

# GUY WALTERS

## THE OCCUPATION

The danger came from Germany but the  
enemy was within



## About the Book

February 1945. In his bunker in Berlin, Hitler makes a desperate decision. He will deploy the V3 - a weapon so secret that its lethal nature is unclear even to the slave labourers constructing it deep beneath the Channel Island of Alderney.

June 1990. Workmen on Alderney mysteriously start to fall sick. Journalist Robert Lebonneur believes he knows why. But the closer he gets to the truth, the more he realises he is up against the same deadly forces that caused so much upheaval nearly half a century ago...

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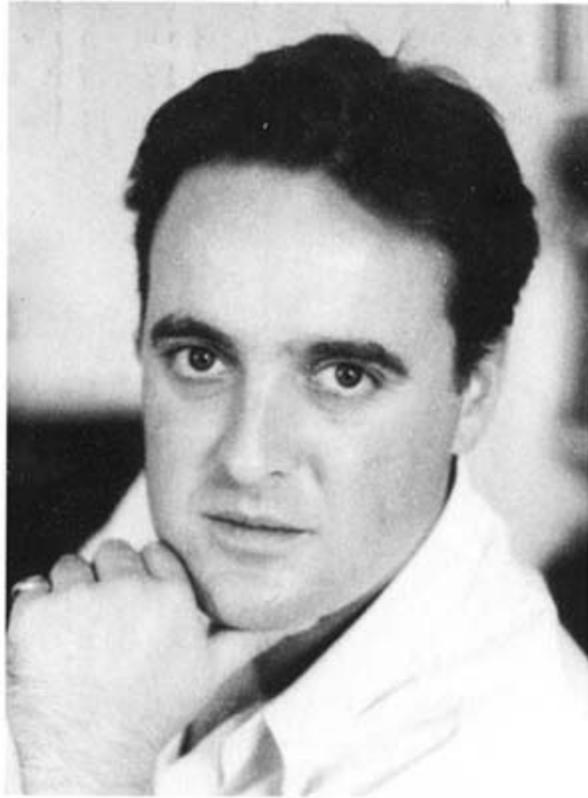
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# The Occupation

Guy Walters

*This book is for*  
JONATHAN DYKES  
1971-2003



Photograph by Dominic Walters

# Prologue

## ***Alderney, January 1945***

THEY DO NOT walk but stumble, shuffle. Their heads are bent into the solid wind, their bodies folded inwards with hunger and nausea. The lucky ones wear rough wooden clogs, the rest are barefoot, their soles long since hardened on the coarsely gritted footpaths and roads. Slung across their shoulders is a variety of tools - pickaxes and spades mainly - although some are too weak and carry nothing. The lamest are being supported by their comrades, dragged the two miles from the camp to 'the hill', a place where they know the weak will die either today, or perhaps tomorrow. Experience has told them that they will never see the day after that.

These are the ones who are badly infected with *la maladie, la malattia, la nauséa*, for there are many different names for 'the sickness'. Despite the prisoners' different tongues, the effects are the same: vomiting, diarrhoea, bleeding from the nose and the anus, utter listlessness. It is impossible to keep clean if one has the sickness, and the prisoners can always tell who is about to leave them: they are the ones whose striped uniforms are the most bloodied, the most shit-stained. They do not even make the effort - their will has gone - but their comrades insist on dragging them to work. This is not just out of kindness, but also because their masters maintain that where there is breath there is productivity. If anybody remains in the camp, the

guards will execute the same number of healthy prisoners as there are malingerers.

There are at least five hundred on the march today, of which at least five are not going to make it to the hill. They know that, their fellow prisoners know that, their guards know that, but all are stuck in a madness that insists work brings freedom, even if one is nearly a corpse.

The first death occurs within two hundred yards of the camp. His name is Francisco, a Spanish Communist captured during the Civil War. For the past two weeks, he has been working deep inside the hill, the place where *la nauséa* is worst. Francisco had started vomiting within a few hours, and by the end of that first day, he had lost so much blood that he nearly died. It is only through the ministrations of Oleg, a Russian, that Francisco has survived for this long, and it is Oleg who is now desperately trying to help him up.

'Come on, Franny, get up!' Oleg whispers in Russian. Oleg may be strong, but not even he can carry both his shovel and Francisco's pick, as well as Francisco himself.

The Spaniard does not answer. All that comes out of his mouth is a delicate trail of blood. Oleg knows that his friend Franny is about to die, but he cannot just let him. He can see Franny's stomach convulsing, trying to retch, but there is nothing to leave his body, apart from blood and parts of his disintegrating organs. Franny's body is fighting itself, racked by a corporeal civil war waged by deformed and poisoned cells.

