

April 7, 1975

275

CROSS OF IRON
"SERGEANT STEINER"

Screenplay
by
JULIUS J. EPSTEIN

Based on the Novel
by
Willi Heinrich

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*MESAW
one page*

CROSS OF IRON

Screenplay by

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Based on the novel The Willing Flesh

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** SCENE 37 TO SCENE 67 MISSING **

April 7, 1975

FADE IN:

THE CREDITS:

Which are SUPERIMPOSED OVER a SCENE of almost unnatural beauty. A thickly wooded forest which practically shut out the sunlight. All is not serene however. SHOTS RING Out -- and we are privy to a running battle between a German patrol and a band of Russian soldiers. It is a desperate fight -- and several bodies fall. we see the faces of several men whose identity we will learn later. The shooting is still going on when the CREDITS come to an END. Then --

1 THE SLOPE OF A HILL - DAY

The CAMERA is MOVING SLOWLY up the hill. The verdancy of the hill, the intermittent clusters of daisies and dandelions are evidence of the season -- late Spring. Now the crest of the hill is in sight; above it a patch of blue sky is visible. The mood is pastoral, peaceful.

The CAMERA reaches the crest -- and suddenly a pair of highly polished boots almost fills the SCREEN. The CAMERA comes to an abrupt HALT. Then SLOWLY, the CAMERA PANS UP from the boots to take in a carefully tailored German officer's uniform and then the face of the German officer -- CAPTAIN STRANSKY.

It is a longish face with a high forehead and light blue eyes. It is a face that gives an impression of extreme forcefulness, an impression underlined by the thin - lipped mouth and angular chin. His hair is white at the temples, emphasizing by contrast the healthy tan of his face.

At the moment, Captain Stransky is gazing through a stereo-telescope. His expression is grim. Behind the Captain stands LIEUTENANT MEYER, a youngish, good-natured face.

However, it is apparent from his expression that he has no great liking for his Captain. His lips are tight as the Captain moves the knobs of the telescope with long thin fingers. Captain Stransky straightens up, locks back at Lieutenant Meyer, whose expression quickly changes to one of impassivity. Stransky, whose demeanor is angry, says nothing, but turns to peer again through the telescope.

2. VIEW THROUGH TELESCOPE - WHAT CAPTAIN STRANSKY SEES

A patch of woods, about a square mile in area.

3. MED. SHOT - STRANSKY AND MEYER

Stransky straightens up.

STRANSKY

(angrily)

Incredible -- sheer stupidity.

Those woods should have been cut down or destroyed by fire.

MEYER

Excuse me, sir, but we retreated too hastily for any such luxury.

STRANSKY

I disagree. It was an irreparable oversight, and I shall send a report to that effect to Regiment.

(looks at the woods,
reaches for cigarette
case)

Do you think the Russians are already in those woods?

(offers Meyer a cigarette)

MEYER

Thank you. We'll know soon enough.

Corporal Steiner is on a reconnaissance patrol.

Stransky drops his cigarette butt, steps on it.

STRANSKY

Reconnaissance patrols have a way of not returning.

MEYER

Steiner will be back.

STRANSKY

(angrily)

I did not ask your opinion Herr Meyer.

Meyer says nothing. We can see that he regrets his impudence. With a mixture of anxiety and curiosity, he waits to see what will happen next.

The ANGLE WIDENS to TAKE IN a PRIVATE who walks up to the Captain, salutes.

PRIVATE

Captain Stransky? Lieutenant Colonel Brandt
Would like to see you at headquarters.

Stransky nods, gazes sharply at Meyer, walks off, the CAMERA TRUCKING with him. All about him are SCENES of great activity. MEN are digging bunkers and preparing positions. SHOUTS fill the air. As Stransky passes, he is greeted by salutes which he acknowledges with the briefest of nods.

4 EXT. REGIMENTAL BUNKER

An armed GUARD is on duty. He salutes smartly as Captain Stransky comes INTO SCENE, returns the salute without looking at the Guard, ENTERS the bunker.

5 INT. BUNKER - TWO OFFICERS

are examining a map that hangs on the wall. The older of the two is LIEUTENANT COLONEL BRANDT. About fifty-two, a gaunt gray face. The younger officer is a CAPTAIN. In his middle thirties, a tired expression, but his features are intelligent. At the moment, he is Shaking his head.

CAPTAIN

If our main line of resistance is at Novorssysk, What are We doing down here?

BRANDT

(shrugging)

We're playing fire department.

CAPTAIN

Several hundred miles from the heart of the fire? Does that make sense?

The door opens and a CORPORAL announces:

CORPORAL

Captain Stransky.

Stransky APPEARS on the threshold.

BRANDT

Come in, Captain. You know my adjutant, of course.

STRANSKY

Of course. How are you, Captain Kiesel?

KIESEL

Awful. Terrible. How are you?

Brandt laughs, Places a bottle of wine on the table.

BRANDT

This might cheer you up, Kiesel.

Stransky inspects the label.

STRANSKY

My respects, Colonel Brandt. Producing a 1937 Moselle in the southernmost corner of Russia.

BRANDT

(fills glasses)

A bottle of Moselle is no more absurd in this region than We ourselves. Your health, gentlemen.

KIESEL

I am not going to drink to my health.
My health is terrible and doesn't deserve
to be drunk to.

(holds up his glass)

To the end of the damn war.

STRANSKY

Incidentally, Colonel, why does our
presence in the bridgehead strike you as
so absurd?

Brandt looks at Kiesel, then turns to Stransky.

BRANDT

(ignoring the question)

CAPTAIN,

Why did you ask to be transferred from
France?

STRANSKY

(laughs)

Exactly what my commanding officer in
France asked me. I can't stop you, he
said, since I'm convinced that without
you the eastern front would collapse in
a matter of days. Go ahead, you heroic
fathead.

KIESEL

(quickly)

I withdraw my toast to the end of the
war. To heroic fatheads everywhere.

Stransky doesn't know quite how to take this, but decides on a faint,
icy smile.

BRANDT

Captain Stransky, is there any news on
Steiner?

STRANSKY

No, sir, not yet.

Brandt shakes his head.

STRANSKY

Incidentally, What sort is he, Steiner?

Kiesel looks at Stransky closely.

BRANDT

A problem...no respect, but a first
rate soldier - so one looks the Other
Way.

Pause.

STRANSKY

(a short laugh)

Of course, I've only been on this front a few days, matter of hours actually, but I see -- rather I sense -- a sort of -- well, it's not exactly insubordination -- Well, let's call it -- a lack of respect.

KIESEL

If I hope into a cab which gets into an accident because the brakes fail, I blame the driver, not the company he works for. I'll say that he should have refused to drive a cab with defective brakes.

STRANSKY

I'm not sure I know What you mean by that.

KIESEL

(looks at him a moment,
then easily)

I don't intend to discuss politics.

BRANDT

(angry)

You talk about lack of respect -- low morale..... it goes hand in hand with impending defeat.

STRANSKY

Defeat? I refuse to admit that possibility.

KIESEL

(dryly)

We'll, said, Captain.

STRANSKY

I don't believe that the German soldier --

KIESEL

The German soldier!

(laughs mirthlessly)

In the early years they saw the retreating backs of the Russians too often to be frightened by his face now. The replacements, on the other hand, think every Russian is an infallible fighting machine.

I feel damn sorry for our poor landsers.

STRANSKY

(frigidly)

In the present state of our nation, such talk borders on treason. I am a soldier and as such it is my duty to subordinate my own ideas to the interests of my country.

KIESEL

(Smiles easily as he lifts glass)

We are still doing our duty, Captain Stransky.

Stransky, his face white, glares at Kiesel.

The PHONE has been RINGING. Brandt picks it up with a Snap.

BRANDT

Yes? -- What? -- Good, Meyer. Wonderful. What sort of shape are they in? -- I see.

(hangs up)

Lieutenant Meyer. Steiner is back.

KIESEL

Of course.

STRANSKY

Naturally, I'd like to talk to him. I intend to promote him to Senior Sergeant on the spot.

KIESEL

(wryly)

Most generous of you.

STRANSKY

(saluting)

If you'll excuse me.

Brandt nods. Stransky LEAVES. There is a moment's silence.

6. CLOSE SHOT - BRANDT AND KIESEL

BRANDT

Well, what do you think of our Captain?

KIESEL

(a moment's thought)

Must have the most expensive tailor in Berlin.

BRANDT

And, of course, he won't rest until he gets the Iron Cross.

KIESEL

(toasts)

Gets.....not earns?

Brandt, who has lifted the wine bottle, finds it empty.

BRANDT

Oh, to hell with Stransky and the Iron
Cross. And you, too, Kiesel.

They smile at each other grimly.

DISSOLVE TO:

7. LIEUTENANT MEYER

Pacing back and forth in a trench, outside of a bunker door. Occasionally he steals a glance at a group of men who are slumped in various indolent positions on the floor of the trench.

8. FULL SHOT - THE GROUP OF MEN

The CAMERA PANS SLOWLY from face to face. There are nine men in the group (all will be identified later indivisually). At the moment, all look exhausted, dirty and somewhat disgusted. The men, with the exception of two, PASTERNAK and ANSELM, are in the same age range (about 25 to 30). Pasternack and Anselm are younger. SCHNURBART is distinguished by a heavy beard. KRUGER by a tough weather-beaten visage. DORN has the look of an intellectual. STEINER'S extreme gauntness is what catches the eyes. His face is expressionless. The others, MAAG, HOLLERBACH and KERN are nondescript, run-of-the-mill faces.

Meyer walks past the men in silence. They do not pay too much attention to him. Several are smoking cigarettes. Meyer looks toward the bunker. The CAMERA, following his gaze, MOVES TOWARD the bunker.

9 INT. BUNKER - LIEUTENANT TRIEBIG

Is seated at the table. He is a very young, very handsome, officer. An orderly. KEPPLER, is busy at a hot plate with a coffee pot. He, too, is very young. After a moment --

TRIEBIG

Is it very hot? Captain Stransky won't stand for anything but hot coffee.

KEPPLER

It is practically scalding, sir.

TRIEBIG

Good.

KEPPLER

Is there anything else you wish, sir?

TRIEBIG

Not at the moment.

As Keppler starts out:

TRIEBIG

Just a minute. You can keep me company for awhile. I really hardly know you. Sit down somewhere.

Keppler looks around uncertainly. Triebig is sitting in the one and only chair.

TRIEBIG

Sit on the bed. Are you always so timid?

KEPPLER

(with a shaky Smile)

No.

He perches on the extreme edge of the narrow bed. Triebig studies him. Keppler's habitual expression is one of helplessness, accentuated by a mouth he keeps permanently slightly open.

TRIEBIG

Where do you come from?

KEPPLER

Frankfurt, sir.

TRIEBIG

Is that so? I know Frankfurt quite well.
(sits on the cot beside
Keppler)

If you get along with me, you'll have a good life here. You may go now. Come to my bunker tonight and arrange my gear.

KEPPLER

(jumping enthusiastically
to his feet)

Yes, sir. When shall I come, sir?

TRIEBIG

Don't come too early. Around ten. We'll have a chance to talk. Do your best and I'm sure I shall be satisfied with you.

Keppler salutes and GOES.

10 EXT. BUNKER

as Triebig COMES OUT. The men are watching Keppler as he WALKS OFF.

11 MED. SHOT - SCHNURRBART AND ANSELM

SCHNURRBART

Not a very robust type, would you say?

ANSELM

(the youngest of the
group)

Well, Schnurrbart, you're so excessively
masculine, it evens things up.

The CAMERA PANS to Triebig. He seems to sense what the men are
thinking. A bit disconcerted, he turns to Meyer.

TRIEBIG

(sardonically)

Do you think we can get them to Stand at
attention when the Captain gets here?

MEYER

(grins)

I don't know, Lieutenant. I'll put it up
to them, man to man.

There is some half - hearted laughter from the men. Steiner is
noticeably quiet.

SCHNURRBART

I'm not getting up till they want my
Signature On the Peace Treaty.

But he gees someone approaching, and slowly he starts to his feet.

12 STRANSKY

approaching the trench. In the b.g. the men CAN BE SEEN reluctantly
getting to their feet. Triebig snaps to attention as Stransky comes
in.

TRIEBIG

(a Smart salute)

Captain.

Stransky, barely nodding to Triebig, looks over the men, no
discernible expression on his face. Finally --

STRANSKY

Which one is Corporal Steiner?

Steiner takes a step forward, slackly comes to attention.

Stransky studies him -- disappointed.

STRANSKY

You are Corporal Steiner?

STEINER

(almost nonchalantly)

Yes, sir.

(pause)

I am Corporal Steiner.

STRANSKY

I had formed a -- somewhat different picture of you.

STEINER

(unconcern in his face)

I'm sorry if I disappoint the Captain.

In the b.g. several of the men permit themselves slight smiles, which fade immediately at a glance from Triebig.

Stransky looks at Steiner again.

