

Excerpt from *Rising from Rubble...Germany Revisited*

ISBN 0-9777237-7-1

Release date August 15, 2006

Pages 194-196

“Would you be willing to go with me tonight to visit a German’s house in old Frankfurt,” the Military Government Major asked me at dinner one evening.

“Sure,” I replied. “Where are we going?”

“I’ve made contact with a German who wants to sell some industrial grade diamonds,” he replied. “It’ll be a good investment.”

After dinner, as darkness fell, we took the Major’s jeep and drove out of the military compound. I was apprehensive about the mission and strapped on my Army .45 automatic. The major also was armed.

It was quiet as we drove through the dark, unlit streets with the ghostly shells of damaged buildings surrounding us. Not a sign of life anywhere. Near the outskirts of Frankfurt, we pulled into what appeared to be a vacant field. As the Major turned the Jeep slowly, the headlights outlined the damaged foundation of a house. It was covered with wood and tar paper.

“There it is,” Holmes said.

As we got out of the Jeep, we flipped on our flashlights. The Major was carrying an Army duffle bag. The air was still and cold on this moonless night. As we approached the building, smoke was rising lazily from a tall stove pipe sticking up from the foundation. It appeared the Major had been here before. We stepped down the dark concrete staircase and he knocked on the cellar door.

The darkness and foreign landscape made us both anxious. ‘What am I doing in this place,’ I asked myself. Then the door opened and the dim figure of a German man greeted us in English, “Come in.”

Inside the basement room we saw a table under a hanging bare bulb. Chairs were placed around it. A stove in the corner warmed the damp room.

“Please sit down,” our host offered. There was no introduction. No names. The middle-aged man, dressed in worn trousers, sweater and coat, pulled a brown leather pouch from his pocket and placed it on the soft green cloth covering the table top. He carefully dumped the contents on the table. The light from the overhead lamp caught the shimmering facets of the diamonds, and it was exciting to see their beauty.

Holmes picked them up individually and examined them carefully with a jeweler’s loupe he was carrying. In 10 minutes, he had finished his inspection, “They look fine. I’ll take them. The 10 cartons of Chesterfields are in the bag.”

I was dumb-founded by the craziness of the transaction. It was the ultimate barter fantasy: thousands of dollars in diamonds for less than 50 U.S. dollars in cigarettes; a black market deal with our former enemy?

Our host opened the duffel bag and removed the cartons one at a time. He tore each carton’s flap and counted the 10 packs of cigarettes sealed in cellophane. Satisfied,

he stood up, shook hands with the Major and said, “Danke sehr.” Thank you. Holmes scooped up the diamonds, poured them into the small bag, and slipped it into his pocket. He and I got up and followed our host to the door. Climbing the steps, we emerged onto the rubble strewn landscape and walked quickly to the Jeep in the cold darkness.

Not until we were safely inside the SHAEF military compound and in our quarters did my heart stop pounding. The Major thanked me, and the subject was closed forever.

© Kenneth Weaver, Author, 2006