'Franny!' Oleg exhorts him once more, but this is a mistake. Running up towards them comes Rebs, SS Unterscharführer Georg Rebs, a deserter from the French Army who has thrown in his tawdry lot with his country's conquerors. Whether his brutality and fanaticism are those of the convert is hard for the prisoners to establish, but this is not the time to debate Rebs's motives.

'What is this man doing?' Rebs shouts in French.

Oleg looks back at him defiantly. There is no point in replying, not because there is a lack of common language but because there is a complete absence of pathos.

Rebs points his rifle at Francisco.

'Get up!'

Francisco does not get up. His body will not allow it.

Rebs pulls the bolt back on his rifle and slides a round into the chamber. The safety catch is disengaged. Oleg wants to do something, wants to help, but what can he do? Try to overpower Rebs? That will achieve nothing. Franny is a dead man - they are *all* dead men - so what is the point?

Oleg shuts his eyes as he sees Rebs squeezing the trigger. He will not watch yet another death. He will not watch his friend collapse flat on to the ground as the bullet punches the last traces of life out of his body. He has seen it too many times, and he will not watch it again.

The shot echoes briefly down the short valley that leads to the sea. Normally when guns are fired birds leave their roosts, but there are no birds here. It is said that the birds left when the Germans arrived, and it is a small piece of folklore that the prisoners find fitting to believe. All that stirs is the shuffling column, which briefly notes that it is now one short, its collective brain noting that there will be just a little more 'soup' per head tonight.

Oleg walks on, not looking at Franny's body.

'Where are you going, Russian scum?'

He turns to face Rebs. He knows enough French to understand. In fact, he knows the words for 'Russian scum' in six languages. Although Oleg is a calm man his overworked heart starts to pound.

'Why did you allow this man to collapse?'

Oleg has a good idea what he is being asked, as Rebs is pointing his rifle down at Franny. He shrugs his shoulders.

'Answer me!'

Oleg starts talking in Russian, knowing that whatever he says, in whatever language, is never going to excuse his 'crime'.

'What the hell are you saying?' shouts Rebs. 'What filthy language is that anyway?'

Oleg knows that phrase as well. He just stands there, looking down at the ground, down at this cursed earth. Oleg does not know much about the earth he is standing on, because he has very little idea where he is. For the past three years he has been shunted all over Europe, and now, as part of SS Construction Brigade I, he is presently residing in what his captors call *das arschloch der Welt* - the arsehole of the world.

Rebs is still shouting at him, but Oleg does not care. He knows what is going to happen. It will happen to all of them, and now it is his turn. There is nothing he can do. He thinks of his dead wife, his dead son, his dead brother, and now he starts to think of his dead self, lying next to his dead friend in the cold dirt.

The *bolezna*, he thinks, at least he will not get the *bolezna* - the sickness.

## ***July 1990***

Although their presence has put the wind up his regulars, the publican of the Divers Inn on Braye Harbour is delighted. At six o'clock every evening, at least twenty to thirty of them drop in, their heavy workmen's boots leaving heavily defined imprints on the sand-sprinkled floor. They drink nearly as well as any Alderney man, he tells them, a deliberate encouragement to swell the contents of his old-fashioned cash register.

They come from all over Europe, these workmen, but mostly from England and Ireland: there are at least a

couple of Frenchmen, the same number of Spaniards, a Greek who calls himself Harry, and even a chap who swears he's a Pole. The islanders are not accustomed to these foreigners: like islanders everywhere they are suspicious of strangers, even the English.

For the past fortnight, the men have been excavating the site for the foundations of a new hotel - Mannez Heights - which is to be a luxury affair, an attempt by the island to attract some badly needed big spenders. Perched on top of Mannez Hill on the far north-east of the three-mile-long island, the hoarding outside the worksite tells passers-by that the hotel will boast three restaurants, a swimming-pool with a wave machine, a gym and, most crucially, a casino. It is that, the hotel's owners hope, which will really draw them in.

The workmen are particularly ebullient tonight, not only because it is Friday but also because it is a fine evening. Even though Braye Harbour faces north, and the workmen will stay inside until midnight, the occasional glimpse through the pub's windows of anchored sailboats bobbing in the vestiges of warm sunlight makes them feel as though they are on holiday.

'Six pints, please, Dave.'

'Just for you, are they?'

'And after you've done, another six over 'ere.'

'You buying a round, Pete? Miracles will never cease!'

'So, then, Debs, which lucky man have you got your eye on tonight?'