STRANSKY

(loudly)

You are promoted to Senior Sergeant, promotion to be effective at once.

He watches Steiner's face. It is as if he had spoken to a tree. There is no surprise in Steiner's face; only a slight flexing of his arms indicates that he has heard at all.

STRANSKY

You heard me, Corporal -- Sergeant Steiner.

STEINER

Yes, sir.

STRANSKY

Your promotion doesn't seem to have made much impression upon you.

STEINER

No, sir.

There is an involuntary giggle from young Anselm. Stransky glares and there is silence.

STRANSKY

(to Lieutenants Meyer and Triebig)

Come in -- you, too, Sergeant.

He starts down the steps to his bunker, Meyer, Triebig and Steiner following.

13 OMITTED

14 INT. STRANSKY'S BUNKER - STRANSKY

is seated behind a table. Steiner, Meyer and Triebig, slightly to the side of him, stand facing Stransky, who has taken out an elaborate cigarette case. He extends it to Meyer who takes a cigarette.

MEYER

Thank you, Captain.

Stransky offers a cigarette to Steiner.

STEINER

No, thank you, Sir.

STRANSKY

(lighting his cigarette)

After what you've been through, you don't feel the need of a cigarette?

STEINER

No at this particular moment -- sir.

STRANSKY

I'm ready for your report.

He reaches into pocket, lays sheaf of crushed papers on the table. Stransky looks at him in amazement.

STRANSKY

I'd like to hear the gist of your report.

STEINER

Lots of Russians. Lots of guns.

(grimly)

We should be hearing from them very soon.

STRANSKY

What about your platoon -- any casualties?

STEINER

Two killed. One missing.

STRANSKY

Two killed. How?

STEINER

(dryly)

Bullets.

STRANSKY

(flushing angrily)

I deduced that. That missing man -- did you look for him, Steiner?

STEINER

(shrugs impatiently)

We had no time to lose. It would have been irresponsible to risk the safety of the entire platoon for the sake of one man.

STRANSKY

There ought not to be a missing man in Such a case.

STEINER

(no expression)

Sorry, sir. I'll try to do better next time.

STRANSKY

(grimly; after a moment)

I have the feeling, Sergeant, that you somewhat overestimate your importance.

STEINER

(eyes darken; but no change in voice)

At the moment, I am free of any such illusions.

The two men look at each other; then Stransky's eyes fall on the tommy gun Steiner holds in his hand.

STRANSKY

That's not a German gun.

STEINER

No, sir It's all in the report. We surprised a Russian platoon -- and when they ran, they left their guns.

STRANSKY

Oh, captured material. Good. Where is your gun?

STEINER

We couldn't carry both, so we left ours.

STRANSKY

What! You left your guns for the Russians!

STEINER

(quietly)

Yes, sir. Our guns for the Russians.

STRANSKY

That I cannot understand. You must be aware that the quality of our arms is far superior to that of the Russians and --

He stops as Steiner shakes his head. Stransky raises his eyebrows.

STRANSKY

I beg your pardon?

STEINER

...the Russian guns are better!

STRANSKY

(sharply)

That is stupid, loose talk. You have every reason to be grateful for the fine equipment the Fatherland puts into your hands at the cost of countless sacrifices.

STEINER

(cannot suppress a
mirthless grin)

I never asked then to put the stuff in my hands.

Meyer looks toward heaven. Stransky takes a deep breath.

MEYER

(hastily)

sir, Sergeant Steiner is greatly in need of sleep. I'm positive that When he --

Stransky cuts him short by turning his back in a gesture of dismissal. Meyer motions for Steiner to follow him.

15 EXT. BUNKER - THE MEN

jump to their feet as they see Steiner and Meyer.

MEYER

Be careful he's taken strong dislike to you.

STEINER

(wryly)

Too bad. I'm crazy about him.

MEYER

He can be trouble...

STEINER

(laconically)

I've survived many a battalion commander. I'll survive Stransky, too.

16 INT. BUNKER - STRANSKY AND TRIEBIG

at his desk, coffee cup in hand, sipping.

STRANSKY

Dammit. This coffee is cold.

TRIEBIG

Sorry, sir. It was heated not too long ago--

There is a LOUD EXPLOSION as a shell lands nearby.

The near miss has shaken up the bunker. Lieutenant Triebig is righting a table that has overturned. Captain Stransky, grim-faced, is dusting off his uniform.

TRIEBIG

(placing some papers on the table; feeble smile)

Too close for comfort, I should say, Captain.

STRANSKY

How many more papers are there for me to sign?

TRIEBIG

Quite a few, I'm afraid.

STRANSKY

(sitting down; crossly)

Let me have the junk.

As he glances through the papers and signs his name. Triebig watches him with his soft eyes, the smile remaining fixed on his face. As Stransky finishes signing he looks up, sniffs the air, looks at Triebig rather strangely.

STRANSKY

That isn't perfume I smell -- is it?

TRIEBIG

Oh, no, Captain --

(apologetically)

Just a bit of after shave lotion. It -- bucks me up.

STRANSKY

I see.

He fixes his gaze upon Triebig whose smile fades under the scrutiny. Then, Stransky's manner changes suddenly. He gestures toward a chair, tries to inject a cordial note into his voice.

STRANSKY

(offering him a cigarette)

Where were you stationed before you joined the battalion?

TRIEBIG

(voice softening)

In the south of France -- Bordeaux.

STRANSKY

Ah! Then being transferred must have
come here, eh?

(voice casual)

Why were you transferred anyway?

TRIEBIG

(after a moment's Silence)

I voluntarily applied for a transfer,
sir.

STRANSKY

(suspiciously)

How interesting.

There is mounting apprehension in Triebig's face as Stransky regards him fixedly. Then again there is a sudden change in Stransky's expression. Again it becomes friendly -- to Triebig's great relief.

TRIEBIG

We lived in real mansions right On the
beach. Swimming at any hour, day or night.
It was indescribable -- the sea, the
palms, the beaches, the people, everything --

Overwhelmed by his memories, he stops. Stransky is surprised to see him swallow with emotion.

STRANSKY

(a knowing smile; winks)

The women, you mean.

TRIEBIG

(raising his head)

I beg your pardon?

STRANSKY

I said, the women. I mean -- in referring
to the people -- you meant, of course,
the women?

TRIEBIG

(shrugging)

Not so much that. I am -- that is--

(suddenly confused)

I didn't have much time to think about
women.

Pause.

STRANSKY

(casually)

Do you like soldiering?

TRIEBIG

(emphatically)

Certainly.

STRANSKY

(nods patronizingly)

I'm glad to hear that.

TRIEBIG

It's like living in an altogether
different world.

The Candle hag burned down. Stransky rises to light another.

STRANSKY

It is indeed a very different world. A
world of danger and a world of men, a
world without women.

(laughs; puffs, gets
thoughtful)

men can get along without women. I tell
you, man's truly natural destiny is not
to breed children, but to be free, to
rule and fight -- in other words, to
lead a man's existence.... women are no
more than a fancy, a superfluous dessert.

(blows a smoke ring;
looks at Triebig)

Or do you disagree?

Triebig looks at Stransky in some confusion. What is Stransky getting
at. Then he gets a grip on himself. Intertwining his fingers, he
regards his thumb thoughtfully.

TRIEBIG

I don't think I disagree, sir.

(after some hesitation)

I think that if I have to I Can live
without women.

STRANSKY

I'm pleased to hear that.

He studies the burning tip of his cigarette; then looks up quickly.

STRANSKY

In other words, you prefer the company
of a man to that of a woman?

TRIEBIG

(greatly troubled now)

It depends on the situation.

STRANSKY

Really?

Stransky smiles. Triebig does not reply.

STRANSKY

If it will help you, I will put your thoughts into words for you.

(smile broadens)

You prefer the society of men to that of women in any and all situations.

The words hang in the silence of the bunker. Triebig retreats into himself like a snail sealing itself up in its shell. He stares with mingled fear, assent and hope at Stransky's face which still registers nothing but friendly assent. Then, afraid silence might be interpreted as agreement, he murmurs...

TRIEBIG

I -- don't understand, sir --

STRANSKY

(smiles confidentially)

Let's drop the hide and seek. By God, Triebig, you don't have to put up a front with me of all people. What I said is true, isn't it? Say yes, man, for heaven's sake.

TRIEBIG

(with the air of a man wanting to stop himself; in a bare whisper)

Yes.

Stransky springs to his feet, directly in front of him.

STRANSKY

Speak up! You said yes. You said yes. didn't you? Don't you dare lie to my face.

At the sight of Stransky's enraged face, only a few inches from his own, Triebig closes his eyes in horror. Stransky shakes him.

TRIEBIG

(feebly)

Yes.

STRANSKY

(releasing him; stepping back)

Stand up!

Trembling, Triebig obeys. Slowly, Stransky looks him up and down.

STRANSKY

I can assure you of this! If I catch you trying any of that stuff, I'll have you hanged, remember that! Before all the men! Do you understand that? Do you hear me?

Triebig is unable to answer.

STRANSKY

Now get the hell out of here and keep out of my sight for the next twenty-four hours. You turn my stomach.

Triebig stands immobile.

STRANSKY

Get out!

For a second Triebig looks at Stransky's distorted face.

Then he wheels around, stumbles across the threshold I end VANISHES. Stransky remains in the same spot for a moment, then he fishes for a cigarette, smiles. He is satisfied with the picture of the complete military, masculine image he has presented.

DISSOLVE TO:

Steiner walking - watching men digging in, goes into Brandt's bunker after looking up at the sky for a long moment.

17 BUNKER - COL. BRANDT

The door opens and Steiner COMES IN. The scowl leaves Brandt's face. He strides forward to meet Steiner; presses his hand vigorously.

BRANDT

So here are you -- unpunctual and unsoldierly as ever.

He laughs and propels Steiner toward a chair.

BRANDT

(laughs)

I read your report. It's enormously valuable. I intend to transmit it personally to the General -- Ah, one thing. Captain Stransky has sent in an official complaint about the guns. What have you to say to that?

STEINER

(stolidly)

What can I Say? I threw away German guns to make room for Russian guns.

BRANDT

Why?

STEINER

The Russian guns are better. I know it. You know it. The men know it.

Captain Stransky seems somewhat in the dark.

Brandt looks at him.

BRANDT

You're a fresh bastard, aren't you?

STEINER

Yes, sir.

Brandt looks at Steiner and crumples Stransky's report. He offers Steiner a cigarette.

BRANDT

Last month I offered to pull you out of the line and give you a staff post?

STEINER

Yes, sir --- and I remember refusing.

BRANDT

....something about your feeling of solidarity with your men. Well -- I renew the offer. I want you on my staff.

No answer from Steiner.

BRANDT

All right -- what's the reason for refusing this time?

STEINER

(after a moment)

I don't want to be dependent on anyone -- not even a regimental commander.

BRANDT

As usual, I find it hard to understand you.

STEINER

(dryly)

I'm sorry to hear that. A good sgt. should be completely understood by his superior officer.

BRANDT

Steiner! Are you laughing at me?
(getting up)

Steiner stands up and looks expectantly at Brandt, whose mouth twitches.

BRANDT

(voice shaking)

Get out!

Steiner half salutes and leaves.

DISSOLVE TO:

18 CLOSE SHOT - MAAG

in machine gun emplacement. Darkness has fallen. Maag is looking out into the night. Suddenly, a Russian sub-machine gun OPENS UP. Maag, frightened, tries to bury his head in the dirt.

19 MED. SHOT - STEINER

walking in the darkness. At the BURST of BULLETS, he has dropped to one knee. Now, there is silence again, and Steiner peers cautiously into the darkness. There is ANOTHER BURST of FIRE and Steiner stretches out flat on the ground. Then there is silence again. Steiner gets up quickly and bounds to the nearest machine gun emplacement -- bumping into Maag, who is trying to get out. Another BURST of BULLETS.

STEINER

(shouting to be heard)

Where are you going?

MAAG

(stammering)

To -- get reinforcements.

STEINER

(angrily)

Leaving your post for that?

He pushes Maag back into the hole. They huddle together till the Russian machine guns are quiet. Then Steiner peers through the loophole. A few shells WHINE through the air, EXPLODE nearby.

MAAG

(gasping)

They must be right in front of us. In the Shell holes down there.

Behind them there is the SOUND of RUNNING FEET and Schnurrbart dives into the emplacement. Behind him come Kruger and Hollerbach, and Lieutenant Meyer.

MEYER

What's happening?

STEINER

The big craters on the slope are full of Russians.

Meyer stands frowning for a few seconds, then:

MEYER

(to Steiner)

Signal for a barrage. Kruger --
Get the rest of the company. I'll inform
the Commander.

He hurries OUT. Steiner picks up the flare gun.

Back bent, he LEAVES the emplacement.

20 MED. SHOT - STEINER

as he reaches a position in the trench. He inserts the cartridges
in the flare gun. He sends up a FLARE.

