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PART I

Toward A New Dawn
June 1961



The Land

If anything could be considered timeless amid the passing of life's fleeting hours, surely it was the land.

There were spiritual considerations, of course, that possessed deeper claims to immortality. She knew that.

But on the physical plane, the earth and the fruit it brought forth out of the ground—according to the ancient parable recorded by the gospelist Saint Mark—possessed, like no other aspect of the created universe, links to eternity.

The armies of six millennia of Nebuchadnezzars and Caesars and Alexanders and Napoleons and Hitlers tramped across it, changing its borders, subduing its nations, and slaughtering its inhabitants. But never had they altered by so much as a speck its miraculous power to produce, to recreate, to regenerate itself in the midst of what chaos the men above it wrought upon one another.

Generations came and went. Tribes, clans, families, and races all rose and fell. Life passed into life, as men and women, the great as well as the obscure, returned to the earth as they came.

Yet the land abided, an enduring reality under the gaze of the heavens. Over it the inexorable march of history passed, father to son, mother to daughter, one conquering dynasty giving way to the next—while the earth remained, surviving them all.

Karin Duftblatt let her eyes wander across the countryside out the windows in every direction.

Expansive fields of slowly ripening grain, extending right and left from her gaze, were beginning now to lose the green of their youth in preparation for the deep golden brown of their old age, which would arrive with the harvest later in the year.

It was a tranquil scene, broken here and there by green pastureland or trees, and now and then an uncultivated hillside. How could it now be so peaceful where bombs and blood had such a few short years ago filled the air and covered the

ground? How could the land bear such abundant fruit where so much death had once been?

Didn't the land know what holocausts, what crimes against God's creation, it had witnessed?

Oh, but she loved this land! She could not help it, though there were places farther to the north she avoided. Some memories were too painful, even after all this time.

It may not have been the most beautiful of the world's landscapes. But she would always love it, mostly for what the black soil was capable of producing from out of the God-imbued riches of its subterranean depths.

Love the land and its growing things she did, though neither did she begrudge the present focus of her activities in the city. As much as she enjoyed an occasional drive into the countryside like this, she doubted she could live here again. The city may have tended to make its inhabitants cynical and callous, but it also helped her forget the past. Her work was there as well, and because of its importance, she needed to remain in the city.

She glanced about again as she drove, breathing in deeply and then exhaling a melancholy sigh.

Conquering dictators had indeed fought over this particular segment of Eastern Europe's geography. The Huns and Franks and Magyars and Mongols had all tried to subdue it. Napoleon had stretched the reach of his domination this far early in the last century, as had their own mustached Teutonic madman in this. By many names had it been known, this Prussian, Pomeranian plain between the two great and ancient powers of Germany and Russia.

Never, however, had this land been fully its *own*.

Now it possessed borders and a name that hinted at the racial individuality of its people. No one in the world was deceived, however, into thinking that the territory to which had been affixed the name "Poland" was anything but a subject of the new power that had arisen to the east, in the same autocratic tradition of the worst of the world's ancient conquering empires.

Out of the rubble of fascism's defeat had arisen the spectre called communism, whose shadow now, sixteen years later,

blanketed half of two continents. Its persecution was not so visible. No less lethal, however, were the results.

If a handful of brave souls could not by themselves prevent the silent and insidious carnage, they might at least be able to make it known to the rest of the world.

Such was the mission to which she and the man she was on her way to meet had given themselves.

Ordinarily she would have sent another of her people. It was a long drive from her home in East Berlin, halfway across Poland. But word had come that this delivery was unlike any before it, and it must be managed by as few hands as possible.

Thus she had decided to make the pickup herself and return personally to the city with the evidence they had so long sought.



Secret Holocaust

It was probably foolhardy for him to cross the border to make the contact himself.

For a normal delivery he wouldn't even consider it.

But this was a special package. This time there were actual photographs. Along with the data they had recently uncovered and sent through last month, these pictures could help expose the entire Stalinist lie.