The air is thick with such banter as well as cigarette smoke - roll-ups being expertly fashioned every few seconds by thick, muddy fingers.

One of those ordering a large round is Mark, a South Londoner, who finds himself away from home for at least six months a year. He misses his family, but the money from jobs such as this is too good to turn down. As Dave pours

the pints, Mark turns to his mate Ian, a man he's worked with for the best part of two decades.

'Tough that today, weren't it?'

Ian wipes his brow theatrically. 'I never known concrete like it. Them Jerries must have doubled the weight of the whole bleedin' island.'

'God knows what we're going through.'

'Probably some sort of fortress or something. The place is littered with them.'

Mark licks the gum on his cigarette paper and nods. 'I don't get it,' he says. 'The Germans must have spent their whole time here building, building, building. Why didn't they just enjoy it? It's not a bad spot, this.'

Ian laughs slightly.

'I expect they did. The Germans, I mean. They had slaves, didn't they, did all their work for them?'

'We could do with a few of them ourselves!' Mark exclaims.

Ian laughs again. 'They say they're all buried in the breakwater,' he says.

'Who?'

'The *slaves*,' says Ian. 'I was talking to some bloke the other day, and he tells me that the Germans worked the poor buggers to death and dumped their bodies in the concrete in the breakwater. Hundreds of bodies, he says, maybe more.'

'Bit like the M25, then.'

'Come again?'

'That's meant to be full of bodies,' says Mark. 'Gangland killings and that.'

'No wonder it's falling to bits.'

The men both laugh.

'Here you go, gents,' says Dave. 'That'll be seven pounds fifty.'

'I'll get this,' says Mark, and picks off a ten-pound note from a large bundle he has stuffed in the back of his jeans.

'Ta,' says Ian. 'And then I suspect it'll be Roger's turn.'

'Speaking of which, where is he?'

'Roger?'

'Yeah.'

'He's here somewhere,' says Ian. 'He told me he was feeling a bit out of sorts, though.'

'Caught the sun?' asks Mark, taking a generous mouthful from his pint.

Ian shakes his head. 'No,' he says. 'He was right down that little shaft all day, the one with all that bleeding hardcore plugging it up.'

'Probably just knackered, then.'

'Yeah,' says Ian.

For the next minute or so, Ian and Mark stand in silence. They, too, are a little tired - it has been a long week - but the pint is going down well, and it's good for them to think they've got an entire day's sunbathing ahead of them.

The remaining pints from the round are taken by their work-mates, one of whom is Colin.

'Ere, Col,' says Mark. 'You seen Roger?'

Colin sups his pint and gesticulates with his left thumb over his shoulder. 'Went to the gents. Said he 'ad a nosebleed,' he says, and then, glancing at his watch, 'although he's been there a while. Must be 'bout twenny minutes.'

'A nosebleed?' asks Ian.

'Sright. They can go on for ever them things. I 'ad one which lasted—'

'I think we should see if he's all right,' says Mark, putting down his pint, 'Twenty minutes is way too long.'

Ian nods and places his nearly empty pint on the wet counter. Together, the men make their way through the crowded bar, through the door marked 'Gentlemen' in battered Gothic script, and into the lavatory.

'Jesus Christ!'

'Rodge!'

There, sprawled on the floor, his mouth, chin, neck and chest covered with blood and vomit, is Roger. His head rests against the pedestal of a basin coated with yet more blood, and around him lie countless tissues dyed different shades of red.

Ian remains frozen while Mark bends down. 'Rodge!' says Mark. 'Can you hear me?'

Roger's chest is moving up and down rapidly, his breathing erratic. His eyes are glassy, and he is pale, terribly pale.

Mark turns to Ian. 'For fuck's sake, get some help! Go and get some fucking help!'

# Chapter One

## *Berlin, February 1945*

THE LIGHTS IN the bunker flickered in accompaniment to the muffled noise of the bombs. The occupants were too busy to notice, secure in the knowledge that above them lay eleven and a half feet of ferro-concrete and, above that, another four feet of sand. The bunker, it was claimed, was impenetrable to anything the Allies could drop on it. In fact, the greatest danger to the occupants came from within, for everybody seated around the large table in that cramped conference room late that night was equally wary of his neighbour. Ever since the previous July, when von Stauffenberg had nearly wiped them all out, nobody was above suspicion.