21 FULL SHOT - SLOPE OF HILL

ILLUMINED by the FLARE. The dark shapes of the Russians are visible
in the craters. Then there is darkness -- then once again the
landscape is ILLUMINED. The dark shapes can be seen burrowing into
the ground.

22 MED. SHOT - STEINER

He is looking at his watch with bated breath. Then he smiles grimly
as a hollow roaring SOUNDS above his head. It swells rapidly to a
mighty moan and a moment later comes the heavy detonation. Steiner
turns as he HEARS hasty FOOTSTEPS.

He sees Meyer running past him toward the MG emplacement.

Steiner follows.

23 MG EMPLACEMENT

as Steiner slides IN, followed by Meyer. The men of the platoon are
already assembled.

MEYER

Commander's order. The Second
Platoon is to undertake a counter- attack
at once. You are to occupy the craters
and take as many prisoners as possible.
Sergeant Steiner, you will command. How
do you think to proceed?

STEINER

(considers briefly)

We'll attack from three sides. Kruger
from the west, Schnurrbart from the east
and I from the south. When the firing
starts We'll need artillery support --
to keep the Russians pinned down in the
woods. I guess that's all.

MEYER

(nodding)

Good in theory; let's hope it works out
in practice.

STEINER

(smiles grimly)

It's too simple; it'll never work.
All right -- First Platoon, down the
trench till I step you.

With bent backs, Anselm and Pasternack in the lead, the men start
down the trench.

24 TRUCK SHOT - THE MEN

as with bent backs and faces taut with tension they proceed down
the trench. The CLATTER of weapons persists.

The men stop, look at each other -- some with frightened grins.

ANSELM

(With a nervous laugh)

Sergeant -- could I go make a telephone
call?

A titter, totally without mirth, runs through the men.

STEINER

(to Kruger)

You and your boys stay here.

Steiner raises his arm. The rest of the men follow him.

25 SPOT FURTHER DOWN TRENCH

as Steiner and the men come INTO VIEW. Steiner raises his hand in a
signal to halt. Then he peers over the trench, lifts himself over,
gives the signal for the men to follow.

26 SLOPE OF HILL

We SEE the shadowy figures of Steiner and the men descending the
slope. When they reach the level field Steiner again gives the signal
to halt.

STEINER

(to Schnurrbart)

You wait here. Attack in exactly five
minutes --

Schnurrbart looks at his watch.

STEINER

As soon as the first shots are fired,
we'll come in. Clear?

SCHNURRBART

(grunting)

All Clear.

He shakes hands with Steiner, who walks into the darkness followed by Kern, Anselm and Pasternack.

27 TRUCK - STEINER AND MEN

trudging toward a clump of woods. Suddenly, Steiner drops to the ground.

28 CLOSE SHOT - STEINER ON GROUND

The other men have wordlessly followed his example. Anselm, crawling on his belly, comes INTO THE SCENE.

ANSELM

(whispering)

What's wrong?

Steiner points his head leftward. Anselm follows his gaze.

29 LONG SHOT-A COLUMN OF DIM FORMS

moving cautiously through the darkness. They are no more than twenty yards away.

30 STEINER AND MEN

ANSELM

Russkis! At least a hundred of them!

Steiner is hesitant.

STEINER

How many men has Schnurrbart got -- a dozen? They'll run right over them.

ANSELM

Why don't we fire on them now?

STEINER

That may louse up the whole counter
- attack.

(bites his lips as he
thinks hard)

Schnurrbart probably won't even see them
coming --

He reaches into his belt for flares.

STEINER

A couple of flares -- and Schnurrbart can
see he's getting visitors -- Then if we
start shooting up their rear --

(MORE)

STEINER (CONT'D)

(shrugs)

Maybe, the confusion --

He sends up two flares in quick succession.

31 LONG SHOT - THE RUSSIAN COLUMN

is taken by surprise. SHOTS RING OUT, several fall.

32 MED. SHOT - STEINER AND HIS MEN

STEINER

All right -- after them. Stick close together and don't save on hand grenades.

(ironically)

Remember, the eyes of the entire German nation are upon you.

He runs in the direction of the Russians, the men following.

33 EXT. CAPTAIN STRANSKY'S BUNKER

The air is crackling with the SOUND of GUNFIRE and heavy EXPLOSIONS. Captain Stransky comes running OUT of the bunker, followed by Lieutenant Triebig. A Private comes running INTO the SCENE from the opposite direction.

PRIVATE

Word from Corporal Schnurrbart, sir. The Russians have broken into the trenches.

Triebig looks alarmed.

STRANSKY

(to Triebig)

Take up positions in front of the bunker with all the men attached to staff. I'll phone the combat train.

He turns and runs back INTO the bunker.

34 CLOSE SHOT - STEINER AND ANSELM

manning a machine gun. They are lying on the slope FIRING toward the trenches.

ANSELM

We've mowing them down.

STEINER

Who? Ours or theirs?

35 EXT. 2ND. PLATOON'S BUNKER

There is the SOUND of faraway BURSTS of machine gun fire.

Hollerbach and Kern are helping Anselm who is limping badly. Behind them are Dorn and Kruger. All look weary and begrimed.

36 INT. BUNKER

as they come IN.

KERN

(to Anselm)

You're a damn fool not to go to the Field Hospital --

ANSELM

(sinking to the floor)

I'll wait until the holiday rush is over. Otherwise, they're just as likely to amputate as not.

HOLLERBACH

Does anybody still have any idea what the hell went on?

DORN

(who seems dazed)

--- confusion --- confusion --

ANSELM

I couldn't see anything. When something moved I fired at it. Probably got as many Germans as Russians.

HOLLERBACH

Shut up!

ANSELM

Please -- a little respect for a wounded man.

Steiner comes IN. He has a bandage on top of his head.

STEINER

Kruger, what happened to you at the signal?

KRUGER

I was Clearing Out the craters -- then I heard the firing from your direction --

STEINER

I was wondering if you were waiting for a formal invitation.

KRUGER

You know what you can do with your fuckin' sarcasm. I saved your ass.

STEINER

Oh, did you? Well, you know what
You can do with my --

37 MED. SHOT. AT ENTRANCE TO BUNKER

as Stransky and Triebig come IN. The men start to come to attention.

STRANSKY

(curtly)

At ease.

(to Steiner)

That was a bad business. You know half
of 2nd Company was put out of action?

STEINER

Yes, Sir. Our platoon was hit, too.

STRANSKY

Why didn't the plan go according to
schedule?

KRUGER

We didn't think that --

-- SCENES 38 TO SCENES 67 MISSING --

68 CLOSE SHOT - STEINER

He is now close enough to the beach to stand. He takes an uncertain
step or two to stand, then he falls, his face down in the water. He
makes no effort to rise -- allowing himself to slide deeper and
deeper into the water. Suddenly Gertrud's hands come INTO THE SCENE,
grip Steiner's feet, pull him back.

69 MED. SHOT - GERTRUD AND STEINER

Struggling for breath, he lies on the ground.

Steiner turns over on his back and looks at her. There is rage and
shame on his face. The blood starts streaming down his face again.
He tries to sit up. She tries to support him and he knocks her arm
back.

STEINER

If you don't leave me alone I'll
Smash --

He stands up, takes a few steps to meet the incoming surf, bends,
scoops up a handful of water, washes the blood from his face.

Then he turns and sees that Gertrud has retreated a few feet up the
beach, and stands watching him. The wind is blowing her skirt close
to her thighs.

He looks at her a moment, then, CAMERA TRUCKING with him, he makes
his way to her side. Gertrud looks at him steadily.

Suddenly he seizes her. She struggles, wordlessly. Steiner forces her to the ground. With one swift movement he pulls her blouse from off one shoulder.

70 CLOSE SHOT - STEINER AND GERTRUD

She has stopped struggling. His face is close to hers.

There is no resistance in her expression, but neither is there compliance. She looks steadily into his eyes as if there is a battle of wills. Roughly Steiner grabs her shoulders. Suddenly, he releases her, stands up. He watches her as she slowly sits up, rearranging her clothing.

He stares at her without Speaking. Then --

STEINER

(In a low voice)

Why did you follow me?

She doesn't answer. He shakes his head slightly.

STEINER

Nurse Gertrud.

Keep your humanitarian paws off drunken men. It might be misunderstood.

GERTRUD

(breathing heavily)

You're insane.

STEINER

(laughs harshly)

We are all insane.

(he makes a tiny, mocking
bow)

Goodnight.

He walks toward the blackness of the garden. Gertrud turns to watch him until He is no longer in sight.

DISSOLVE TO:

71 HALL - REST HOME - STEINER

has just reached his bedroom door He is about to go in, when he stops, hesitates. Then he walks slowly to the next door, leans forward, listening. He glances up and down the hall, then Slowly depresses the latch.

72 INT. DARK BEDROOM

A streak of LIGHT coming through a space afforded by the blowing curtains. As Steiner COMES IN, we SEE Inge's shape sitting up in bed.

INGE

Who's there?

STEINER

(closing the door behind
him)

Three guesses.

Inge, her long nightgown trailing around her ankles, approaches him in the darkness.

INGE

Leave my room at once.

STEINER

Out of character, but very nicely
said. Don't worry; I just wanted to ask
you if you have any aspirin.

Inge comes two steps closer, looks at him. She hesitates.

As she turns toward the door, he grips her shoulders and holds her tightly.

STEINER

Were you going to turn on the light?

INGE

Yes.

STEINER

(feeling along her arms)

You don't need any light, take my word
for it.

Pretending to struggle, she manipulates the nightgown off her right shoulder, a maneuver not lost upon Steiner.

INGE

Let me go. I'll scream. I will scream.

STEINER

Naturally, you'll scream.

She closes her arms tight around his shoulders. When she tries to kiss him he turns his face aside. He picks her up and as he carries her toward the bed:

DISSOLVE TO:

73 LONG SHOT - SUNRISE

framed in a window. CAMERA PULLS BACK to the interior of Inge's bedroom. Inge is lying in bed. Steiner is sitting on the edge of the bed, his back to Inge, looking out the window.

STEINER

Funny -- you boasted about your view of
the sunset. I prefer the sunrise.

Inge laughs. She sits up, throws her arms around his chest.

INGE

You know -- never once last night did
you say my name.

(strokes his chest)

Don't you like my name?

STEINER

Why shouldn't I like it? Up to this
moment I've never met a
girl named Inge. At least not in bed.

Inge laughs. When Steiner makes a move to get up, she holds him
tighter.

INGE

Where are you going?

He pulls himself loose, walks to where his shoes lying, picks them
up. Inge, blanket up under her chin, watches him.

He turns.

STEINER

Goodnight.

INGE

(angrily)

Aren't you at least going to kiss me?

He stoops and casually kisses her shoulder.

INGE

Is that all?

STEINER

Isn't it enough? Do you want to get paid?

She starts up as though the pillow behind her had become a hot iron.
Then she throws herself face down on the bed, begins to sob wildly.
Steiner stands for a moment, looking at her in embarrassment and
some remorse.

STEINER

(sadly)

Depend on me to say a few words too many.

He walks slowly to the door, closes it behind him.

74 DELETED.

75 MED. SHOT - GERTRUD

who has just COME IN and is talking to a MAN at the bar.

76 MED. SHOT - STEINER

He sinks back into his seat, looks off at Gertrud. Then he rises and, CAMERA TRUCKING with him, winds his way across the floor to her. Her back is to him.

STEINER

(quietly)

Gertrud --

She turns, flushes as she sees him, but doesn't say a word.

STEINER

I wish -- I were meeting you for the first time now.

GERTRUD

(looks at him)

I suppose that's as close to an apology as you, Can ever get --
If you'll excuse me...

He makes a gesture to stop her, but she brushes past him.

We hear Klaus' voice.

KLAUS' VOICE

Rolf --

Steiner turns to face Klaus.

KLAUS

She's here --!

STEINER

(Pre-occupied)

Who?

KLAUS

You know -- Ilse -- the Iron Cross Tits --

STEINER

Listen I don't want --

He has turned automatically to look toward the corner of the bar. At the sight of the GIRL in the nurse's white uniform, Steiner's speech stops; his eyes narrow.

77 CLOSE SHOT - ILSE

She is looking toward Steiner, an expectant smile on her face. She is very buxom and very pretty in a coarse way.

78 MED. SHOT. STEINER AND KLAUS

Steiner's face is expressionless. CAMERA TRUCKING with him, he makes his way to the Waiting Ilse. En route he passes Gertrud who, struck by the grimness of Steiner's

expression, keeps her eyes on him as he pushes toward Ilse.

79 MED. SHOT - ILSE

Her smile freezes as Steiner STEPS INTO the SCENE.

STEINER

(steadily)

Good evening, Ilse.

She can only stare at him.

STEINER

I can't blame you, Ilse. After all, it's been -- how long --? More than a year anyway. Yes, thirteen months --

ILSE

(in a very low voice)

Rolf --

STEINER

-- and the law of averages -- What right have I to be alive -- Did you count on that, Ilse?

