The Night Train to Multan

Behind me beetle faces and [illegible] voices whirled thickly. A [illegible] was attached by a [illegible] cannot be more alone than is a enemy of Nazi power in a stronghold of the Gestapo. Yet, it was where I had been told to exist. I was not a victim of persecution. I was not an innocent man jerked out of his bed before dawn because of an anonymous denunciation. I had fought the Hitler regime with all the means and skills at my disposal. I had fought for a proletarian revolution in which I still believed somehow.

A fist crashed into my face. Kicks from the rear sent me sprawling. Hands tore me up from the floor and pushed me against a wall. A bald-headed man butted his knee into my abdomen. Another hit me on the head with handcuffs. I was strong, but I fell. It was Magnus who dragged me back into the middle of the room and told me to stand upright. He motioned the others to stand aside.

"Leave him alone," he ordered.

A short, broad-shouldered man entered the room through the door of an adjoining office. He had dark, deep-set eyes and his face was strongly lined. He wore a well-pressed suit and had rings on his hands. An aroma of pine needles came from his glistening hair.

"Good evening" he said.

The men stood back. They were silent. Someone brought a chair. The short man sat down two yards in front of me and eyed me placidly. At his side stood an Elite Guard with a six-foot leather whip in his hand, and a girl holding a stenographer's pad. Both had followed the short man from the adjoining room.

"We are going to cut belts out of your skin," the short man said.

The girl smiled. She had fine teeth. She was large, with wide blue eyes and a thick flaxen mane. I recognized the girl. Her name was Hertha Jens. Less than a year before Hertha Jens had still been the confidante of Herrmann Schubert, a Reichstag member, and one of the leaders of the Communist Party. She had had access to confidential files and had taken part in conspirative meetings. Because her printing plants had been raided and hundreds of comrades had gone into the dungeons. Since May already, Hertha's name had been on the O.P.U. list of traitors scheduled for "liquidation."

The Elite Guard with the whip went to a table by the window. He raised the whip until its tip touched the ceiling. Then he crashed it down on the table. The impact sounded like a rifle shot. I winced.

"I am Inspector Kraus," the short man said languidly.

Again the trooper smashed his whip on the table.

"This is Inspection 6," Inspector Kraus continued. "The anti-Communism department of the Geheime Staatspolizei. Among your friends in Moscow this Inspection has a rather bad reputation."

My interlocutor took a sheaf of papers which were handed to him by Hertha Jens.

"Now then," he said, "you are a member of the Communist Party?"

"No, sir."

"You were a member?"

"No, sir."

"How long?"

"From 1923 until the National Revolution — until the Reichstag fire."

Inspector Kraus curved his lips in contempt. "Oh, you're such a harmless, such a lovable creature. But so are we, to be sure. Now listen: I have here some excerpts from your dossier. Let's see if you're the gentle lamb you'd like to be in the present situation. You have been a ship's officer?"

"I have a ship's officer's ticket."

"At one time you engaged in building up a Communist ship officers' organization, and edited a weekly sheet called The Bridge. Is that correct?"

"That's correct."

"In 1923 you took an active part in an armed insurrection against the government of the German republic. You were then a detachment leader in the second proletarian hundred of the Red Marines. You were arrested, but you escaped. Is that right?"

"Yes," I admitted.

Inspector Kraus went on: "There's a gap of a few years. But now we come to 1926. In 1926 you murdered a man in California."

"I have never murdered a man," I interrupted vehemently.

"Oh, no? . . . I have here," Inspector Kraus said, "an official report, checked by the German consul in New York. This report states that you were sentenced by a superior court in Los Angeles to ten years of penal servitude for a crime which involved the use of a deadly weapon."

Waves of ice and fire shot through my body. Out of the ring of watchers sounded a low whistling sound. The room seemed to reel about me and the shapes of men were blurred.

In a dead calm tone Inspector Kraus inquired:

"Have you ever been in the employ of the Russian OGPU?"

"No, sir. Never."

"You probably have. I shall find out later. We now come to 1929. In December, 1929, you were in charge of the French alien police, yes? You broke jail in Le Havre and escaped. The French authorities seem to be sorry that you left the German embassy in Paris. So I take this jailbreak as a fact."