The remnants of the Third Reich's leadership were gathered for a 'situation conference' - a common enough event - but there was a curious atmosphere in the room, detected by many. Especially sensitive to the mood was Captain Gerhard Boldt, the aide to Colonel General Heinz Guderian, the army chief of staff. He had felt a greater tension than usual up in the Reich Chancellery, when he and the general had been searched especially thoroughly for concealed weapons. He had felt it when they entered the bunker, and had even seen it in the faces of secretaries such as Fräulein Junge as they waited in the anteroom.

Although he dared not meet its gaze, it was the face of the Führer that told Boldt all he needed to know about the state of the Reich, its defeats and setbacks physically impressed on his body. His spine twisted, his jowls heavy, his eyes red and heavy-lidded, his pallor troglodytically grey, Hitler was like his own ghost. His hands were so unsteady that it was sometimes hard for him to sign documents, and after a row they shook even more violently. Boldt had heard that Hitler's physician, Dr Morell, had kept telling his patient that he should take Luminal to calm himself down, but the Führer had replied that he had no need of such medication. Instead, to reduce his blood pressure, Hitler had apparently ordered Morell to drain a few hundred cubic centimetres of blood on a regular basis.

Vampire, Boldt thinks, the man is vampire. Not only does he suck our blood, but he also sucks out his own. He actually *wants* to destroy us, destroy himself, wants us all to die rather than accept defeat. For years, Boldt had accepted the 'last drop' homilies, but had never, until that night, regarded them as anything more than metaphorical.

'... and furthermore, I have been told that the latest reports from Dresden suggest that the death toll could be as high as one hundred thousand ...'

The room gasped. Until that point, nobody had been listening that closely to Minister of the Interior Wilhelm Frick. He had been droning on in his soft, low, bureaucratic voice about tales of supposed production statistics, about how many trains were reaching their destinations, about food shortages and other equally stultifying topics.

Hitler coughed before speaking. 'One ... one hundred thousand?' His voice was gruff and strained, so unlike the commanding bark heard at all those rallies held all those lifetimes ago.

'Apparently so, my Führer,' Frick replied, 'although I am informed that the numbers could be higher.'

Hitler smashed the table with a ferocity that made the room jump. 'This is a crime!'

'Quite so,' said Frick, his voice unemotional.

'They are slaughtering our women and children for their own sadistic purposes! It is monstrous!'

There was a loud murmur of agreement - an expression that Boldt couldn't help feel to be hypocritical. The Allied bombing of Dresden might well have been a crime, Boldt pondered, but we have committed quite a few ourselves. Was he really the only one thinking this? He looked at some of the men around him - Field Marshal Jodl, Admiral Dönitz, Guderian: what were they thinking? Did they really believe that the Allies are criminals in the same way as we are? Everybody knows what is happening to the Jews, but nobody talks about it. Surely the 'evacuations to the East' are worse than Dresden?

But their faces mimicked that of their beloved Führer, expressing indignation at this criminal act. Boldt noticed that the only man who looked impassive was Albert Speer, the Minister for Armaments. Handsome, elegant and patrician looking, Speer's face stuck out among the rougher ones that surrounded him. It was to Speer that Hitler's next remark was addressed.

'Speer!' the Führer growled. 'What is happening to my vengeance weapons? Are they just sitting in the factories? What are you doing with them?'

Speer shrugged a little, as though someone had walked over his grave. 'It would seem that we can do very little, my Führer.'

*'Little?'*

'Things have been ... difficult of late,' Speer replied, his tone bordering on the nonchalantly insolent. Boldt was impressed - there were very few who could talk to the Führer in that way.

Hitler's eyes widened so much that everybody around the table could see how bloodshot and yellow they were. 'It

has been *difficult* for all of us,' Hitler shouted. '*Difficult* for our brave soldiers on both fronts, *difficult* for every citizen of the Reich, young or old. It has been *difficult* for everybody, Minister, and yet why are you the exception?'

Another shrug. Boldt found himself wincing at Speer's manner.

'I am in no way demanding for myself any exceptional or particular treatment,' Speer replied precisely, his top lip visibly moistening, 'although my Führer must appreciate that special armaments production is almost impossible with such saturation bombing. If we were in a position to stop it, then of course things would be far less ...'

Boldt realised that Speer was about to say 'difficult', but its repetition would clearly have been unwise.

'... I mean, we would achieve greater levels of efficiency.'

Hitler glared. He knew Speer was right - this was all Göring's damn fault. That drug-addled whale had managed the Luftwaffe so ineptly that it was now no more effective than a pre-war flying circus. It was just as well that the man was not present: he would have been swept away by the strongest torrent of savage abuse. 'So what is happening, Speer? Why exactly are your rockets not wreaking the havoc I had been led to expect?'