This envelope had to reach West Berlin!

As dangerous as it would be, and as well known as he was, he would take it himself into Poland, where he could place it directly into her hands. The fewer people involved in this transfer, the better.

She would get it safely the rest of the way. She always did.

Slowly the old man rose from the knees of prayer—his first order of business before any such undertaking—removed the *talit* from around his shoulders, and stood. Methodically he undressed, laying aside the traditional garb of his heritage, his calling, his very life, in order to don the costume of a working peasant. This had been the most difficult part at first. It had

felt like he was denying the very culture he was trying to preserve.

But he had through the years gradually acclimated himself to the necessity of it. What sacrifice should he not be willing to give if even the single life of one of his people could be saved from the invisible holocaust of this terrible regime?

One by one he pulled off his vestments, reflecting over the time since this had all begun during the war. Who could have foreseen what it would lead to? Many years had passed. He was far from a young man. He had always known that he could not remain here indefinitely. His destiny lay toward the south. There were other things of importance besides photographs.

It was likely, he thought wearily, that there would not be many more such missions for him. Others could carry on the work in his stead.

If only they could locate Joseph. How happy that would make him! The continuing uncertainty over the young man's whereabouts was no doubt one of the factors that had kept him in Russia so long. The others looked to him for leadership, it was true, but he knew they could continue the work without him.

It was nearly time to emigrate for good. To do so was only fitting, and he knew his poor wife longed for it. Perhaps, he thought, pulling up his peasant trousers, after this one last delivery—after he knew the photographs were safe.

At last he was ready. He rose and left the room.

Two hours later he stopped at the border. The guard held up his hand to stop him. He rolled down the window of the small car.

"Passport and papers."

He handed out the documents of his false identity.

"What business do you have in Poland?"

"I have been transferred to a collective in Bialystok," he answered contritely.

"Out of the car, please."

He opened the door and stood before the uniformed official.

The guard searched him.

"What is this?" he said, discovering the valuable envelope inside the traveler's coat pocket.

"The documents of my transfer."

The guard opened the envelope, pulling out several papers, which he examined hastily.

"Proceed," he barked as he returned them.

Stuffing the sheets back inside, he pocketed the envelope, got in the car, and sped past the border and into Poland.

The would-be bearded farmer breathed a sigh of relief. At the first opportunity, he would replace his personal documents with other papers so as to eliminate any incriminating links between himself and his contact.

As many borders as he had crossed in his life, the experience always made his heart pound a little more rapidly than he enjoyed. Especially, since he would do it again tomorrow at another border station, when he had to cross back *into* the Soviet Union.

Well, he thought, very soon he would cross that hated border for the last time, never to return. Then *he* would be the "package" to be transferred safely to Berlin. But not until he was satisfied he had done all that was in his power to ensure the future safety of his people.

3

Secret Police

The room was neither spacious nor luxurious. Its spartan appointments fit to perfection the objective to which its occupant was dedicated.

Plain walls, grey paint, drab carpet, and uncomfortable chairs comprised what might sarcastically have been termed the "decor" of the office where the section chief of the East German Secret Police made his headquarters.

Most of the work of the *Stasi* did not occur in offices but rather in back alleys, on street corners, in homes and offices and factories and wherever else its feared and dreaded agents could gather and extort the information they sought against anyone considered an enemy of the state.

The door behind the chief opened.

Brisk footsteps crossed the floor. The chief turned as his assistant approached him.

"*Mein Herr,*" said the younger of the two men, "an informant has just alerted me to a possible exchange involving the smuggling of information between some of the people we have been interested in."

"Jews?"

The young man nodded.

"A troublesome lot. One would think they would have learned by now. Where is the handoff supposed to occur?"

"Somewhere in Poland."

"Poland! How am I supposed to monitor a whole country that size? Let *your* people deal with it. Why do you bring it to me?"