I nodded. My mouth was dry. I wanted to ask for water, but I could not formulate the words.

Inspector Kraus smiled. "In the meantime you have chosen some thick as thunder," he continued. "In 1931 you were wanted by the Portuguese government for treason against the smuggling of treasonable propaganda to British colonies—as culprits in this affair were named one Lossovsky in Moscow, a certain James Ford from New York, another negro, and you. In the summer of 1932, you were arrested and deported from London by Scotland Yard. In the Spring of 1933, you were wanted in Sweden for the theft and kidnapping you engineered of the son of a seamen's strike. A month later you were arrested in Copenhagen for deportation in Norway, but again, you escaped. Two months later the French Surete was looking for you in Paris and Strasbourg. So were the police departments of Holland and Belgium. In all these places you used false passports. You took your orders and your money from the Communist International in Moscow. And now we have you here. This time you won't escape. The charge against you is high treason."

Hertha Jens left the room, whistling a tune, and half a minute later she returned with Cilly. Cilly's face was pale and set, and her eyes were wide, and she looked as if she had not slept for three nights. Inspector Kraus grinned quietly.

"She's a trim specimen," he said. "I must acknowledge your good taste."

Cilly stared at me with unbelieving eyes. The red from her lips was gone and they twitched at their corners. Behind her, Hertha Jens smiled brightly.

Cilly stood so close to me that I could have touched her. We stared at one another without a sign of recognition.

"Do you know her?" Inspector Kraus demanded harshly.

"No, sir," I said.

"Look well," he snarled. "She'll be a rotten old hag before we're through with her."

Cilly's lips had become a thin, straight line. Her dark hair was rumpled. Her amber bracelets were gone. Her youthful slenderness contrasted strangely with her weary face. She pressed her lips together until they were white. Her lips were eloquent. "Tell them nothing," they said.

Inspector Kraus got up and grasped her arm.

"Do you know this man?"

Cilly replied steadily, "I've never seen him before."

Inspector Kraus reached out. Five, six times his hands struck viciously at Cilly's face. She gave a little shrieking gasp.

"Do you know this man now?" the inspector asked.

"No," she said dully. "I do not know him."

"That'll do. Take her away."

Hertha Jens clutched Cilly's wrist and escorted her into an adjoining room. When Hertha Jens returned, I saw through the open door that a lanky Gestapo man pushed Cilly into a chair. A look of unforgettable utter desolation was on her face.

All fireside talk of heroism is rot. If it were possible for a man to creep into himself and hide, hide physically, I should have done it in front of me stood Inspector Kraus, a short dog-whip in his hand. The whip had been soaked in water. Wet leather cuts deeper. A drop of water glistened at the end of the whip. I watched it fall to the floor.

"Who is the girl?" asked the inspector.

Dismally, I looked away. I did not answer.

The inspector's face froze in a cold fury. The whip cut into my face. It bit across my throat, was torn free, and bit again with bewildering speed. I tugged at my shackles to clasp protecting hands in front of my face. I tugged at my shackles and screamed.

A Gestapo man seized my arm at the elbow and wrist. I shrieked. I thought the arm would snap.

"Who is this woman?" growled Inspector Kraus close by. "We'll break your bones if you don't talk."

"I met her on the train," I gasped.

"Which train?"

"On the train from Copenhagen. She sat opposite me in the compartment. She asked me for a cigarette and we got acquainted. After that I thought we could be friends."

"All this is a fairy tale you two have prearranged," Inspector Kraus said calmly. "You did not come yesterday. You arrived in Germany months ago. You've been under surveillance in Berlin and Hamburg for the last two weeks. There was a third person with you in the Botanical Gardens. There was a whole bunch of you scheming and slinking to sabotage the New Germany, to fabricate discontent, to plant your spies, to discriminate high treason. We have reports about you. Sufficient reports to bury you for life."

I said nothing.

Inspector Kraus gave me a cigarette. While I smoked, he laid his hand on my shoulder. His face changed abruptly into a friendly mask.

