

Fifty years in May
by
Silvio Nacucchi

FADE IN:

INT. BERLIN/MOABIT JAIL/CORRIDOR - DAY

Cells line both sides as six boot-shod legs march along a dimly lit corridor.

The steps echo rhythmically.

SUPER: MOABIT JAIL - BERLIN - MAY 12, 1945

The boot-shod legs belong to three RUSSIAN PRISON GUARDS: corporal PETKOV and the privates ARMANICEV and KOMOROF. They are armed with a PSSh sub-machine gun.

Through the bars the tense faces of some GERMAN PRISONERS are visible.

Scared, they step back when Petkov hits the bars with his weapon.

PETKOV
(scornful)
Back, stay back!

The three Guards open one of the cells and take out Colonel STOLZ (45).

EXT. BERLIN/MOABIT JAIL/YARD - DAY

A sunny day.

A large yard filled with Russian soldiers. A gallows lies in the centre, where Stolz stands on a chair with a noose at his neck.

In his eyes just terror. His lips are twitching but he remains soundless.

The HANGMAN (40) approaches and covers his head with a hood.

BLACK.

On BLACK, we hear the murmurs of the soldiers in the yard louder and louder...

...and they suddenly stop when the Hangman kicks the chair and Stolz starts swinging back and forth, painfully kicking in the air.

Cheerful shouts of the soldiers accompany the macabre rite.

INT. MOSCOW/NKVD HQ/ROVATIN'S OFFICE - DAY

A fist pounds on a large table strewn with papers.

ROVATIN
Fifteen hangings in two days!

It's NKVD (Russian secret police agency) General ALEXANDER ROVATIN, 60s, short and stocky with Asian features and thinning hair. His uniform shines with decorations that jingle whenever he moves.

Two other NKVD officers sit across the table: Colonel ANATOLJ LABOMOV, 50ish, and Colonel IVAN TATAREV (45s), a tall, slim and clean-shaven agent of the NKVD. The pair jumps at this sound.

Tatarev nervously taps a pencil on the tabletop as he listens annoyed.

ROVATIN
The world is watching us...

Rovatin picks up some papers, and tosses them across the table to Labomov.

ROVATIN
...And Stalin does not want any further complaints from the Allies!

LABOMOV
They're war criminals!

Labomov jumps to his feet.

LABOMOV
People don't want justice. They want revenge!

Rovatin and Labomov keep looking at each other with hostile looks.

TATAREV
Comrades, comrades, please.

Stands and walks toward Labomov. Tatarev puts his hands on Labomov's shoulder. Their eyes meet.

TATAREV
The line between vengeance and justice is often blurred at best.

Tatarev's piercing glare invites Labomov to sit. He obeys.

TATAREV
Today we sit at the table of the righteous.

Walks to a globe in a corner of the room.

TATAREV

Nobody remembers now, that we
invaded Poland and Finland.

He spins the globe slowly.

TATAREV

Stalin cares more about the
relationship with the Allies than
the German prisoners.

Rovatin nods.

ROVATIN

The relationship with the
Westerners is not easy. Let's not
make it even more complicated.

TATAREV

Our people will get revenge, in
due course.

Tatarev gives the globe one final, hard spin and comes back
to the table.

ROVATIN

We must only make it seem...

Rovatin hesitates, not finding the right words to express
himself.

ROVATIN

... A little smoke screen for the
Western world.

Labomov nods slightly.

TATAREV

Let the West defend them, then.

Tatarev's words catch the attention of Labomov and Rovatin.

TATAREV

Starting with this one here.

Tatarev pulls a folder with a red tape out of the drawer
and puts it in front of Rovatin.

ROVATIN

Obviously you take all
responsibility, don't you?

TATAREV

You don't earn medals and
promotions without taking some
risks.

Rovatin considers the proposal. Nods.

ROVATIN
I'll report to Stalin.

Stands and walks to the door with Labomov and Tatarev.
Rovatin stops at the threshold. He turns to Tatarev.

ROVATIN
Should something go wrong...

Labomov grins at Tatarev, and drags his thumb across his
throat. Tatarev turns and leaves.

EST. FRANKFURT/SHAEF - DAY

A big compound formed by smaller box-shaped buildings
attached to each other.