"He says it concerns information that is coming to Berlin—important information."

"I see," mumbled the chief, pausing to allow his thoughts to wander in a new vein. Only two days ago Moscow had ordered them to double their surveillance on all known connections between Russian and German Jews. There was damaging evidence attempting to be passed from Russia to Berlin that could prove extremely compromising to several higher-ups at the Kremlin. It must be intercepted at all costs, they had said. The order came from the highest possible sources.

There must be a connection between that and this most recent information, thought the chief. Here was an opportunity to gain favor, if he could personally foil the delivery of whatever it was the Kremlin was worried about.

"Yes, perhaps then we ought to see what might be done on our end," he said thoughtfully to the young man, pausing once more.

"Get one of our men familiar with the Polish connections on it immediately," he went on. "Who do we have in that sector?"

The young man answered.

"A Pole . . . hmm, I don't suppose it can be helped at this stage. But I don't want to take any chances. Go out there yourself if you have to. If there is anything going on, I want to know about it. I'll see what I can find out through my contacts here in the city."

"Yes, *mein Herr*."

"In the meantime," added the chief, turning to his desk and picking up a single sheet of paper, which he handed to his assistant, "there are some reports I want you to draw up the moment you return . . . on several individuals."

The young man glanced over the sheet.

"I need the complete files," the chief went on, "so utilize . . . ah, whatever techniques of persuasion you may require to obtain the information. Most of them should be on file with the Bureau of Records. It only remains for us to, shall we say, *acquire* them, even should we have to go through unofficial channels to do so."

"I understand."

"They will hopefully shed light on our ongoing search for the woman I have spoken of."

"I am still looking into the lead you gave me last week as well."

"Good. These new files on several men and women whose names have recently come to my attention may have just the connections we need. It is of the utmost importance that she be located."



Warsaw Newsstand

Warsaw was not a friendly city during these uncertain times. She had only been here twice before, once for a meeting with the rabbi, and two years ago to personally escort a small band of Jews through the network and to the safety of West Berlin.

There was always some danger this far from her own surroundings. And for some reason, on this day she was more nervous than usual.

She had the odd sensation of having been followed.

Karin glanced again at her watch. It was 4:12.

She had waited long enough. Something was wrong. She was certain this was the right place. Why hadn't he come?

Heart pounding, and still with the uncomfortable feeling that unwelcome eyes were upon her, she stepped away from the building and began walking down the sidewalk.

There was the newsstand just ahead.

She had been watching it, but there had been no activity. She stopped and absently asked the vendor for a paper.

Suddenly her eyes were opened. There, less than a meter from her, was the man she had been waiting for all this time.

Involuntarily her mouth opened in would-be greeting.

"Shh," murmured the vendor under his breath as he saw her about to exclaim. "Take the paper calmly."

She did so.

The portentous drop had been made.

Doing her best to keep tears from overflowing her eyes at the sight of her old friend, she dug in her pocket and handed him a few coins.

"I am sorry," the man said in reply, speaking barely above a whisper, "but you must not tarry."

"Would to God there was more time!" she replied.

"One day there will be time for all. Give her my love."

"You may be assured I will!"

"Godspeed, my dear friend."

Slowly she moved away from the newsstand, though she could not tear her swimming eyes from him, then finally turned abruptly away and continued on down the sidewalk, clutching the paper he had given her. The two of them had begun this work together, yet sometimes their self-imposed constraints could be so cruel. She had to remind herself that the cause was more important than her own personal feelings.

Sometimes she wondered what kind of a life she had carved out for herself. Mistrust was the stock-in-trade of her existence. There were so many—even Americans—whom she could not trust. Those of her people who possessed contacts at the British and American embassies in the West had to walk warily, for even in those bastions of freedom there were those who were unsympathetic to this fringe cause among all the world's more significant ills.

This is a weary life I have, Karin thought. What happened to the girl I once was?