Suddenly, Ilse lets out a sob, covers her face with her hands, then turns and runs toward the exit. Klaus, who has stood a few paces behind, comes up to Steiner.

KLAUS

I must say -- it's a strange effect you have upon women.

Steiner doesn't answer. Klaus shakes his head, goes after Ilse.

80 MED. SHOT - GERTRUD

Whose eyes haven't left Steiner. She watches him now as he sits down at an unoccupied table. From his inside pocket he takes out a piece of paper. She sees him flag a passing WAITER. A brief conversation ensues between them, and the Waiter lends Steiner a pencil. As Steiner begins to write, Gertrud moves slowly toward him.

81 MED. SHOT - STEINER AT TABLE WRITING

As Gertrud's shadow falls across the table he looks up briefly, goes back to his writing. Without a word, Gertrud slips into a chair across from Steiner. After a moment, he finishes writing, looks at Gertrud.

STEINER

I imagine you want to know what it's all about?

GERTRUD

No.

STEINER

Be honest.

GERTRUD

Yes, I do. Very much.

Pause.

STEINER

It's not too pretty a story -- and it isn't very chivalrous of me to tell it. But, then, one of the first casualties of the war was chivalry --

(looks at the slip of paper)

A year or so ago I was in a hospital. In four years of war I have been in four hospitals.

(harsh laugh)

Some day I must get around to rating them. Anyway -- Ilse -- Miss Bauman -- decided she would be more than a nurse to me. After three days and three nights I told her to be more than a nurse to somebody else.

(looks at Gertrud's face)

He is silent a moment, his face reflecting the humiliation.

STEINER

She found a way to get even -- result -- Court martial -- degraded -- Six months in a Penal Battalion --

(pause. Holds up the paper)

Now, I intend to have Miss Bauman's signed confession --

GERTRUD

Please -- don't be brutal to her --

He gets up.

She looks at him in mute appeal. He shakes his head, Starts out, Gertrud looking after him.

He gets up.

She looks at him in mute appeal. He shakes his head, starts out, Gertrud looking after him.

82 MED. SHOT - BENCH ON BEACH - FACING THE WATER

On a corner of the bench, Ilse is huddled, still sobbing.

In the b.g. a figure looms. Then a flashlight, in the hand of the figure is snapped on. Its beam ILLUMINATES Ilse, who doesn't move. The figure, holding the flashlight, moves closer, and we SEE that it is Steiner. Now he stands beside Ilse, who does not look up.

ILSE

Turn it out -- I can't see.

Steiner snaps off the light. She looks up at him, her face a study in fury.

ILSE

You Stinking louse.

STEINER

(laughs grimly)

I that What I am?

ILSE

(violently)

Yes. And you always were a louse. You never knew how to treat a woman.

STEINER

How right you are. And now, let me prove your point --

(takes out the slip of paper)

-- Sign this.

ILSE

What is it?

STEINER

Your confession.

ILSE

Confession. What have I to confess?

STEINER

Oh -- are we going to play games?

All right, I'll read it to you --

(MORE)

STEINER (CONT'D)

(snaps on the flashlight,
starts to read)

On the night of May 12, 1943, I, Ilse Bauman, a nurse at the 2nd Base Hospital in Rostov, stole a wrist-watch from the room of Corporal Karl Wachtel, an amputee, and furthermore, hid the watch among the belongings of -- Sgt. Rolf Steiner.

Suddenly, Ilse jumps to her feet, starts to run, knocking the flashlight from Steiner's hands. But Steiner catches her in two strides. She kicks him and pummels him with her fists. Steiner drags her down to the water, wades in knee deep and thrusts her head under.

83 MED. SHOT - STEINER

holding Ilse's head under water. Then he pulls her up by the hair.

STEINER

Will you sign now?

She coughs and struggles for breath. He picks her up in his arms, carries her back to the bench, dumps her on it unceremoniously. He picks up the pencil and paper and the flash-light. He flashes the LIGHT on her face. Water is dripping from her hair down her forehead and onto her hands.

STEINER

Maybe in bed you could cry your way out,
but not here.

He thrusts the pencil into her hand. He flashes the LIGHT on the bench so that Ilse can see. With trembling hands, she signs the paper. Steiner switches off the flashlight.

STEINER

(looking at paper)

All right -- you may go now.

She doesn't stir.

STEINER

(repeats sharply)

You may go now.

Unsteadily, she gets to her feet, looks at him.

ILSE

(tonelessly)

You're going to report me.

He nods grimly.

ILSE

Oh, God. Oh, God, what am I going to do?

He shrugs. Slowly she walks away, her wet skirt clinging to her legs, head bowed, shoulders twitching.

84 CLOSE SHOT - STEINER

watching Ilse go. There is no pity in his face. Then, he sits on the bench, examines the paper closely. He is deep in thought when there is the SOUND of SOFT FOOTSTEPS in the sand. Steiner looks up, Gertrud stands beside him.

GERTRUD

(quietly)

So you have what you want?

Steiner nods his head slowly, looks at the paper again. Then he gets up, walks to the water's edge. For a moment, he hesitates, then he tears the paper into tiny scraps, tosses them into the water. Gertrud comes INTO the SCENE, stands at Steiner's side. Together they watch the scraps being carried out on the waves, dancing and scattering until they vanish from sight. There is a moment's silence, broken by Gertrud.

GERTRUD

Why?

STEINER

(shrugs; then, slowly)

I'm not interested anymore in clearing my name. Doesn't matter.....

He starts away.

GERTRUD

Rolf--

He stops, turns, looks at Gertrud.

85 CLOSE SHOT - GERTRUD

as she looks steadily toward Steiner.

86 MED. SHOT - STEINER AND GERTRUD

He walks to her. Without a word he takes her in his arms.

They cling to each other.

DISSOLVE TO:

87 MED. SHOT - NIGHT - CREST OF HILL - GERTRUD AND STEINER

Gertrud, her knees drawn up, sits facing the sea. Steiner sits at right angle to Gertrud, his head resting on her shoulder, as he reads a letter:

STEINER

"-- Well, here I am, back in dear old Mother Russia, after six weeks in the hospital. Why did no one ever tell me before about the pleasures of being wounded? That nice, clean hospital -- the food -- those nurses -- rather, that one nurse in particular. But why am I telling you. Every hospital, I hear has that one particular specimen... "

He turns his head to look at Gertrud. They smile at each other. Then he resumes reading.

STEINER

Anyway -- "At the moment things are quiet here, so you can be sure the Russkis are preparing something big. I suppose you heard that Dorn got it. We had finally persuaded the professor to put in for Officers Training, and the very next day the Russkis lobbed over a few shells to let us know they're still in business -- "

He stops reading. Gertrud looks at him.

GERTRUD

Bad you heard of it?

STEINER

No.

GERTRUD

Were you fond of him?

STEINER

The professor? I don't know -- not particularly, I guess.

(reflects a moment)

He was a good soldier. Did his job.

(pause)

I'm sorry he's gone.

(back to letter)

"Well, to get on to more cheerful news. Our darling Captain Stransky is in some sort of trouble --"

(looks up from letter)

Him -- I can be more definite about.

(resumes reading)

"Seems in the Captain's report on the Russian action, the night we got it, he somewhat overplayed his hand. His report, I hear, pictures Stransky, accompanied by Triebig, appearing at the last moment

(MORE)

STEINER (CONT'D)

among his fleeing men, stemming the panic, and leading the counterattack --"

(pauses)

A damned lie! "From what I hear, Stransky sat out the engagement in his bunker. Colonel Brandt informed Stransky that he was entitled to the Iron Cross First Class for his actions, but he also pointed out that two witnesses were required. Triebig, that sweet-smelling skunk, naturally signed, but the signature of the Company Commander was also needed. Since Lieutenant Meyer was killed and you were then in charge, it looks like you're elected. We can't wait until you get back and are asked to sign. So, don't linger by the wayside. Hurry back and join the fun. Keep well and watch out that they don't pick you up and stick you in some other unit. Things are supposed to be pretty hot on the main front. All the best, your old friend, Schnurrbart."

Steiner looks out at the sea. After a moment...

GERTRUD

You don't want to go back do you?

STEINER

Not now.

GERTRUD

(trying to sound cheerful)

In the morning you're going home for a month. I know it sounds crazy -- out maybe in a month it'll all be over.

STEINER

It'll never be over. Not for me.

He falls silent. The POUNDING of the SURF can be HEARD.

Gertrud stretches her hand out to Steiner.

GERTRUD

Rolf -- sit beside me.

He takes her outstretched hand, sits beside her, rests his head on her breast. She puts her arm around him.

He lies quietly for a moment, then lifts his face to kiss her.

GERTRUD

No, darling -- later -- later -- later --

Her arms around him, she is rocking him almost like a child as we:

DISSOLVE TO:

88 FULL SHOT - STREET - DAY

There are two fleets of army trucks lined up. On one side of the street the trucks face west; on the opposite side they face east. SOLDIERS are boarding both fleets of trucks.

89 MED. SHOT - SERGEANT MULLER - IN THE MIDDLE OF THE STREET

He calls out to a soldier who is walking hesitantly toward the trucks facing west.

MULLER

You there -- let me see your orders.

The soldier hands his orders to Muller, who looks at them.

MULLER

Where do you think you are going?

(with sadistic glee)

These trucks are going home. You belong there --

(pointing to east bound Trucks)

You're going to the front!

(pointing to west-bound trucks)

Lucky ones there!

(waves to east-bound trucks|)

Unlucky ones there!

(laughs again)

90 MED. SHOT - STEINER

Standing outside the rest home, near the parked trucks. He is looking up and down the street -- evidently waiting for someone. Muller, who CAN BE SEEN in the b.g. , calls out --

MULLER

Steiner--! Get into your truck.

It's ready to move!

91 MED. SHOT - MULLER

as Steiner walks slowly up to him.

MULLER

What's wrong, Sergeant? For one of the lucky ones, you sure don't seem anxious to go.

Steiner doesn't even look at Muller who evidently sees someone at the west trucks.

MULLER

Hey, you there -- let me see your
Orders --

He runs off, almost colliding with Inge. She looks complacent.

INGE

Goodbye, Sergeant Steiner.

STEINER

I'm touched. Up this early just to say
goodbye to me. Or are you waiting to
welcome the new batch coming in?

INGE

No. I just thought somebody should say
goodbye to you.

(smiles as Steiner looks
at her)

Gertrud is not coming, Sergeant.

He stares at her. She takes an envelope out of her pocket.

INGE

This is for you.

As he snatches it out of her hand.....

INGE

That's all right. I've already read it.

STEINER

You're a pig.
(looks at the envelope,
but doesn't open it)

INGE

I'll be happy to read it to you.

She takes the envelope from him. He just stands there, neither
objecting nor assenting. Inge's tone, as she reads, is not as
triumphantly smug as might have been expected.

INGE

(reads)

"Dearest Rolf -- I can't face you this
morning. How can you and I know what we
feel for each other? We hate so quickly
and easily, maybe we fall in love too
quickly and easily, too.
There are things I even needed to tell
you about.....

Steiner snatches the letter from Inge. crumples it in his hand. His
face is his usual steel mask again.

He stands still for a moment, then the SOUND of the trucks MOTORS causes him to look up. The trucks bound for the front have started slowly off. Steiner looks at the crumpled letter in his hand, throws it away, runs for the trucks.

92 MED. SHOT - MULLER

as Steiner runs past him. He stares in amazement as Steiner jumps onto the back of the last truck heading east.

MULLER

(almost screaming)

No! No! Steiner -- wrong truck!
You're going home. That one's going to
the front! Steiner -- Steiner --!

But in the b.g. the truck has disappeared around the corner.

FADE OUT:

Fade In:

93 LONG SHOT - ROAD SKIRTING A ROW OF BUNKERS - DAY

A truck is seen coming to a stop. A lone figure jumps off the back, waves to the driver. The truck drives on.

94 MED. SHOT - STEINER

standing in the road, looking about him with some curiosity.

Then, CAMERA TRUCKING with him, he starts to walk. He passes several SOLDIERS. We can tell by the cursory glances they exchange that they are strangers to each other.

Steiner enters the bunker.

95 LIEUTENANT TRIEBIG

rounding a corner near the bunker. He HEARS SHOUTS from the bunker and stops. Then he HEARS a half dozen voices CRYING in unison, "Steiner! Steiner! Steiner!" Triebig's face sets. He stands a moment, immobile, then turns, hurries away in the opposite direction.

96 INT. BUNKER

Kruger, Kern, Schnurrbart and Anselm are grouped around Steiner. A NEWCOMER stands off to the side a bit. Steiner is opening a beer bottle.

KRUGER

You're an idiot, Rolf. Why didn't you go home when you could have?

STEINER

(stony-faced)

Heard it was safer here.

KERN

(nodding)

I was home for two weeks.