SUPER: FRANKFURT - SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied
Expeditionary Force)

INT. SHAEF/HAYDEBER'S OFFICE - DAY

A spacious and well-lit office. In the middle of the room
there's a big desk. Next to the table lamp there are a
thermos and a glass.

The US Army Military Police Colonel JOSEPH HAYDEBER (50),
thick white hair and blue eyes, sits at the desk. Looks at
some documents, and signs some of them.

The telephone rings. Haydeber promptly picks it up.

HAYDEBER
Haydeber... Good morning, sir.
Yes... No problem working with
the Russians.

Haydeber takes the thermos and pours some coffee into the
glass.

HAYDEBER
Yes, I understand... Top
secret... Yes, Sir.

Haydeber hangs up. He looks annoyed as he sips the coffee.

INT. FRANKFURT/JANKO'S ROOM - DAWN

A small dark room, simply furnished, where chaos reigns, as
if it had just been deliberately searched by a cop. On the
floor there are a few empty whiskey bottles.

The US Army Military Police captain SASHA JANKO, 30-year-old, with graying hair, attractive and athletic body, lies on the ground next to the bed. He's naked, barely covered by a sheet.

A persistent knock at the door abruptly wakes him up. He opens his eyes and moves his arm in front of his face, trying to focus on his watch. He gets up and wraps the sheet around his waist. As he drags himself to the door, he stumbles on an empty whiskey bottle.

JANKO

Shit!

The knocking continues.

JANKO

I'm coming!

He reaches the door limping, and opens it.

In the dimly lit corridor, the M.P. Sergeant JOHN JAMES (JJ) PERRY (40's), his orderly. He's a short chubby guy, always smiling. His round face and constantly moving blue eyes make him likable at first sight.

PERRY

Christ, Sasha!

Perry strides in.

PERRY

I can't talk bullshit anymore to cover for your absence.

Janko sits on the bed holding his head in his hands.

PERRY

Haydeber is searching the entire city to find you.

With a look of disapproval of the messy room, Perry starts picking up the various pieces of Janko's uniform, tossed around the room. He shakes the dust off the uniform, and neatly lays it on the bed. The M.P. armband is the last thing he picks up.

Janko, still sleepy and hangover, slowly starts putting on his uniform.

PERRY

Seems like they finally have a task for you... After a long time.

Janko rushes to the bathroom. He kneels in front of the toilet and throws up.

PERRY
You can't show up like this.

JANKO
(with his head in the
toilet)
Bring me some black coffee.

Perry rolls his eyes and shakes his head.

INT. BERLIN/MOABIT JAIL/HOTTE'S CELL - DAWN

ALFRED HOTTE (25) dark hair and eyes, sleeps fitfully on the floor of a cell with his threadbare Wehrmacht officer's uniform coat as his pillow.

The sound of trudging, heavy booted steps echoes from a distance.

He suddenly wakes up. Gets up and approaches the cell door.

Looks at the other cells in the corridor, and sees other suffering faces, like his own, looking back at him.

EXT. FRANKFURT/SHAEF/YARD - DAY

Janko and Perry in a Jeep speed through the gate of the Headquarters, and stop in the inside courtyard.

JANKO
(to Perry)
Wait here.

Perry nods. Janko jumps out of the Jeep and walks to the entrance of the building.

INT. FRANKFURT/SHAEF/CORRIDOR - DAY

In the corridor, American, British and French Officers and Soldiers come and go. Sounds of PHONES RINGING and TYPE-MACHINES TICKING everywhere, accompanied by indistinct chatter. FEMALE PHONE OPERATORS are busy plugging and unplugging phone-jacks as lights go on and off in front of them.

Janko stops in front of a door, set ajar, on which the plaque reads: COLONEL HAYDEBER - Military police HQ.

Janko sighs, and knocks.

EXT. FRANKFURT/SHAEF/YARD - DAY

Perry leans on the Jeep. Enjoying a smoke, he stares at FEMALE SOLDIERS walking by.

One of them, particularly curvy, walks in front of him. Perry whistles at her, but she doesn't seem to appreciate.

INT. FRANKFURT/SHAEF/HAYDEBER'S OFFICE- DAY

Janko stands at attention in front of Haydeber's desk, who looks at him firmly.