"Listen," he said, "we two can make a bargain. You're finished absolutely finished, you know that. All right. There's two ways in which a man can grow old once we've got our hands on him—a peaceful way, and a painful way. The painful way is gratis. The price for the peaceful way is to tell us all you know about your organization. All the names, all the addresses, all the crimes you know of and who committed them.

"You are one. Your love in the next room makes two. We also have the third man. But who was the fourth? Who were the dozens of others who made up your conspirative Apparat? Where are the print-shops? What are the codes? Which points are used for crossing the frontiers? Who brings the money? Who takes the passports? We know you've been in Comintern service. We know you came to Germany on Comintern business. Tell us what part of the Stalin machine you handled here and who your helpers were. You'll tell us in the end. You'll suffer if you don't."

I was glad of the cigarette. It gave me time to think. The shifting glint in the deep-set eyes of Inspector Kraus told me he realized that he had made a mistake when he allowed me to smoke. I was too much a part of the Comintern to think of myself. The individual was nothing. The Party was all. If I held out through this night, the comrades outside would have time to change their residences, meeting-places and depots. They would change their lines of communication, change their codes and even change their names. The "underground" organization had learned to maneuver fast to abandon quickly all points endangered by the arrest of some of its members, to occupy new points and use new routes of which the comrades who had been seized knew nothing. The Gestapo men watched me like wolves. They knew: if they could make me talk that night, a series of raids and mass arrests would be the result.

Inspector Kraus said to me, "Have you thought it over?"

"I cannot give you information on matters I know nothing about," I explained. "I left Party work after Hitler came to power."

Instantly the dog-whip slashed across my face.

"Who sent you to Germany? Who gave you the money? What were you instructed to do?"

"No one sent me."

"And still you came. You knew you were wanted for high treason and still you entered Germany with a doctored passport. Why?"

"I came to find my son. He disappeared after my wife's apartment in Hamburg was raided by the secret police. I came to Germany to find his whereabouts."

"I don't believe it. Who sent you to Germany? What were your instructions?"

"I came to find my son."

"Nonsense," he hissed. "What role did Karl Burmeister play?"

The question struck me like a hammer blow.

"Burmeister?"

"Yes, Burmeister. What was Burmeister's function in your high treason outfit? Don't be a fool—heroism is a farce."

I did not believe it when they told me that Karl Burmeister had been captured. He was the coolest, most reliable militant in the "underground."

The door from the corridor banged open. Karl Burmeister was hurled into the room. He stumbled to his feet. His massive chest heaved up and down, and rasping noises came from his throat. Behind him Inspector Kraus and two Gestapo agents in shirt-sleeves stemped in. They pushed Karl Burmeister against the wall.

"Now, Karl, don't say one single word," Inspector Kraus said precisely. "I shall ask you a question. All you do is nod your head or shake it."

Burmeister was stripped to the waist. His face was bruised. His body was covered with livid streaks; his sides and back showed patches of blood. Blood was on his trousers and shoes.

"Tell me," Inspector Kraus, pointing at me, demanded, "is this the man who gave you the directions in the Botanical Gardens?"

Burmeister was silent.

"I only want to confirm what you've already told the gentlemen who questioned you."

All of a sudden, with an inhuman roar, Karl Burmeister threw himself on the nearest Gestapo man.

Karl Burmeister fought like a lion. He fought with his head, his knees, his teeth, his feet, his shackled arms. He fought and cursed and his breath came like the breath of a strong woman in childbirth. One of the police agents level his pistol. Inspector Kraus waved him off. Burmeister was still struggling after four men pinned him to the floor. Only when one of them crushed his shoe against Karl Burmeister's throat, did he become quiet. The eternal smile had gone from Hertha Jen's face. With a calline calmness Inspector Kraus watched the struggle. In the clutch of a Gestapo man, I stood there like a helpless, fascinated idiot.

They raised Karl Burmeister from the floor and dragged him toward the door. Halfway to the door, he opened his eyes and with one tremendous effort he tore himself free. He ran across the room and threw the whole weight of his body against the window. The glass splintered. Karl Burmeister pitched out into the night.