Speer swallowed. It was certainly not his fault that the V2 rocket had not been as effective as it was hoped, but he knew that if the Führer asked such questions, then one was obliged to reply as if it was one's responsibility. 'Once again, my Führer, there have been delays. Last month the factory in the Netherlands that produces the rockets' liquid oxygen was destroyed by the RAF. There has also been a question of launch sites. The Allied advance has been so rapid in some quarters that as soon as a launch pad is established it has to be moved again. We are ... we are doing our best, my Führer.'

Hitler waved his right hand effeminately in the air, brushing away Speer's comments as if they were some mildly troublesome flies.

'And what about the V3, Herr Minister?'

The voice was not Hitler's. Boldt scarcely recognised it, as it was a voice that was seldom heard. The voice - thuggish, from the street, Boldt thought - was that of the Führer's *éminence grise*, some said his successor, Martin Bormann. As Party Minister in charge of Party Headquarters, the squat Bormann was said to control access to the Führer, and he had his stubby fingers in many pies. Like many army officers, Boldt did not care for Bormann, seeing him as the ultimate Party man. It was farcical that Hitler had made him commander of the 'People's Army', but even more bizarre appointments had recently been made.

'It is my understanding that the V3 is not yet ready to be implemented—' Speer began.

'Your *understanding*, Minister?' snapped Hitler. 'This does not sound particularly authoritative. All I need to know is *when*, Speer, *when*.'

Speer thumbed through his file once more, then pointedly gave up and shut it. 'My Führer, I feel that I must say something. As you know, the V3 is a highly technical weapon ...'

Hitler snorted.

'... which requires much specialist knowledge and huge amounts of matériel. These are commodities which are in short supply ...'

'Commodities!'

'... and there is a larger question of whether the V3, even if it works, will only cause the Allies to inflict yet more Dresdens on us—'

'I've had enough of this, Speer! I have three simple questions for you to answer.'

Speer wiped his top lip, then folded his arms.

'One,' said Hitler. 'Do you want Germany to win the war?'

There was a pause, a slight pause, but enough of one to ensure that Speer's reply was not taken at face value by anybody, least of all Hitler.

'Of course, my Führer.'

'Good,' said Hitler. 'Because if you didn't, I would have you shot, Albert.'

'Albert'. The use of Speer's first name reminded Boldt of how intimately the Führer and his architect had known each other. Speer did not speak, but he nodded.

'The second question is this: can you make the V3 operational?'

A longer pause.

'I can.'

'Good. Three. How long will it take?'

Speer smoothed the back of his well-groomed head with the flat of his hand. Boldt had never seen the man look so agitated, so clearly rattled. 'About a month, maybe six weeks. But I do need ...'

'Excellent!' said Hitler, suddenly jubilant. 'You can have whatever is required.' He looked round the room. 'Each of you,' he said quietly, hoarsely, 'is to assist Minister Speer in any way you can. There is nothing more important than this project. If it works, the V3 will stop the Allies in their tracks. It might even do more than that, much more.'

The men around the table started to exhibit nervous smiles.

'May I ask something, my Führer?' said Guderian.

'Yes?'

'Where is the V3 and what exactly is it?'

'It's on one of the Channel Islands,' Hitler replied.

'Which one, Speer?'

'Abschnitt Adolf.'

'Adolf?' said Hitler, grinning. 'You are joking.'

'I'm not, my Führer.'

'And what did it used to be called?'

'Alderney.'

'And now why don't you tell the General here what exactly the V3 is?'

Speer took a deep breath and began.

\* \* \*

It had been a long time since he was captured - only a few days after D-Day - and Captain Edmond Fellowes had had enough of Jersey. He bore no particular antipathy towards the island itself, but he certainly did towards the hovel of a POW camp in which he was detained. A veteran of No. 4 Commando since its first raid in March 1941, Fellowes hated being incarcerated more than most. The conditions in the camp were atrocious - the substance that passed for food was unpalatable, there was no wood for the tiny stove in the draughty hut, and it was almost impossible to get any proper exercise. Captain Fellowes was not one to gripe unnecessarily, but he certainly knew that he was malnourished. His complaints to his captors had been met with forced smiles and reminders that the Germans had even less food than their prisoners, who were fortunate to have their Red Cross parcels.

As there was no time difference between Berlin and Jersey, Fellowes was not to know that he swung his legs out of his bunk at exactly the same time as Albert Speer had been starting his nervous exposition - 1.35 a.m. precisely. He trod on the floorboards softly in his rubber-soled boots and bent down to the bottom bunk. 'Smith!' he hissed. 'Come on!'