HAYDEBER

--They've been looking for you for hours in the dives where you always hang out.

Janko keeps his position, unable to reply.

HAYDEBER

Seems like you've been hitting the bottle more than hanging out with women, lately.

JANKO

I'm sorry, I--

HAYDEBER

(banging his hand on the desk)

--You deserve to be sent to the Martial Court!

Janko stands at attention. Haydeber keeps looking at him, and then motions him to sit down. Janko obeys.

HAYDEBER

You've been picked for a task.

(gives him a distasteful look)

Looking at your awful condition, I honestly don't get how they might have.

JANKO

(trying to compose himself)

Can't judge a book by its cover.

HAYDEBER

The Russians asked us to cooperate in a trial.

Haydeber takes a folder bound with red tape from a drawer and hands it to Janko

HAYDEBER

You'll be defending this Nazi in court.

Janko looks at him surprised.

HAYDEBER
You're a lawyer... and you speak
Russian--

JANKO
--But I haven't practised in
years!

Uncomfortable, he instinctively loosens up the neck of his
shirt with his index finger.

HAYDEBER
(implying he has no
options)
Tomorrow you're going to Berlin.

Janko looks down at the documents in the folder and flips
through them without really looking.

HAYDEBER
Almost forgot... the Allies
Headquarter won't be involved at
all in this matter.

Janko, surprised, looks at Haydeber.

HAYDEBER
We don't want troubles with the
press. The Russians give us
enough headaches already.

Haydeber takes the thermos and pours some coffee in the
glass. It seems like Janko has something to say, but
Haydeber already moves on to something else.

EXT. FRANKFURT/SHAEF/YARD - DAY

Janko exits the Headquarter. Perry approaches him.

PERRY
So? How did it go?

JANKO
How's your Russian?

PERRY
Excellent. Tovarish, spaziba,
vodka.

JANKO
Good. Stick to that, so you won't
say any more bullshit.

They get in the Jeep.

INT. BERLIN/MOABIT JAIL/TATAREV'S OFFICE - NIGHT

A photograph of Hotte in his uniform.

The photo is clipped on the inside page of a file folder, with underneath a caption in Cyrillic.

SUPER: "ALFRED HOTTE - SUBLIEUTENANT"

Hands leaf through the pages of a Cyrillic text. They are Tatarev's hands. He sits in an armchair behind a huge wooden desk with one of his legs on the armrest.

The desk is in perfect, meticulous order. There are no personal items on it, no family pictures, no name plate.

He smokes a cigarette. He seems thoughtful as he carefully looks through Hotte's file. He picks up the phone.

TATAREV

Send in Drakov.

Hangs up. Binds the folder with some red tape and puts it back in the drawer.

INT. BERLIN/MARIA'S HOUSE - DAWN

A run-down apartment, with only one livable room. A cupboard with small curtains that replace the doors, a broken wardrobe, three chairs, a worn out armchair and a table are the only pieces of furniture. Most windows are covered by camouflage cloth or cardboards. In a corner, separated by a curtain, there's a queen-size bed where MARIA (28), voluptuous with long black hair, and her 7-year-old son BERTHOLD (Berthy) are sleeping close together. She wakes up. Gently moves her son to the side, careful not to wake him up. Gets up and goes to the window. She opens the camouflage sloth just a little bit. Some weak sunlight enters the room.

BERTHY (O.S.)

(sleepy)

Mommy!

Maria turns around. Smiles. Approaches him and sits on the bed next to him. Sweetly runs her hand through his hair.

BERTHY

I'm hungry.

Maria goes to the cupboard. Opens the curtains. Takes a small piece of bread and sighs looking at it. Puts it on the table. Berthy rushes to the table and sits down.

MARIA

We have to wash, first!

She takes a jug and pours some water in the bowl. Berthy washes his face. Maria takes a towel and wipes him dry with a long caress. Then pats him on the back to invite him to sit down. Berthy divides the piece of bread in two and gives one to his mom, who smiles at him hardly hiding hunger.

MARIA

I already ate... When you were asleep.

Berthy eats voraciously. Maria observes him full of sadness. The two pieces of bread disappear quickly.

BERTHY

I'm still hungry.

Maria tries hard to conceal the tears that are filling up her eyes, unsuccessfully.