The Inspector munched a sandwich. "Let's proceed," he said coolly. "Don't get the idea now to blame Burmeister for the things you're guilty of. You fellows usually wait till somebody is dead to shove all responsibility on a corpse. Either on corpses or on comrades who're safe in Moscow. Am I right?"

I thought of Karl Burmeister. Not long ago we had talked of the spirit of self-abnegation, the will of revolutionist to persevere through all suffering; the Leninist attitude of mind which we had defined as one of selflessness and determination; of a revolutionist's duty to save his life for the cause if he could do so without betraying the movement. Karl Burmeister had agreed that we should not endeavor to die for the revolution, but to live for it. Still, he had anticipated his fate. I remembered his words: "When I feel I can hold out no longer, I shall find a way to get killed, or to kill myself before you can spell the word Traitor."

"Traitor—it is the ugliest word in the world." I thought.

(Continued Tomorrow)

Would Incorporate Little Holly Ridge

HOLLY RIDGE—(AP)—Twenty-five property owners of this little community, adjacent to Camp Davis, have applied for a certificate of incorporation to make Holly Ridge a municipality.

The proposed municipal limits would form a rectangle a mile long and 2,000 feet wide and contain property valued at $25,500 in the last assessment. Secretary of State Thad Eure estimated that 600 persons would be included.

The petition was turned over to the Attorney General to determine whether legal requirements were met.

Survey of Church Colleges Slated

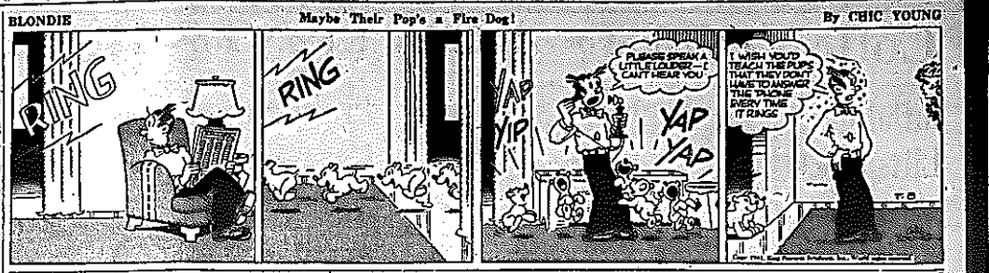
MONTREAL,—(AP)—A survey of all church-related colleges and theological seminaries in the Presbyterian Church in the United States will be made by a staff headed by Dr. George A. Works, head of the Department of Education, University of Chicago.

A move for greater interest and additional financial support in the institutions will be based on the final report.

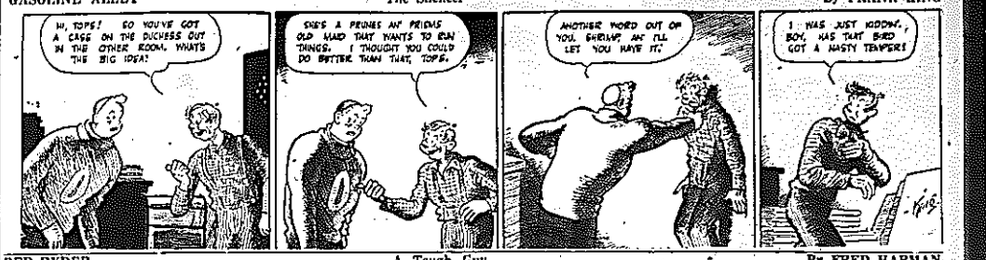
Employment of Dr. Works was announced here yesterday by the Christian Education and Ministerial Relief committee of the church.

Say, "I saw it in The News." Thank you.

BLONDIE — Maybe Their Pop's a Fire Dog! — By CHIC YOUNG



GASOLINE ALLEY — The Silencer — By FRANK KING



RED RYDER — A Tough Guy — By FRED HARMAN

THIMBLE THEATER — Watch Your Tonsils, Olive! — STARRING POPEYE

BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES — Now, Now! — By MARTIN

LI'L ABNER — One Way Voyage — By AL CAPP

WASH TUBBS — The Knot Is Tied — By ROY CRANE