THE NEWCOMER

(angrily)

I wish this kind of talk would stop.
It's -- it's gross exaggeration -- and
what's more, it has a terrible effect on
the morale of the troops at the front!

Everyone turns to look at the newcomer. Steiner regards him coolly.

STEINER

What's your name?

ZOLL

(defiantly)

Zoll.

STEINER

Thank you, Herr Zoll for worrying about
my morale.

The men laugh.

SCHNURRBART

Zoll is a Party member. He's convinced
we're winning the war, and anybody who
doesn't think so, he's quite willing to
turn in to the Storm Troops.

STEINER

(to Zoll)

My name is Rolf Steiner -- and please
memorize my correct serial number. I
wouldn't want them to come for the wrong
man.

The PHONE RINGS. Zoll answers it.

ZOLL

(very snappy)

Second Platoon. Zoll speaking.

STEINER

God, isn't it wonderful hearing a
real soldier speaking again.

ZOLL

(through the men's
laughter)

Yes, sir -- yes, sir --

(hangs up, turns to
Steiner)

Captain Stransky wants to see you in his
bunker.

STEINER

When?

ZOLL

Right away.

STEINER

Good.. I missed my Captain Stransky.

97 CLOSE SHOT - STRANSKY'S FACE

The CAMERA PULLS BACK and we SEE that we are in what is evidently Stransky's bunker. Triebig is facing Stransky.

It is now dark.

STRANSKY

I'll soften him up, don't worry. How long have we kept him waiting?

TRIEBIG

About half an hour.

STRANSKY

All right. Send him in.

Triebig, still looking worried, goes OUT. Stransky stands for a moment, moves another chair to the table, then sits opposite it. The door opens and Steiner comes IN. He looks at Stransky, his face devoid of expression.

98 MED. SHOT - STRANSKY - AT TABLE

with Steiner in b.g. Stransky's demeanor is carefully matter-of-fact.

STRANSKY

Welcome back, Sergeant. Please sit down.
(impatiently, as Steiner
remains standing)
You may sit down.

STEINER

If you order me to.

STRANSKY

Consider it an order.

Reluctantly, Steiner sits down facing Stransky, who moves the kerosene lamp so that he himself is sitting in darkness.

STRANSKY

Are you quite recovered from your wound?

STEINER

Quite.

STRANSKY

Good. Now that you're back, I'm willing to make a fresh start. I excuse your past behavior. There are several important matters I wish to discuss with you.

STEINER

(his face shows that he knows what Stransky has in mind, there is a pause before he speaks)
 Certain things can be talked about only man to man, not superior to subordinate.

STRANSKY

(an attempt at a smile)
 You would naturally think that. But, you know, don't you, that in civilian life, too, a distinction is made between people and personalities?

For a fleeting moment Steiner's expression darkens, but he quickly composes his features. His tone is ingenuous.

STEINER

I don't. But I'm sure you can explain that distinction to me.

STRANSKY

(smoothly)
 I can. The difference is a matter of ethical and intellectual superiority and is caused, whether you like it or not, by class difference. Those who are reared in dirt will never or rarely emerge from it because they have never learned to see dirt as dirt. Isn't that self-evident?

STEINER

(swiftly and quietly)
 I disagree. Talent, sensitivity and character are not privileges of the upper class.

STRANSKY

(voice less urbane)
 I see. May I ask which of the two categories you count yourself?

It is an open challenge. Steiner sits up in his seat.

STEINER

Is this conversation taking place between two equal human beings, or between a superior and his subordinate?

STRANSKY

(haughtily)

I see no reason to throw the weight of my rank into the balance.

STEINER

(quietly)

In that case, I am free not to answer your tactless question.

There is a silence as fury mounts in Stransky's eyes, but he controls his voice.

STRANSKY

You are forgetting yourself, Steiner.

STEINER

(coldly)

If you feel insecure about standing on your grounds of equality, we can easily go back to our regular relationship.

STRANSKY

(looks at his hands,
speaks softly)

Your impertinence can only come from stupidity -- and digging holes.

(stands up brusquely and
paces the room several
times before he comes
to a stop in front of
Steiner)

I have met more than one person of your type -- and I have always crushed them like vermin. I consider you nothing more than an insolent lout who cannot keep his hands off his comrades' property.

99 CLOSE SHOT - STEINER

as he stands up slowly. He makes a visible effort to control himself.

STEINER

(voice steady and quiet)

You'll regret that.

100 MED. SHOT - STRANSKY AND STEINER

Steiner wipes his sleeve with his right hand.

STRANSKY

For that remark alone, back home I would have had dogs chase you over the fields until your feet were bleeding straps.

STEINER

We're not back home.

STRANSKY

You'll wish you were before long.
 (turns his back on
 Steiner, picks up the
 phone)
 Triebig? Come in here!

He hangs up, turns, sees that Steiner is leaning easily against the wall.

STRANSKY

Stand at attention!

Steiner takes a half step forward, lets his arms dangle.

The door opens and Triebig COMES IN.

STRANSKY

How far has my new bunker progressed?

TRIEBIG

About a foot and a half.

STRANSKY

The bunker is to be ten feet deep.
 Sergeant Steiner will work on it tonight
 until that depth is reached.

TRIEBIG

(astonished)
 Tonight?

STRANSKY

Tonight. I shall hold you responsible
 for having that bunker ready by tomorrow
 morning.

TRIEBIG

Yes, sir.

Steiner has listened with an impassive face. Now, without change of expression, he holds the door open for Triebig, then he turns to look at Stransky. without a word, he GOES OUT.

101 EXT. BUNKER- TRUCK SHOT - TRIEBIG AND STEINER

as they walk toward the spot (seen in b.g.) where the new bunker is being dug. They walk in silence a moment.

TRIEBIG

I want you to know I have nothing to do
 with this business.

STEINER

That's lucky for you. Where's your
 "friend"?

TRIEBIG
(looking straight ahead)
He's dead.

STEINER
Oh -- too bad.
(sardonically)
Well -- bear up. Fresh recruits are coming
in every day.

Triebig looks at him and his voice shakes with hatred.

TRIEBIG
I have only one wish, and the Commander
shares it. We could court martial you or
get rid of you some other way. But we
want to have the pleasure of seeing you --
croak.

STEINER
(smiles)
You'll have to take very good care of
yourself if you want to outlive me.

Triebig clenches his fists in helpless fury.

TRIEBIG
Thank you for the warning.

STEINER
You're entirely welcome.

By this time they have reached the pit where four men are digging.

TRIEBIG
(to the men)
Ail right -- you're relieved. You may
return to your quarters.

The men, seeing only Steiner with Triebig, don't quite comprehend.

TRIEBIG
(shouting)
I said you may return to your quarters!

The men hastily drop their shovels, clamber out of the pit, and
walk AWAY. They keep looking back at Triebig and Steiner, still not
certain of what's going on. Triebig turns to Steiner.

TRIEBIG
If I were you, I'd make sure it was done
by morning.

STEINER
It won't be for lack of trying, sir.

Triebig glowers at him, walks AWAY. Steiner jumps into the pit, starts to shovel. The CAMERA notes that Steiner is up to his kneecaps in the pit.

DISSOLVE TO:

102 CLOSE SHOT - PAIR OF MUDDY BOOTS

The CAMERA PANS UP from the boots to Steiner's face.

Steiner is asleep in a chair, his feet stretched out.

The scene is the outer room of Brandt's command post.

After a moment, the inner door opens and Kiesel and Triebig COME OUT.

KIESEL

You'll wait here, Lieutenant.

Triebig nods nervously, Kiesel looks at Steiner, shakes his head.

KIESEL

Steiner!

Steiner opens his eyes, stumbles to his feet, straightens up. Kiesel holds the door open. Steiner looks at Triebig, then walks IN.

103 INT. BRANDT'S ROOM

Brandt is sitting behind a huge, clumsy desk piles with all sorts of useless objects. He holds a lighted cigarette between his fingers. Steiner and Kiesel COME IN.

BRANDT

So there you are. Next time you're wounded, give me a week's notice that we're going to lose you, ha, ha. How are you, Steiner?

STEINER

I can't complain.

Brandt stands up, shakes hands heartily, then gestures toward chair.

BRANDT

Make yourself comfortable.
(extends cigarette case
to Steiner)
How was it in the hospital?

STEINER

(laconically)
Pretty good.

BRANDT

And the Rest Home?

STEINER

I recommend it.

BRANDT

(laughs, then, casually)

That night you were wounded -- did you know that Captain Stransky led the Second Company's counter-attack?

STEINER

That's what they tell me.

BRANDT

Is it true?

STEINER

The counterattack was led by Lieutenant Meyer. Captain Stransky was nowhere in sight.

Brandt and Kiesel exchange glances.

KIESEL

Are you sure of that?

STEINER

Absolutely. In the first place, I would have seen him, and in the second place, Lieutenant Meyer had to report to the Captain what had been happening in the lines.

KIESEL

How do you know that?

STEINER

I was there when Lieutenant Meyer phoned.

BRANDT

A-ha!

(sharply, to Kiesel)

Fetch Triebig.

Kiesel GOES OUT.

BRANDT

(grimly)

I think you're entitled to a little fun.

104 MED. SHOT - AT DOOR

as it opens and Triebig and Kiesel COME IN. Triebig looks very worried. For a moment, Brandt just looks at Triebig who bites his lip. Finally, Brandt speaks. His voice is unusually soft and low.

BRANDT

You signed your Captain's report, Lieutenant Triebig. Were you present when Captain Stransky led the counterattack?

TRIEBIG

(after a noticeable hesitation)

I accompanied the commander to the hill and saw him calling several men around him. Then he sent me back to the command post.

BRANDT

Then how do you know that Stransky really led the counterattack? You signed a statement to that effect, Lieutenant Triebig.

TRIEBIG

I -- I learned of it from wounded men who were returning.

BRANDT

Can you give me the name of one of these wounded men?

TRIEBIG

They weren't staff men -- just company men. I -- I knew them only by sight. Besides, it was pitch dark when I spoke to them.

BRANDT

(icily)

I want you to know, Lieutenant Triebig, that I have had your statements checked. Captain Kiesel will inform you of the results of our investigation.

Steiner watches closely as Kiesel takes a sheet of paper out of his pocket, studies its contents for a moment.

KIESEL

(placidly)

Our investigation so far has disclosed that at the moment there are forty-two men in 2nd Company who took part in that counterattack. They declare unanimously that the attack was led by Lieutenant Meyer. None of them saw Captain Stransky, and none of them heard that he was even with the company.

Brandt turns to Triebig, who looks as if he were standing against a wall watching an execution squad line up in front of him.

BRANDT

To my mind, there is nothing more contemptible than snatching the laurels that properly belong to a man who died in action. I shall abide by Sergeant Steiner's testimony. If he stands by his statement that Captain Stransky was not with the company, I shall be compelled to institute disciplinary proceedings against the Captain. You may go now. You are no longer needed here.

TRIEBIG

Yes, sir.

He doesn't look at Steiner as he LEAVES the room.

105 MED. SHOT - BRANDT, KIESEL AND STEINER

BRANDT

(to Steiner)

Very well. Do you stand by your statement?

To Brandt's surprise, Steiner doesn't answer immediately.

Then, after some hesitation:

STEINER

Would it be possible for me to think it over for a few days?

BRANDT

(anger and disappointment in his voice)

Think it over? What is there to think over? Did you see Stransky or not?

Steiner doesn't answer.

BRANDT

I don't understand you. Are you a friend of Stransky's? My impression is that you wish him in hell.

STEINER

My differences with Captain Stransky are a private matter.

BRANDT

(losing patience)

Oh, they are? Why were you ordered to dig Stransky's bunker tonight?

Steiner compresses his lips.

BRANDT

I asked you something!

Steiner looks up, their eyes meet.

STEINER

Do you want to hear lies?

BRANDT

(leaning forward)

Do you know that Stransky intends to recommend disciplining you?

STEINER

(a growl)

If I were he, I wouldn't lose a minute about it.

BRANDT

(to Kiesel)

I really think I should place a guard over him and have him dig holes until he's blue in the face.

KIESEL

(shrugs)

Why try to revise the decisions of Providence?

BRANDT

(sternly, to Steiner)

Listen to me. You know I've always shown a great deal of understanding for you. But I am beginning to get tired of battling with your superiors over you.

STEINER

(defiantly)

I didn't ask you to.

As soon as the words are out, it is obvious from Steiner's expression that he regrets going that far, but it is too late. Brandt rises and leans on his desk. His voice is hoarse with rage.

BRANDT

Didn't ask me to! You didn't ask me to! Have you gone clean out of your mind? Do you have any idea what you're saying?

KIESEL

Steiner -- you ungrateful idiot --

For a second, Steiner closes his eyes. He is struggling not to let the words out -- but they come pouring forth violently.

STEINER

What are you asking me, Captain Kiesel?
To love Colonel Brandt?