Already awake, Pilot Officer Edward Smith threw off his meagre blanket and got up. For a few moments, both men checked themselves over. They were wearing battered farm labourers' clothes, bought for an usurious amount of chocolate from an islander who delivered small, irregular

supplies of milk to the camp. It was disgraceful, thought Fellowes. The man should have given them the clothes for nothing. Instead, there had been a lot of moaning about how risky it was, how it might put him and his family in gaol or perhaps worse. Fellowes had been tempted to give the man an earful, but Smith had managed to calm him down, and had produced the six bars of chocolate that had bought the man's complicity, as well as the name and address of someone who could help them - a Mrs Campbell of Wellington Road in St Helier.

'Wirecutters?' asked Fellowes.

Smith patted his trouser pocket. 'Knife?'

Now it was Fellowes's turn to check. It was there, tucked into his right boot - six inches of Krupp steel pinched from a guard's tunic left in the washroom. Even when he was stealing it, Fellowes had known that the guard would never dare report its theft for fear of punishment.

Fellowes nodded back at Smith. 'Right,' he said. 'Let's go.'

The two men walked quietly between the bunks. The occasional 'Good luck, lads,' could be heard, causing Fellowes to smile appreciatively. The chance of getting out of the camp was minimal, the chance of making it off the island even slighter. Still, it wasn't going to stop him trying, as it had done others. There were some in this camp who seemed grateful to be out of the war, an attitude that earned no sympathy from Fellowes. Some had accused him of wanting to be a medal-winner and a hero, that all he was doing would get them into trouble. They had stopped short of telling him he was doing wrong, as each officer knew it was his duty to escape. Even if an attempt was unsuccessful, at least the officer should have derived some contentment that he had done his own little bit to disrupt the German war effort.

When they reached the hut's only window, the two men paused.

'Good luck, Smith,' said Fellowes.

'Same to you, Captain.'

The window was meant to be bolted, but the prisoners had undone it during the height of summer. Occasionally, a guard had given them some grief about it, but a packet of Red Cross cigarettes was the usual fee for keeping it open. Despite the failure of his earlier attempts, the regime was certainly slacker than Fellowes had expected - a combination of lack of morale and the German belief that the waters off Jersey were so treacherous that any prisoner trying to navigate them was likely to meet his doom. Fellowes thought the Germans were probably right, but it wasn't going to stop him. He had heard that some islanders had escaped during the early days of the occupation, and he saw no reason why he and Smith could not try to emulate them.

Gently, Fellowes pushed open the window, feeling the coolness of the night air caress his face. There were no searchlights in the camp, but there were haphazard patrols, which had been accompanied by dogs until the food shortages had become so bad. The prisoners couldn't believe that the Germans had eaten them until one of the guards had offered up a bowl of evidential stew that smelt suspiciously canine. None of them had dared try it, with the exception of a lieutenant from the Hampshire Regiment who said it tasted rather like his grandmother's cooking.

Fellowes stuck his head out of the window, looked left and right and, with some gymnastic polish despite his clothes and boots, launched himself out of the aperture in one movement. He landed more heavily than he would have liked, and remained crouched down, using his fingertips to keep his balance. For a moment, all he could hear was his breath, which was coming in short pants. Calm down, he told himself, for heaven's sake calm down. He forced himself to breathe more slowly, and as he did so, he tried to pick up any traces of noise.

Nothing. Perhaps some wind in the trees. Maybe the sea? He came up to a half-crouch, then stepped away from the window. He looked from side to side: his vision confirming his hearing - only a handful of sleeping huts and the constant backdrop of barbed wire gleaming dimly in the weak moonlight. He raised his right hand, then brought it down, signalling his partner to make his exit.

Smith's landing sounded like a trunk full of shoes falling from a loft. Fellowes cursed him silently, believing they might as well call it a night. Who would have thought Smith was a flaming Spitfire pilot? Surely fighter pilots were meant to be a graceful lot?

After fixing Smith with a glower, Fellowes turned to his right and, remaining crouched, walked ten brisk yards to the next hut. He did not run because that might have attracted attention, and made a noisy stumble more likely. Haste, not speed, Fellowes reminded himself. This is not D-Day, nobody is shooting at you - at least, not yet. He stopped at the hut and beckoned Smith over. This time the man had found a greater degree of nimbleness, and his passage was quieter than his landing. The two men edged their way along the side of the hut.

The barbed-wire perimeter was now only thirty yards away. They scampered towards the last hut before the fence. This next stage would be the most risky, as it would involve lying next to the fence, with no cover, and cutting through the barbed wire.