BERTHY

Are you crying?

MARIA

I've got something in my eye.

BERTHY

Let me see.

She gets closer to Berthy, who gently blows air in her eye.

MARIA

It's ok now.

Berthy smiles at her.

INT. BERLIN/MOABIT JAIL/TATAREV'S OFFICE - DAY

Lieutenant DRAKOV (25), Tatarev's orderly, stands at attention in front of his superior, who flips through some papers at his desk.

TATAREV

Is this all you could find on the American?

DRAKOV

Yes, comrade.

TATAREV

Mmmh... Russian father... Ph.D. in Law... Six years at the American Embassy in Moscow in charge of security... Speaks German...

Closes the folder.

TATAREV

What about his orderly?

DRAKOV

He's not dangerous.

TATAREV

Janko will be our target, then.

Drakov nods, smiling wickedly.

EXT. BERLIN/STREET - DAY

Dense clouds cover the former Reich's capital. Light rain wets the ruins scattered over the whole city.

A dark sedan speeds through the streets of Berlin.

INT. SEDAN - DAY

Janko and Perry are in the back seats. Petkov is driving.

JANKO

(whispering to Perry)

Five hours to get the authorization! And they knew we were coming.

PERRY

Oh well-- bureaucracy. At least they gave us a lift.

Perry turns around and distractedly looks at the city through the window.

EXT. BERLIN/HOTEL - DAY

A street not much damaged by the war. The sedan with the Americans stops in front of a building in good condition, only a few bullet holes are visible in the external wall. The hotel sign is partially destroyed.

Hidden behind the corner of the building, Berthy observes the arrival of the sedan.

Petkov gets out of the car and opens the back door for the passengers. Gives Janko a map.

PETKOV

(in Russian)

You'll need to find your way around town. That car will be at your service.

He points at a GAZ (a Russian Jeep) parked in front of the hotel, and hands him the key. Without waiting for an answer, he opens the trunk and unloads the bags on the sidewalk.

Berthy approaches Perry, shyly stretching out his hand.

BERTHY
(in German)
Please Sir... Something to eat.

PERRY
(in English; bending
over to Berthy)
I don't understand...

BERTHY
(in German)
Please Sir. I'm hungry.

Janko takes a piece of chocolate out of his pocket and hands it to the kid.

JANKO
(in German)
Take this. It's chocolate.

Petkov interrupts and rudely pushes the kid away.

PETKOV
Get out of here! Get lost!

The piece of chocolate falls to the ground. Janko grabs Petkov by the lapels and pushes him against the wall.

JANKO
Don't you dare do this again.

Janko lets him go. Petkov adjusts his uniform and goes back to unload the bags.

Perry kneels in front of the kid, who looks scared, and reassures him with a smile. Janko picks up the chocolate and hands it to him again, smiling. Berthy hesitates. Janko puts the chocolate in his hand. Berthy curiously looks at the two metal bars on Janko's shoulders: the Captain's rank.

JANKO
(in German)
Take it. Don't be scared.

Berthy runs away. Janko watches him until he disappears around the corner.

KRAMER, a fat, balding 60-year-old, approaches them. He wears thick glasses with a stupid look on his face.

KRAMER
Welcome to Berlin. I'm Kramer,
the hotel porter.

He goes to the bags still on the pavement. Tries to pick one up. It's heavy. Janko takes it from his hands.

JANKO
Don't worry, I'll take it.

KRAMER
Thank you, Sir.

Janko and Kramer walk to the hotel.

INT. BERLIN/MARIA'S HOUSE - DAY

Berthy gets in running.

BERTHY
(yelling)
Mom, mom, look!

Berthy gives the chocolate to Maria.

MARIA
How many times did I tell you not
to yell?

BERTHY
Sorry, mom.

Maria unwraps the package and finds the chocolate.

MARIA
Who gave it to you?

BERTHY
A soldier.

MARIA
I told to stay away from the
Russians.

BERTHY
He didn't look Russian. He had an
armband with MP on it and two
strange metal strips on his
shoulders.

MARIA
Did you thank him?

Berthy shakes his head. Pretending to reprimand him with her eyes, Maria breaks the chocolate in two halves and gives one piece to Berthy.

MARIA

Take this. Go play now.

