mouth, she kneeled down beside him to touch his face.

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When the German police arrived, Fleming showed his military identification. Refusing to answer any questions, he ordered them to bring the American military police to the scene. All this time, his .45 remained concealed in the shoulder holster under his suit coat.

When an American sergeant and another MP arrived, Fleming explained the essential circumstances of the situation. *He was leaving the tavern when accosted by six men. The injured attempted to assault him with steel pipes. Having failed, the two dead displayed firearms. Armed, he defended himself when one assailant ordered the other to kill me before realizing I was also armed. For some reason they called me a Jew. I believe that might be the cause of this attack.*

Fleming then explained to the German police that ultimately this was an American matter. They could advise their superiors that a full report would be forthcoming. With that, he ordered the sergeant to follow him back to American headquarters at

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Koblenz. They could join him as he reported the incident to the American military police commander.

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To his superiors, Fleming spun a distorted version of the circumstances. He admitted to a sexual relationship with this woman who became a source while pursuing his intelligence duties. Citing associations within the local German government and the industrial community, Eva Gruenewald's tavern provided a perfect social location for developing sources of information.

In so doing, Gruenewald revealed her brother's affiliation with a violent right wing political party based in Munich. He suspected the Nazi Party possibly had members of their paramilitary wing the SA based in the American occupation zone. He knew remnants of the disbanded Freikorps populated the American occupation zone. Learning the Nazi SA recruited largely from former Freikorps veterans, he wanted to investigate political right wing activity here in the Rhineland. Eva Gruenewald proved an unwitting source into this clandestine world.

To General Allen, Fleming said, "I appreciate the delicacy of our mission, General. Unfortunately, engaging in intelligence collection sometimes gets messy. Although succumbing to human weakness, my venture ultimately proved successful. It exposes the threat of right wing political activity in this important industrial sector of Germany. We have not seen the last of German aggression, General."

For Fleming, if this did not blow over it might make his decision to leave the Army. Therefore, he forcefully asserted his position rather than pleading a defensive case.

General Allen was a tough old bird. While serving in the Philippines, he organized and commanded the Philippine Constabulary. Known as the Iron Comandante, he had a police mentality. Regardless of extenuating details of the incident, a gang of thugs attacked one of his officers with deadly force. The German authorities registered no official complaint. Both the military police commander and General Allen signed off on Fleming's report.

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Fleming likewise passed along a similar sanitized report to Dulles. Since this was in the form of a contrived letter to his girlfriend, Eleanor Lansing Dulles in New York, he omitted Eva entirely from the narrative of the violent confrontation.

Since that night, Fleming never again saw Eva Gruenewald. Although experiencing some guilt for whatever emotional involvement she may have felt for him, they were not in love. They had only sex in common. The affair to eventually end anyway. Having killed her brother clearly made any attempt at reconciliation impossible.

As much as these fanatically racist Nazis obsessed about Jews, there seemed no reason to think he was Jewish. Perhaps the incident nothing more than Fritz Reiner planting disinformation to get rid of a rival for Eva Gruenewald's affections disguised as anti-Semitic violence. A mystery he would leave buried.