With Smith next to him, Fellowes edged his way along the side of the hut and waited. There was a noise, he was sure of it. It was the sound of a guard's footsteps.

They were getting louder now, more threatening.

Fellowes sensed Smith tensing next to him, a reaction caused not only by the looming guard, but also by Fellowes's smooth removal of the knife from his boot. He knew what Smith was thinking: It's madness, it will get us shot. Too bad. Fellowes had heard of too many

commandoes being murdered by the Germans to have any sympathy for one of their number, even if this one was a mere dolt of a guard on Jersey.

Fellowes looked down at the knife. He did not relish violence, but he was good at it. When had he last killed? He remembered it clearly - it had been 8 June, two days after D-Day, in a firefight among the Normandy hedgerows. He had killed two SS NCOs, shot one, and bayoneted the other. It had been gruesome. No amount of training could have prepared him for the man's imploring look as he had driven the weapon into his heart. It had remained as the life quickly drained out of him, and although one of his men would later say the captain had been seeing things, Fellowes swore that the expression was still on the man's face two hours later.

The footsteps drew nearer. He would wait for the man to pass, and then he would dispatch him.

The guard appeared, his figure tall and thin. Fellowes steeled himself, his body tensed to go into action. He followed the deeply absorbed discipline of his training. Breathing calmly through his mouth, he stepped after the guard, his knife pointing towards him. In order to mask the sound of his footsteps, he walked in time with his intended victim, and stepped down on the balls of his feet rather than on his heels.

Fellowes leaped up, and smashed the hilt of the knife into the side of the guard's neck. As the man crumpled, Fellowes twisted his head to one side, simultaneously sliding the blade deeply into and across his neck. Just as he had been taught, the weight of the collapsing body provided much of the downward force needed for the knife to penetrate deeply. Fellowes could already feel the thick, warm liquid oozing over the back of his hand, and released the near-corpse gently, allowing it to crumple backwards to the ground. A low gargling sound was coming from the

guard's exposed trachea. He could see the man's eyes - they, too, were imploring him.

Smith appeared at his side. Fellowes knew that the shock of what he had just done would come later. Without looking at Smith, he scuttled over to the barbed wire and lay down next to it. Smith was a second behind him, and started to cut the wire, far too slowly for Fellowes's liking. It was tough, but thankfully the cutters were strong enough for the task. In less than a minute, thought Fellowes, they would be free men.

\* \* \*

Lieutenant Colonel Max von Luck took careful aim. His target was an elusive one, going first this way and then that, but von Luck was an experienced shot and second-guessed his target's movements. He squeezed the trigger firmly and fired.

Damn! Missed! Still, he had another barrel. Just two seconds later, he fired again. Got it! As if thrown down by an unseen hand, the bird plummeted. Von Luck allowed himself a smile. The erratic flight of the pigeon always made it difficult to shoot, but that made it much better sport than some of the 'nobler' birds. The smile was also in appreciation of the fact that he was not going to eat just a plate of vegetables this evening. Now, if only he could get another, he would be delighted. However, there was little woodland left on Jersey, and the few pigeons that remained were extraordinarily wary. He would try, though - anything to complement those wretched potatoes.

'Good shot, sir.'

'Thank you,' said von Luck, addressing his deputy, Major Rudolf Hempel. 'Did you see where it went down?'

'Just over in those ferns, I think.'

Von Luck broke his shotgun and carried it draped over his right forearm. As he strode through the wet grass, he

felt as though he was at home in Bavaria. The early fading February light, the fir trees, a late afternoon's shooting - all served to render a scene of pastoral tranquillity for which he was becoming increasingly wistful.

'Cigarette, Hempel?'

'Yes please, sir.' Hempel was indeed grateful - cigarettes were in short supply.

Von Luck took out a silver case and opened it.

'Ah! Your famous crested cigarettes, sir.'

'Left by my father when he died,' said von Luck. 'They're abominably stale, but they're the best I can do.'

'Tobacco is tobacco, stale or not. And with your family crest on, well, I'm sure it helps the taste.'

'I wouldn't know about that,' said von Luck, lighting Hempel's cigarette.

The two men smoked in silence. They didn't taste too bad, thought von Luck, better than the alternative, which was probably dried nettles or something.

'So, then, Hempel, what have you heard about our new arrival?'

'Admiral Huffmeier?'

'Indeed.'

Normally Hempel would have been wary of answering such a question, but he knew that here, in the large grounds of Rozel Manor, there was no chance of being overheard. He also knew that his lieutenant colonel was a fellow sceptic about not only the course of the war but Nazism in general. 'I'd heard he was a bad sort,' he replied. 'A real Nazi.'