Berthy runs outside. Maria puts a piece of chocolate in her mouth. Chews it slowly. Closes here eyes delighted.

EXT. BERLIN/STREET - DAY

Janko and Perry's GAZ speeds through the streets of Berlin.

Perry drives. Janko is in the passenger seat, holding the map wrapped in a transparent plastic folder.

JANKO

OK, take that street to the left
now.

Perry obeys. The GAZ approaches an intersection where a chubby FEMALE RUSSIAN traffic attendant soldier waves a red flag urging the GAZ to stop. Perry brakes abruptly.

A few US manufactured Studebakers with a red star on the door drive in front of them.

PERRY

Hey, those are our Studebakers!

The Studebakers drive across the intersection, but the female traffic attendant doesn't signal Perry that he can go.

PERRY

(honking)
So?!

An unusual noise. SCREAMS OF KIDS draw Janko's attention to the ruins on his right.

In a run-down shelter, a squatting WOMAN (25) is stirring something in a tin on a weak flame. Amongst the ruins, children laundry hangs on a line tied between a water pipe and a twisted iron beam from the train's tracks. A LITTLE BOY (5) and a LITTLE GIRL (7), barefoot and dirty, are playing near the woman who turns to Janko.

They stare at each other for a while.

The Woman gets up. Adjusts her dress, trying to put on a dignified air. Janko smiles at her, but she keeps staring at him sternly.

The traffic attendant waves the green flag.

PERRY

'Bout time!

Perry nervously shifts into first gear, making the gears grind. The GAZ drives off with a screech of tires.

JANKO

Turn right here. It should be faster.

The GAZ speeds into the side street to the right.

A capsized tramcar suddenly appears in front of the GAZ.

PERRY

Christ!

He steers promptly, avoiding the impact. Screech of tires.

PERRY

How can they just leave that thing in the middle of the road?!

Janko, still looking at the tramcar, sighs in relief.

EST. BERLIN/STREET - DAWN

A long line of people is in front of a store. Maria rushes to the end of the line. HELGA, a fat 50-year-old woman who thinks she can offset her age by wearing a lot of cheap jewelry, turns around and smiles at Maria.

HELGA

Everything ok, dear?

Maria nods. An OFFICER of the Red Army exits the store, gesturing with his arms.

OFFICER

(in broken German)
Food finished. Go away.

A few Women approach him complaining. The Officer shakes his head.

OFFICER

(in broken German)
No more eat.

The Women quietly leave in different directions. Maria seems desperate. Looks around. Approaches a well-dressed OLD MAN.

MARIA

Please... Something to eat.

OLD MAN

What I have is barely enough for me.

An elegant 40-year-old blond WOMAN quickly walks by Maria, reaches out her hand begging for food.

MARIA
Something to eat... please.

BLOND WOMAN
Don't bother me!

Maria looks at Helga, who's staring at her.

MARIA
Can you spare something..

HELGA
I'm sorry, dear.

Helga walks away.

MARIA
My son hasn't eaten in two days.

After a few steps, Helga turns and walks back. She looks at her, scrutinizing her curvy body.

HELGA
There's a café nearby. Come.

Helga takes Maria by the arm.

INT. BERLIN/CAFE' - LATER

There are few patrons in the café. Maria and Helga sit at a table. Helga observes Maria as she wolfs down her cake and drinks a cappuccino, and smiles. Maria looks at her with gratitude. Helga wipes Maria's mouth with a napkin, takes a lipstick from her purse and starts putting it on Maria's lips.

HELGA
What's your name?

MARIA
Maria. Maria--

HELGA
(puts a finger on her
lips)
--Shush. Never say more than
necessary.

Helga looks at Maria's lips, happy with the results.

HELGA
Yes. Definitely better.

Embarrassed, Maria nervously touches her wedding ring.

HELGA
(hinting at the wedding
ring)
Is he dead?

MARIA
(nodding)
On the Eastern front.

Maria looks at the untouched piece of cake in front of Helga.

MARIA
Can I?

Helga nods, smiling. Looking around, Maria wraps the cake in a napkin and puts it away.

HELGA
You shouldn't be so shy if you
want to feed your child.

Slowly Maria raises her head. She looks confused.

MARIA
No... I... No. No.