(MORE)

STEINER (CONT'D)

I hate Colonel Brandt. I hate you, Captain Kiesel, and Stransky and Triebig, and ever since I've put on this damn uniform I've hated everybody and anybody connected with it. If I get into any trouble, if I have any problem with anything or anybody, I'll solve them myself --! Thank you very much!

Me pauses, shaking. There is a dead silence in the room.

Brandt is breathing heavily. His unsteady hands grope across the top of his desk.

BRANDT

(his voice broken)

Get out. Get out of here at once!

Steiner doesn't move for a split second, then he GOES OUT.

Brandt tries to regain control of himself. Kiesel looks at the floor.

DISSOLVE TO:

106 PANORAMIC SHOT - LINE OF TRUCKS AND MARCHING MEN - DAY

all headed west. This is followed by QUICK CUTS of the troop-laden trucks. The total impression is of a gigantic exodus.

107 INT. SECOND PLATOON'S BUNKER

Steiner, Schnurrbart, Kruger, Zoll, and Anselm are all present. They have packed all their belongings, ready to move out. Schnurrbart and Kruger are playing cards.

Steiner is sitting quietly on his bunk. The others are moving about -- obviously beset by impatience.

KERN

Why the hell aren't we moving out?

ZOLL

What's everybody so worried about? Moving a regiment is quite a job, let me tell you. It doesn't move all at once.

The PHONE RINGS.

ZOLL

Ah -- that's probably our orders now.

As Steiner goes to the phone, everybody makes for their packs, ready to leave at the word.

STEINER

(into phone)

Yes -- yes, sir -- I see --

(no change of expression)

Yes, sir -- at what time? -- Yes, sir.

KRUGER

(to Steiner, who

(has hung up)

What's the good word?

STEINER

The good word is that we've been elected.

KERN

(cautiously)

Elected to -- what?

STEINER

Captain Stransky's paid us a great honor. We -- that is, our platoon -- is to stay here as a rear guard until dark. For two hours. Maybe three.

The men are frozen in disbelief.

STEINER

I think we ought to feel very proud.

ANSELM

Those idiots are crazy.

SCHNURRBART

Not so crazy. They're pulling out, we're not.

STEINER

(takes a map from his pocket, spreads it on the table, traces with his thumb)

The division is moving back to new positions east of Krimskaya --

ZOLL

(nodding)

Much easier to launch an offensive from there.

SCHNURRBART

Why us? Of all the platoons in the battalion, why us?

KERN

(violently)

Because our sergeant is such a pal of Captain Stransky's! That's why us!

STEINER

I'm sorry. In the next war I'll try to pick my enemies more carefully.

108 MED. SHOT - STAFF CAR - DAY

The car stands outside Stransky's bunker. A military CHAUFFEUR is at the wheel, and the MOTOR is RUNNING.

A steady stream of trucks and equipment, headed west, flows past the staff car. In the b.g. the door to Stransky's bunker flies open and the Captain with Lieutenant Triebig behind him, STEPS OUT. As they make for the car, the phone within the bunker is HEARD RINGING.

109 INT. BUNKER - AT PHONE

as Stransky comes INTO the SCENE, picks up phone. Triebig is in the b.g.

STRANSKY

Captain Stransky -- Yes, yes, Captain Kiesel, we were just about to leave --
Yes, sir -- What's that, sir?
(his expression is cloudy
as he listens)

I see, sir. Yes, sir. I'll attend to that immediately. Yes, sir.

He hangs up. Triebig looks at him inquiringly.

STRANSKY

Intelligence reports that the Russians are already on the high-way. Regiment feels that it would be not only useless but suicidal to leave behind any rear guard platoons. They're to join the evacuation immediately.

TRIEBIG

I see.

He and Stransky exchange glances.

TRIEBIG

Shall I call -- I believe it's Sergeant Steiner's platoon, is it not?

Stransky nods. Triebig waits for him to say something, but he doesn't so Triebig picks up the phone.

STRANSKY

Just a second, Lieutenant --

Triebig turns to face Stransky.

STRANSKY

What do you think of this story? We tried to establish telephone communication with Steiner's bunker, but evidently his wires had already been cut. You, Lieutenant Triebig, upon personal investigation, discovered their bunker abandoned. Apparently, the platoon had already left to take up its forward position.

The two men look at each other. Then!

TRIEBIG

(slowly)

I think it's an excellent story.

STRANSKY

Just a story?

TRIEBIG

Much more than a story. I think it's fully justified.

STRANSKY

You do? Why?

TRIEBIG

(after a moment's thought)

It is my firm conviction that the Third Reich would be better off without the likes of Steiner and his cronies.

The two men stand looking at each other without speaking.

Then Stransky takes the telephone wire in his two hands and yanks it out of the wall. He doesn't look at Triebig as he strides from the bunker. Triebig follows.

DISSOLVE TO:

110 EXT. BUNKER

All the men, with the exception of Steiner, are present.

They are busy packing ammunition boxes.

ANSELM

Damn it. I hate to leave this place. We worked weeks fixing this place up -- this damn army.

ZOLL

The trouble with you is -- you're scared stiff.

ANSELM

(looks at him)

You don't know how grateful we are that you were sent to us. It's nice to have one brave man in the platoon.

111 MED. SHOT - AT DOOR

as it opens, and Steiner, his uniform wringing wet, COMES IN.

STEINER

Well -- are we all still here?

KERN

What do you mean "still here"?

STEINER

(pretending surprise)

No deserters?

(walking to table)

All right, then, let's have a look at the map before we start.

He looks at map. The men gather around him.

KERN

How far is it to Krimskaya?

STEINER

About twenty miles.

(staring thoughtfully at the map)

The stuff between is regular wilderness. And a stream running through. How big a stream? Suppose there's no bridge? And the whole region is marshy. The big question is whether we can get through.

KRUGER

Then let's use the highway.

Steiner just looks at him.

KERN

(anxiously)

What does that look mean? Did you see any Russians on the high-way?

STEINER

Infantry, trucks, tanks, the whole damn Russian army.

There is a moment's silence.

KERN

On the highway?

STEINER

Not in the air, take my word for it.

ANSELM

(strapping on ammunition
Box)

How are we going to cross the highway
with the Russians on it?

STEINER

It's dark, it's raining--and there are
bound to be a few gaps in the procession.
We'll wait for the right moment and scoot
across.

KERN

It's hopeless. It's just plain suicide.

ZOLL

(slinging his tommy gun
over his shoulder)

We're eight self-reliant, resourceful
Germans. We'll make it.

STEINER

(sardonically to Kern)

There! Do you feel better?

KERN

Suppose we do make it. The Russians will
be in Krimskaya before us. That means
to get to our lines, we'll have to cross
theirs. How? How, I'm asking?

STEINER

(his boxes are strapped
to him)

We can tunnel beneath the Russians -- or
we can pole vault over them. Are we all
ready?

KERN

(groaning)

You can joke, but we're finished.
Finished.

STEINER

Of course we are. No doubt about it. And
because you have so brilliantly pointed
that out, you may lead the way.

He flings the door open I motions for Kern to start the exodus.
Kern looks sour, but leads the way. The others squeeze past Steiner
at the door. When they are GONE, Steiner kicks the stove so that it
falls over, spilling its golden embers on the floor. Then he GOES
OUT, closing the door behind him.

112 FULL SHOT - THE PLATOON

huddled together in the rain, waiting for Steiner. After a moment, he comes INTO the SCENE. He jerks his head in the direction he wishes them to take. Then he starts off. The men exchange glances, but no one says a word.

They trudge off.

DISSOLVE TO:

113 OPEN PLOWLANO - NIGHT

It is still dark, but in the east the sky is beginning to lighten. In the distance WE SEE the line of men walking slowly, their heads bent against the rain.

114 MED. SHOT - THE MEN WALKING

The ANGLE FAVORS Zoll and Kern. They are panting under the burden of their machine-guns and boxes of ammunition.

They are cursing under their breaths. The CAMERA PANS DOWN to their boots. They are caked with great lumps of muddy soil.

115 MED. SHOT - STEINER - AT HEAD OF LINE

His face expressionless, he is walking steadily on. Ahead of him the terrain begins to slope upward. Suddenly, Steiner stops in his tracks and holds his hands up for the men to stop.

116 MED. SHOT - KERN, KRUGER, ZOLL AND SCHNURRBART

KRUGER

What the devil's the matter now?

No one answers. Schnurrbart motions for them to listen.

After a moment, the low DRONE of big MOTORS, the CREAKING of heavily laden TRUCKS is HEARD. Also an occasional windblown SHOUT is HEARD.

ZOLL

(whispering)

Russians.

KERN

(nervously)

A whole army.

With quivering fingers he unthinkingly reaches for his cigarettes and thrusts one between his lips. As he strikes a match, Steiner suddenly APPEARS in front of him. There is a sharp SLAPPING SOUND, followed by a RAIN of SPARKS from the crushed cigarette. Kern utters a whimpering sound and presses both hands against his mouth.

STEINER

(voice thick with rage)

You idiot!

The men look at him in alarm, but he whirls around and runs forward, signaling for the men to follow.

117 MED. SHOT - KERN

as he walks along. There is a burn on his upper lip which he pats tenderly. His face is clouded with resentment. The VOICES ahead become increasingly distinct. The crisp TREAD of nailed boots is very marked -- grows even louder.

118 MED. SHOT - STEINER

signaling for the men to halt. He walks back to the group.

STEINER

(to Schnurrbart and Anselm)

You come with me. The rest will wait here.

Steiner, Anselm and Schnurrbart run off. The men watch them as, bent low, they DISAPPEAR into the darkness. Then, one by one, the men sink down onto the wet ground. For a few moments no one has the strength or the inclination to speak. Then --

ZOLL

He shouldn't have hit you.

KRUGER

Why not?

ZOLL

What's more important than the treatment of one German soldier by another -- I'd like to know.

KRUGER

I'll tell you what's more important --
(brings his face close
to Zoll's)

It's more important that we have to get out of here. And you know why?
I'll tell you --

He pokes his finger into Zoll's chest. Zoll moves indignantly back.

KRUGER

We have to get out so that we'll be on time to get into the next mess. Out of one mess into the next. That's been going on for three years, and it'll go on until we get into one mess good and deep and don't come out of it --

He has worked himself into such a rage that he can't go on.

There is another morose silence. Zoll sits up on one elbow, listens.

SCHNURRBART

I think all that activity on the highway
is slackening.

KERN

Don't worry. We'll never get across.

He stops, for everyone is listening intently. He listens too. There isn't a sound from the direction of the highway.

KERN

(whispering)

I don't hear a thing....

KRUGER

Here comes somebody --

Every head turns.

119 LONG SHOT - A FIGURE COMING OUT OF THE MIST

From the group's P.O.V. The figure stops.

120 FULL SHOT - GROUP

SCHNURRBART

It's Anselm.

Anselm stops, waves his fist in the air.

KRUGER

Let's go.

They snatch their guns, run up the slope, DISAPPEAR into the mist.

121 CROWN OF HILL

Beneath it lies the highway in the gray dawn LIGHT.

Deserted. In the b.g. WE SEE the platoon slipping down the steep decline and racing across the trampled, rutted width of the road toward the edge of the woods which rise like a dark wall against the further mountains.

122 MED. SHOT - STEINER

He is standing about 100 yards in the forest, looking toward the highway. The men can be seen running towards him.

In a few seconds, they reach Steiner. As they fight to catch their breaths, Steiner looks at them, triumph in his eyes.

KERN

Well --

Steiner holds up his hand for quiet. They listen. The rumble of vehicles can be HEARD from the highway.

KRUGER

(grinning)

Now that we're here that sounds like music to me.

STEINER

(dryly)

I think it's a little early for congratulations.

(picks up his gear)

We're ready.

ZOLL

Sergeant --

Steiner turns to regard him.

ZOLL

Before we start, there's a matter I'd like to bring up. The matter of your treatment of a comrade, Private Kern.

Steiner looks at him closely.

ZOLL

One soldier of the Fuhrer is just as -- good as --

He wilts under Steiner's gaze, stops.

STEINER

(coldly)

Please continue. Just as good as what?

ZOLL

(weakening)

Anyway -- I believe I speak for all the others --

Steiner looks at the others.

KERN

(to Zoll)

Why don't you mind your own lousy business! It was idiotic of me to light that cigarette. Now, let's go.

Steiner looks at Zoll, then, without a word, turns and starts walking. The others follow.

DISSOLVE TO:

123 STREET - IN KRIMSKAYA - DAY

The scene is one of great bustle and activity. Trucks are unloading. Anti-aircraft guns are being set up on empty lots between houses. A Staff car speeds INTO the SCENE, jolts to a stop before one of the houses. Captain Kiesel alights, taking a salute from the SENTRY, ENTERS one of the houses.

124 INT. HOUSE - STRANSKY AND TRIEBIG

are supervising the installation of phones. Kiesel comes RUNNING IN.

KIESEL

You're slow with those phones, Captain. Regiment has been trying to speak to you.