'That's what I'd heard,' said von Luck, combing the ferns with a stick. 'Where is this damn bird?'

'I think it fell more over here.'

'You think so? All right.'

They looked in silence for a while, von Luck thrashing the ferns. This was bad news. The last thing he wanted was to have to deal with an intelligent maniac. In his position as

head of civil affairs in the Field Command, it was von Luck's job to liaise between the Germans and the island authorities, a task to which he had set with much diplomacy and sensitivity. He had, he hoped, won the respect of the islanders as a fair and reasonable man, perhaps even reaching the status of a 'gentleman' in their eyes. But with Huffmeier two years' hard work would be ruined. God knew what would happen to the poor islanders now that he was in charge - they were half starved already. He swiped at the ferns again, more out of frustration with the situation than the non-appearance of a dead pigeon. 'So why is he here, Hempel? Why has our good general been replaced?'

Hempel shrugged his shoulders. 'Nobody really knows.'

'There must be a *reason*,' said von Luck, breaking the stick against a rotting branch. 'Shit. Where is this damn bird?'

'The only thing I can think of, sir, is that they're planning something.'

'Go on.'

'Well, one rumour puts it that we're going to make an attack on the mainland.'

'I don't think that's very likely, Hempel, do you? The troops are so hungry they're almost eating each other! They're not exactly fighting fit.'

'I agree, sir. But I'm afraid that's all I can think of.'

'Maybe you're right, maybe that's just what they're planning. No doubt someone in Berlin has looked at his maps and pieces of paper and decided that an attack in the enemy's rear is just what is required. But not even *he* would be so stupid. We do not have the landing craft, the equipment, nothing. We can barely feed ourselves and the islanders, let alone wage war. I tell you, Hempel, we are prisoners here.'

Von Luck picked up another stick and started thrashing again. After a minute, he was rewarded with his pigeon. 'I

was beginning to think someone had taken it.'

'Not that unlikely,' Hempel replied.

'Now then, Hempel, all we need to do is to bag you one, and then we can go home happy.'

By half past four, it had grown too dark, and von Luck and Hempel called off their hunt for another bird. 'I'm sorry, Hempel, you shall share mine. He's not the fattest bird I'm afraid, but he will do.'

'Please, sir, you shot it, therefore it is yours.'

'Nonsense, Hempel! Besides, I can tell a hungry look in a man's eyes. You must join me at Linden Court for dinner. I insist.'

'That is very kind, sir.'

'Not at all.'

Even the horses they were mounting were thin. Von Luck had refused to shoot them, and had managed to wangle them some feed. The two men rode in silence, von Luck watching the slow, pale sun setting to his right. He sighed. It was Sunday evening, a time for reflection and writing up his diary, but he was glad of Hempel's company. This business with Huffmeier troubled him, and he wanted to chew it over further.

'Damn!'

'What is it, Hempel?'

'I had forgotten, sir. I'm sorry - I'm meant to be dining with Major Schwalm this evening. He's over from Alderney and wants to talk to me.'

'Talk to you about what?'

'Vegetables.'

'Vegetables?'

'Yes, sir. I do apologise.'

'That's quite all right, Hempel. It does, of course, mean that I shall have the pigeon all to myself.'

'I know,' Hempel replied, laughing. 'I have somewhat drawn the short straw.'

Vegetables, thought von Luck, it was always bloody vegetables. That was all they ever talked about, all they ever ate.

'Why does that bore Schwalm want to talk to you about vegetables anyway?' he asked. 'Hasn't he got enough of his own?'

'I don't know yet - maybe he was just looking for an excuse to get off Alderney.'

'I can't say I blame him,' said von Luck. 'Alderney is a real shit-hole. Jersey must feel positively cosmopolitan to him. What's he been doing there all this time?'

'No idea. I expect it involves digging and concrete.'

Von Luck laughed. That's all they had ever bloody done on these islands - dug into them, then poured concrete into the holes.

'Ask him, could you?'

'Ask him what, sir?'

'Ask him what exactly he's been doing. I'd like to know.'

Ten minutes later, accompanied by further apologies, Hempel wished von Luck a pleasant evening. Von Luck was gratified that Hempel eschewed the Nazi salute, always a sign that someone was on the side of the angels. The road down which he rode was deserted, and all he could hear was the sound of Satan's hoofs.

Without any warning, the horse halted.

'What is it, Satan?'

Satan merely shook his head, his tail whisking in agitation.

Von Luck looked around, mildly confused. It was unlike Satan to be so edgy: he must have seen something. He leaned forward and patted the top of the horse's head.