Helga gets up throwing a cold and ruthless look at her. She takes a small piece of paper from her purse and puts it in front of Maria.

HELGA
You can find me here if you
change your mind.

Helga walks out, leaving Maria alone with her despair. She takes the piece of paper in her shaky hand and angrily crumples it up. Her look turns to a fly that desperately tries to find a way out, but keeps bumping against the window glass.

EXT. BERLIN/MOABIT JAIL - DAY

The jail building has the shape of a 5-point star. A high surrounding wall abruptly separates the jail from the outside world.

EXT. BERLIN/MOABIT JAIL/YARD - DAY

At the checkpoint, the GAZ with Janko and Perry is granted access to the vast courtyard. Perry pulls over in front of the jail headquarters.

Drakov approaches and welcomes them with the military salute.

DRAKOV
(in broken English)
Welcome. I Drakov, adjutant
Colonel Tatarev. Come please.

He leads the Americans into the headquarters.

INT. BERLIN/MOABIT JAIL/HQ ENTRANCE - DAY

A bench, a desk and a few USSR flags are the only pieces of furniture in the entrance, along with the obligatory framed Stalin portrait. A dusted chandelier gives the room a yellowish tone.

Janko and Perry follow Drakov to the second floor.

INT. BERLIN/MOABIT JAIL/TATAREV'S OFFICE - DAY

At his desk, Tatarev coldly looks at Janko and Perry, standing in front of him.

TATAREV
--The Germans left this matter
open, which we intend to close.

Janko seems annoyed as he listens to the Russian Officer.

TATAREV
Rest assured, they will pay for
this.

Janko is not looking at Tatarev.

TATAREV
You're not following me, Captain.

JANKO
I can't follow you where I don't
want to go, colonel.

Tatarev harshly looks at Janko for a few seconds. Then smiles, changing attitude.

TATAREV
Our Countries are allied. Let's
not argue because of a Nazi.

JANKO
I totally agree.

Tatarev gets up and heads to the wet-bar.

TATAREV
My apologies. I didn't offer you
a drink.

Tatarev takes the vodka bottle by its neck.

TATAREV

Let's toast to our two Countries.

He drinks straight from the bottle. Perry looks surprised. Tatarev notices and smiles.

TATAREV

(gives Janko the bottle)

Real soldiers don't need glasses.

Janko takes the bottle and raises it.

JANKO

To peace.

Takes a generous sip. Then hands the bottle to Perry.

PERRY

(in English)

I don't know... To women!

Janko is about to translate, but Tatarev interrupts him.

TATAREV

Yes, yes. I understand.

Perry takes a sip and grimaces. The vodka is very strong. Tatarev laughs, but turns serious again right away.

JANKO

I will need an office.

TATAREV

It's all set up. Lieutenant Drakov will show you.

Tatarev walks Perry and Janko to the door.

TATAREV

The prisoner will be questioned tomorrow at 8.

JANKO

(military salute)

Colonel...

Tatarev salutes back. Perry and Janko exit the room. Tatarev stays at the door and looks at them leaving.

INT. BERLIN/HELGA'S HOUSE/CORRIDOR - DAY

In the corridor there's debris everywhere. The ceiling has partially collapsed.

Maria walks the corridor looking at the numbers on the doors, holding the piece of paper Helga has given her. She stops in front of a door. Hesitates. Sighs and knocks. The door opens. Helga appears smiling.

HELGA

I didn't expect you so soon.

Maria enters. The door closes behind her.

INT. BERLIN/JANKO'S OFFICE - DAY

Janko and Perry put some documents in the cabinet. The PHONE RINGS. Janko picks up.

JANKO

Captain Janko.

VORONIN (FILTERED)

Hello Sasha! Do you still remember your old friends?

Janko hesitates for a moment, then recognizes the voice.

JANKO

Valerij... Of course I remember. How are you?

VORONIN (FILTERED)

Very well! I heard you're in Berlin. When are we going for a drink?

JANKO

Where can I find you?

VORONIN (FILTERED)

At the Army headquarters.

JANKO

See you soon then.

Janko hangs up.

PERRY

Who was it?

JANKO

A friend.

PERRY

We just got here yesterday. How did he know you were here?

JANKO

He wanted to warn me we're being controlled.

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