STRANSKY

They'll be in any minute, Captain Kiesel.

KIESEL

With the Russians breathing down our necks, the Colonel wants a patrol out front. I think Steiner's the most experienced --

STRANSKY

Sorry, Captain. I haven't the faintest idea of the whereabouts of Steiner and his platoon.

KIESEL

What do you mean by that?
(stares at Stransky)
You mean you didn't pull him out of line and bring him back? You had your orders.

STRANSKY

I tried to contact Steiner immediately -- wasn't that so, Lieutenant?

TRIEBIG

Yes, Captain.

STRANSKY

But he had already moved his platoon from the bunker.

KIESEL

Why? He had orders not to move till dark.

STRANSKY

(shrugging)
You know Steiner Disobeying orders is a speciality of his.

KIESEL

How the devil is he going to get back here? He's got the whole Russian army to get through.

STRANSKY

He had his orders--he disregarded them.

KIESEL

It doesn't sound like Steiner. He'd risk his own neck, not a whole platoon's --
 (looks at Stransky closely)
 I think I can promise you a full investigation, Captain Stransky, when Steiner gets back. If he gets back.

He turns and walks OUT rapidly. The telephone men are still in the room, so Stransky and Triebig can only exchange covert congratulatory glances. The CAMERA MOVES to the window, THROUGH IT to an open field and as it MOVES EAST...

DISSOLVE TO:

125 OVERHEAD SHOT - THICK WOODS - DAY

The CAMERA MOVES DOWN through thorny undergrowth until it picks up Steiner's platoon, fighting their weary way through. The undergrowth has ripped the men's uniforms

and scratched their hands and faces. Sweat is pouring from their faces. They are almost continually slapping at almost invisible stinging mites which hover about them.

The CAMERA PANS DOWN to two pair of boots slogging through the marsh. It is evident that they are suffering a great deal.

126 LONG SHOT - THE SUN LOW IN THE SKY

It will be dark in a little while. From THIS ANGLE the CAMERA ZOOMS DOWN into the forest. It picks out Steiner trudging in water that is halfway up to his knees.

There is no one in sight behind him. Suddenly, from the rear there are HOARSE SHOUTS. Steiner stops, turns, listens. The SHOUTS are HEARD again. Steiner starts back, CAMERA TRUCKING with him. There is a slight rise in the terrain, which is firm and dry. Most of the men are stretched out on the ground.

STEINER

What's the trouble?

SCHNURRBART

You'll have to call a rest, Rolf.

STEINER

(tersely)

We're not even half way yet.

SCHNURRBART

I know, but what can't be done can't be done.

STEINER

(reluctantly)

All right.

He notices Zoll, who is lying on his stomach off to one side, his head pillowed in his arms.

STEINER

Where are your ammunition boxes?

The others become attentive. Zoll doesn't stir. Steiner digs the toe of his boot into Zoll's side.

STEINER

Didn't you hear me?

ZOLL

(a grunt)

Leave me alone.

KRUGER

He had them ten minutes ago. The swine must have dumped them.

STEINER

Then he'll go back for them.

Zoll still doesn't move, so Steiner grips him by his cartridge belt and pulls him to his feet. Face twisted with fury, Zoll whirls, snatches up his rifle, brandishes it.

ZOLL

(hoarsely)

Keep your dirty paws off me. If you touch me again.

Steiner looks into Zoll's rabid face with a sort of curiosity.

STEINER

(quietly)

You're too much of a coward. Watch!

He drops his tommy gun and gestures Schnurrbart and Kruger back. They watch worriedly as Steiner steps so close to Zoll that the barrel of his rifle touches his stomach.

Quietly he reaches out, grasps the rifle by the barrel and takes it from Zoll's hands. A sort of relieved sigh goes up from the men. Zoll stands motionless, his face reflecting fear, rage and shame. Steiner picks up his tommy gun.

STEINER

Get those boxes.

Zoll hesitates for just a second. Then he turns and walks off INTO the brush. The men look after him grimly.

127 MED. SHOT - STEINER - IN A TREE

making his way to the top. When he nears it, he pushes aside two branches to give himself a view.

128 LONG SHOT - FROM STEINER'S POV

An enormous expanse of reeds cuts a swath across the woods. Brown water shimmers along the thick stems. Then there is a hundred yard width of muddy water, then more weeds.

129 MED. SHOT - STEINER

He looks grim as he starts his descent.

130 FULL SHOT - THE MEN

as they wait for Steiner.

KERN

I bet this is the only dry spot for miles around. Why don't we just stay here?

ANSELM

Don't be silly. They won't know where to send our pay. Ah --

For Steiner has dropped out of the tree.

SCHNURRBART

Well -- ?

STEINER

Reeds, swamp, open water, more reeds, more swamp. Worse than I thought it would be.

Steiner spreads the map on the ground. The men look over his shoulders. Steiner points to something on the map.

STEINER

(nods)

Tomorrow morning we'll start before dawn.

KRUGER
(querulously)
Straight into the creek?

STEINER
Shut up! We'll march north to the road.

KERN
How far is that?

STEINER
About thirty miles.

KRUGER
Thirty miles! It's crazy! This way we're
no more than eight miles from Krimskaya!

STEINER
Sure. If we could cross that swamp, and
we can't!

KRUGER
Before I march thirty miles I need
something to eat.

STEINER
If you've got to have something to eat,
try tree bark. Boiled in soft water it's
supposed to be edible. Damn it all,
don't act like a bunch of children.

They look shame-faced, but Kruger growls...

KRUGER
You've seen what the water looks like.
Like a hundred cows have been scheissing
in it.

STEINER
Then boil it and skim it. You won't mind
the filth -- you've got a pig's stomach
anyway.

The men grin.

STEINER
We'll make a soup. Put the meat and bread
right in it. Kruger and Schnurrbart fetch
water. But don't anybody try drinking
the muck before it's boiled. The rest of
us can gather wood.

The men make a movement to start.

STEINER

Wait a minute -- we may as well settle this now. We'll need a volunteer for sentry duty tonight. At least to start it off --

Nobody answers. The men don't look at each other.

STEINER

I know you're all tired, but --

KERN

Sergeant, I --

At this moment, a NOISE in the brush causes all heads to turn. An exhausted Zoll, lugging the ammunition boxes' struggles INTO the SCENE. Steiner looks at him, then turns to Kern.

STEINER

That's all right. The problem is solved.

The men laugh, start off. Zoll looks puzzled by the laughter.

DISSOLVE TO:

131 CLOSE SHOT - SMALL SMOLDERING CAMP FIRE

The CAMERA PULLS BACK to REVEAL Kruger, Schnurrbart, Kern and Anselm asleep on the ground in various uncomfortable postures. Pawn is breaking in the sky. The air is filled with the croaking SOUND of FROGS.

132 MED. SHOT - KRUGER

as he slowly awakens. It is a moment before he is fully awake. He reaches out and nudges Kern awake.

KERN

Huh? -- What? -- Oh -- what's up?

KRUGER

Where's Steiner, do you know?

KERN

He just got up sometime ago and went off somewhere.

KRUGER

Did he say where?

By this time the conversation has awakened the other men.

KERN

I asked him, but you know Steiner -- he just gave me a look and off he went. I got the shits.

SCHNURRBART

(grimly)

Steiner goes -- and you get scared'
huh?

KRUGER

(looks around at all the
faces)

We're all scared the minute Rolf's not
around to hold our hands.

SCHNURRBART

(tosses a branch into
the fire, sending up a
shower of sparks)

He'll be back. Anselm, relieve Zoll.

ANSELM

(rebelliously)

Why me?

KRUGER

Hurry up and relieve Zoll. On the double.

ANSELM

You and Schnurrbart -- big shots!
Lousy noncoms! You're all alike. Rank
goes right to your heads. It stinks. The
whole damned army stinks. And you, Kruger,
stink worst of all!

Kruger picks up a dry stick of wood which is only partially in the
fire and tosses it at Anselm, who barely throws his hand up in time.
Then, with a cry of rage, he jumps across the firs and onto Kruger's
neck. The two men struggle on the ground.

KERN, SCHNURRBART

(simultaneously)

Come on, now - stop it. Kruger! Anselm!

Zoll comes running IN from his sentry post.

ZOLL

What's going on here?

Zoll, assisted by Kern, tries to separate the two men who are locked
together on the ground.

KERN

Watch out -- somebody's going to get
burned in the fire!

Suddenly, Steiner's voice is heard.

STEINER'S VOICE

Zoll -- Kern! Let them fight it out.

133 MED. SHOT - STEINER

His gun is in the back of an elderly RUSSIAN. The others are in the b.g.

STEINER

Why shouldn't they kill each other? Why should the Russians have to do it?

SCHNURRBART

Who the hell is that?

The old man sinks to the ground.

STEINER

It's my guess he's a very old Russian -- what's yours?

KRUGER

Where did you find him, Rolf?

STEINER

There's a dirt road about four miles from here. The road leads to a bridge. He was guarding it.

ZOLL

A bridge! A bridge that crosses the swamp, you mean?

SCHNURRBART

Eureka, that means we don't have to march thirty miles to the highway, doesn't it?

KERN'S VOICE

Not to mention the forty more to Krimskaya.

ANSELM

(feeling his throat)

Doesn't anybody care that my neck is broken?

STEINER

Not so fast. On the other side of the bridge there's a house. and there are Russians in the house.

Pause.

KRUGER

How do you know -- did you see any?

STEINER

No, but there was smoke coming out of the chimney. You ask him how many there are.

Kruger talks in Russian to the old man, who replies. Then!

KRUGER

He says there's two wagons and two horses.

STEINER

To hell with that. Ask him how many men there are in that house.

Kruger speaks in Russian, but the old man just shakes his head.

STEINER

How many men are there in the house?

Kruger speaks to the old man who closes his eyes and turns his head aside.

KRUGER

He won't say.

STEINER

(putting the muzzle of his gun against the old man's head)

He has to. Ask him again.

Kruger expostulates with the Russian, illustrating his words with unmistakable gestures. The Russian slowly opens his eyes. Steiner is regarding him without expression. A brief smile passes over the Russian's wrinkled, parchment-like face, and he says a few words.

STEINER

What is he saying?

KRUGER

He says he is an old man.

STEINER

(calmly)

We can see that. I admire him, but I'm going to have to shoot him.

SCHNURRBART

Isn't it dangerous, firing a shot? There may be some of them around, looking for him.

STEINER

You may be right. On the other hand, we can't waste time hanging him.

Pause.

ANSELM

Well, let's see -- there's strangulation, drowning, stoning --

STEINER

If we had the time we'd let you talk him to death.

Pause. Steiner takes a knife from his scabbard. The men are very silent.

STEINER

Any volunteers?

ANSELM

(after a moment)

How about you, Zoll? You were a butcher in civilian life, weren't you?

The joke falls flat, even with Anselm.

ZOLL

(after a moment)

If everybody's scared, I might have a try at it.

STEINER

No. I'll make it quick and clean.

(lifts the Russian to his feet, to Kruger)

We'll give him one more chance. Tell him what I'm going to do.

Kruger speaks to the Russian who says nothing, doesn't even shake his head.

STEINER

All right, then --

He pushes the Russian ahead of him toward a grove of small trees, CAMERA TRUCKING with them.

134 FULL SHOT - GROUP

They stand around in silence. A low GASP is HEARD O.S.

The men tense. Anselm ventures to look off.

135 LONG SHOT - ANSELM'S POV

Steiner is seen bent over, leaning against a tree.

136 FULL SHOT - GROUP

ANSELM

I'll say this for Steiner. At least he's throwing up.

All eyes are fixed o.s. After a few moments, Steiner comes back IN. His knife and scabbard are both gone.

STEINER

All right, get your things together.

SCHNURRBART

I wonder how many Russians there are in that house.

STEINER

Since we've got to cross that bridge, it doesn't matter how many there are.

KERN

Aren't we too few for the job?

STEINER

No. There's only the front door and one window on the side. We'll smoke them out with grenades, then mow them down as they come out.

(looks at Zoll)

And hang on to your ammunition boxes. We're going to need them.

Steiner picks up his pack.

137 LONG SHOT - A ONE-STORY HOUSE - DAY

It is made of massive logs. Smoke is pouring from one of the chimneys. The CAMERA STARTS PULLING BACK and we see that a creek flows parallel to the house. Its bank is overgrown with shoulder-high reeds which sway gently in the wind. Two unhitched wagons, their contents concealed under dark brown canvas' stand by the side of the house. Then we see a primitive but wide wooden bridge with rails on both sides. In the center, leaning against the narrow slats of the railing, stands a GUARD -- an elderly man with a yellow, wrinkled face. His cap is pushed back on his head and he is staring dully at the dirty surface of the water. His tommy gun is slung diagonally across his back. The CAMERA CONTINUES BACKWARD across the bridge into the reeds. Finally, it comes to rest on the flattened shapes of Steiner and his platoon who are gazing intently at the sight. The men speak in whispers.

STEINER

You realize how important it is that no one -- not a single one -- escapes?

KERN

We won't be able to get them all.

STEINER

We have to get them all. Once the Russians find out there are Germans behind their lines there'll be hundreds of them beating the bushes for us.

He looks at the men significantly. They nod grimly.

STEINER

Anselm -- you and Kruger stay here. Set up the machine gun -- see that no one gets past this way. The rest will come with me. Keep your heads behind the trees -- and remember, if one of them gets away we're sunk. With bent back, he moves forward, the men following.

Anselm starts setting up the machine gun.

138 MED. SHOT - STEINER AND MEN

walking cautiously through the woods to get on the other side of the house. The CAMERA FOCUSES on Zoll, who is last in line. His eyes are fixed on the ground, on small patches of SUNLIGHT on the ground. They change shape, expand and contract each time the leaves stir overhead.

Suddenly Zoll takes mincing little steps, now jumping or skipping to avoid a band of SUNLIGHT. He becomes so absorbed in this that he is oblivious to everything else.

He doesn't notice that Steiner is standing in his path, watching him curiously. Zoll is on the point of jumping over a broad strip of LIGHT when his eyes meet Steiner's.

His intended jump becomes a halting step that carries him

right into the middle of the SUNLIT band. Zoll stands still, looking into Steiner's face.

ZOLL

(weak smile)

Just a game --

STEINER

(incredulously)

A what? A game?

ZOLL

(apologetically)

When we were kids -- a game -- we'd race through the woods. No one was allowed to step on a spot of sunlight --

STEINER

I see. And would you like us to join you in the game? Perhaps we could find the time.

ZOLL

I only thought -- silly idea -- if I don't step on a spot of sunlight now I'd come through this all right.

He smiles an abject, apologetic smile. Steiner's face is expressionless. He turns to the men, motions them to the ground. Zoll is the last to obey.

139 MED. SHOT - STEINER ON THE GROUND

The men behind him.

STEINER

I'll take care of the gentleman on the bridge. When I run -- you follow me --
 (looks at Zoll)
 -- taking special care to avoid the spots of sunlight.

Zoll flashes a look of hatred at Steiner, but remains quiet.

Steiner lifts his tommy gun, sights it at the man on the bridge. He takes his time. Beside him, Kern is trembling visibly.

140 LONG SHOT - THE GUARD ON THE BRIDGE

He has not changed his position.

141 ANGLE - OVER STEINER'S SHOULDER

SHOOTING TOWARD the Guard in the b.g. Steiner is still aiming.

Then he FIRES -- a whipping round of SHOTS. In the b.g., we SEE the man on the bridge start to move as though he stood on a whirling disc. Then his hands grip the wooden railing for support. His legs sag, and he slides, knees first, underneath the railing and into the dirty water. Steiner jumps to his feet, runs madly for the bridge, the men following.

142 OTHER SIDE OF BRIDGE

as Steiner comes across, throws himself flat on the ground.

The others, close behind, do the same. They all SHOOT round after round at the doors of the hut. Then --

STEINER

(holding up his hand)
 Stop!

A FINAL BURST from Kern and then there is stillness. The men look toward the house.

143 LONG SHOT - THE HOUSE

There is not a sound from the house. Not a single sign of any activity.

144 MED. SHOT - THE MEN

still lying flat on their stomachs. They turn their faces to look at each other questioningly.

ZOLL

(hopefully)

Maybe there's nobody in the house.

STEINER

Don't worry, there is.

ZOLL

Well, it can't be too large a force.

KERN

Enough to give us a hero's death.

SCHNURRBART

(to Steiner)

What do you make of it?

KERN

(excitedly)

Look -- !

A figure is rushing toward them.

STEINER

Don't shoot -- it's Kruger!

Kruger comes RUNNING IN, out of breath.

KRUGER

Rolf --

STEINER

(sharply)

Why did you leave your post? Anselm can't handle them alone.

KRUGER

Anselm is in the house.

STEINER

What?

KRUGER

Didn't you hear the screaming?

STEINER

Screaming?

(looks at the men for confirmation)

KRUGER

Women's screams, then moans. So Anselm went in.

KERN

(bitterly)

Naturally. If it's anything to do with women --

STEINER

What do you mean, women?

KRUGER

I mean women! Anselm says to come over.

STEINER

Well, it's nice of him to invite us. Kern, you stay outside. Fire. One shot if you see anyone coming.

He gets up, runs toward the house, the men following.

145 EXT. HOUSE

as Steiner comes INTO the SCENE, kicks open the front door.

146 INT. HOUSE - HALL

It is a narrow hall, which separates two rooms. From the left room comes a weird MOAN. The men look at each other.

Steiner walks to the room.

147 INT. ROOM

The entire long wall of the room is taken up by a heap of straw covered with blankets. Crowded together in the rear half of the room, faces half-defiant, half-terrified, are about a dozen and a half WOMEN in Russian uniforms. They carry no weapons. Most of them are big breasted, stocky

women. Their full blouses, reaching down over their hips, are gathered at the waist by broad belts. One or two are fairly young and attractive, and there is one exceedingly pretty GIRL. At the women's feet, bedded down on the straw, lies a young WOMAN, the clothing stripped away from the upper part of her body, a blood-soaked bandage covering her right breast. Her eyes are closed, she emits the weird MOAN.

Anselm is guarding them. Steiner and the men stop in their tracks as they see the women.

ANSELM

(grinning broadly)

I hope you put me in for the Iron Cross, Sergeant. I took them single-handed.

KRUGER

Well, what do we do with them?

STEINER

What do you do with armed guerrillas, male or female?

SCHNURRBART

These are not guerrillas. They're regular uniformed troops. Besides -- they had no arms.

STEINER

If they're regular troops, we'll treat them as we must treat all prisoners in our situation.

SCHNURRBART

(gasping)

You mean, shoot them?

STEINER

Do you see any other way? If one of them escapes and gets to the Russian lines before us, we're done for.

ZOLL

Steiner is right. The women must be killed.

STEINER

Despite the fact that you agree with me, I still feel I'm right.

His glance falls on the wounded woman. She is looking at him with an expression of wild horror. An older WOMAN beside her speaks in Russian.

STEINER

What did she say, Kruger?

KRUGER

She says there's a kettle of hot water in the room across the hall. Please help the girl, she says.

STEINER

Anselm, get the water. We'll clean the wound.

ANSELM

(bewildered)

What's the sense of fixing her up, if you're going to shoot her?

STEINER

(sharply)

Get the water.

Anselm shrugs, GOES OUT.

STEINER

(to Kruger)

Ask them where they come from
and where they were going. Tell them if
they lie to us we'll throw them in the
creek.

Kruger talks in Russian, the older Woman, who appears to be an
officer, replies.

KRUGER

(to Steiner)

They belong to the 39 th Women's Mortar
Battalion and are on their way from Maihop
to Krimskaya. I think she's telling the
truth.

Steiner looks grim. Anselm COMES IN with a bowl of hot water, sets
it on the floor.

148 MED. SHOT - STEINER AND WOUNDED WOMAN

as he bends down beside her. She tries to roll back against the
wall.

STEINER

Take it easy. What do you think I want
to do?

He lifts the bandage. We do not see the wound, but from Steiner's
face, we know that it is a serious one.

STEINER

(opening his first aid
kit)

Are you in pain?

The woman understands, nods.

STEINER

(enigmatically)

The pain will be over soon.

He starts to wash the wound. In the b.g., we CAN SEE that the other
women have not changed their posture. They are still huddled together
against the wall, fearfully watching his movements.

Steiner lays a compress on the wound.

KRUGER

This is ridiculous. A nice clean bandage --
then a bullet.

Before Steiner can reply there is a NOISE at the door.

149 MED. SHOT - KERN AND OLD RUSSIAN

Kern has his gun in the Russian's back. The Russian is squat and stocky and despite his age looks powerful.

KERN

(grinning proudly)

He practically walked into our arms --

OLD RUSSIAN

(to Steiner, raising his hand pleadingly)

Captain --

Steiner pushes him in the direction of the women, motions for him to lie down. As the old man reels, several of the women SCREAM.

KERN

I had a look at the wagons, Sergeant -- there's plenty of food. Canned. stuff.

STEINER

Good. Zoll, you stay here. If any of the women starts anything, shoot her at once.

ZOLL

(as they walk off)

When do I get to eat?

STEINER

Don't be in such a hurry. Who wants to eat?

He starts OUT.

150 CLOSE SHOT - PAIR OF HIGHLY POLISHED OFFICER'S BOOTS

CAMERA PANS UP to a MED. SHOT of Colonel Brandt on the telephone. The scene is obviously his new headquarters in Krimskaya, the second floor of a Russian building.

Captain Kiesel stands near the window, listening.

BRANDT

Yes, General.... Yes, General, we're so solidly dug in, it seems almost a shame --

(smiles ironically at Kiesel)

I say that, General, because in four or five days -- we'll be driven out of these beautifully dug-in positions.

(another smile to Kiesel)

Certainly, General. I know about German valor. without that valor, I wouldn't

(MORE)

BRANDT (CONT'D)

give us more than two days -- Yes, General.
I will, sir.

(hangs up, shrugs in
Kiesel'S direction)

The General was short with me; but he
knows the truth as well as I do.

KIESEL

Of course. It's always he who orders us
to fall back, isn't it?

There is a KNOCK at the door.

BRANDT

Come in.

An ORDERLY opens the door for a CAPTAIN.

CAPTAIN KILIUS

Captain Kilius reporting, sir.

BRANDT

Oh, yes. You have your orders?

KILIUS

Yes, sir. And a letter for you.

BRANDT

(as he opens the envelope)

This is Captain Kiesel--

Kiesel and Kilius shake hands.

BRANDT

Captain Kilius comes to us from the Western
Front.

KIESEL

Really? Whatever induced you to leave,
Captain?

Kilius smiles wanly. Brandt, reading the letter, snorts loudly.

BRANDT

Didn't you once mention Captain Stransky's
good connections?

KIESEL

There is a Major General Stransky

attached to Army High Command, South. He is, I think, a cousin of
Captain Stransky's.

BRANDT

I see.

(MORE)

BRANDT (CONT'D)

(tosses letter on table
as if it were filth)

You can guess what that is, can't you?

KIESEL

His transfer, of course.

BRANDT

(grimly)

Exactly. Herr Stransky is to report to
Paris within a week.

There's a silence in the room as if both men had forgotten the
presence of Kilius. Then Brandt recovers. He turns to Kilius.

BRANDT

Please excuse me' Captain. My orderly
will arrange for your billeting.

KIESEL

Don't unpack too thoroughly. We'll be
on the move soon.

KILIUS

(smiles)

Thank you, Colonel Brandt.

Se salutes, LEAVES.

KIESEL

He's so new here, he didn't even ask in
which direction.

BRANDT

That bastard, Stransky!

(shrugs)

without Steiner to contradict him, he'll
get his Iron Cross and strut all over
Paris. That arrogant bastard! So Stransky
will be in Paris, while Steiner --

(looks glumly out the
window)

God knows where he is --

151 CLOSE SHOT - STEINER

stuffing food into his mouth. The CAMERA PULLS BACK to show the scene
as the exterior of the house, at one of the wagons.

The other men are eating greedily too. Steiner turns, looks toward
the window of the house.

152 CLOSE SHOT - ZOLL'S FACE - AT WINDOW

The CAMERA PULLS BACK to take in the Russian female prisoners and the old man. The women are still huddled close together as close to the wall as they can get. They are asleep or pretending to be asleep. The wounded woman lies with her head on another woman's lap. Her eyes are closed and she MOANS softly in her sleep.

153 MED. SHOT - OLD MAN AND YOUNG GIRL

They are sitting in the forefront, and are the only ones not asleep. Their heads are together and they are whispering. The girl is no more than twenty and very pretty. The old man's expression is very worried.

154 MED. SHOT - ZOLL

as he turns from the window. He sees the old man and the young girl whispering.

ZOLL

Shut up, you two!

The old man and young girl draw slightly apart. The girl looks at Zoll and her expression is frightened.

155 CLOSE SHOT - ZOLL

as he looks at the girl. His eyes glide searchingly over her figure. It is very evident what he is thinking.

He looks at her quite a while, then, with an effort, turns away, walks to the door, stands with his back to it, tries not to look at the girl.

156 MED. SHOT - GIRL AND OLD MAN

The old man has moved closer to her, and has cautiously resumed his whispering. The girl's expression is still tense. She draws back in fright as Zoll suddenly comes INTO the SCENE.

ZOLL

I told you to be quiet, didn't I?

He lifts his foot and, kicking his boot against the old man's shoulder, sends him sprawling on his back. The old man looks up at him, then, as if resigned, turns over on his side. Zoll looks at the girl. It is some time before

he takes his gaze away. Then, he walks to the window, looks out again. In the b.g., we SEE the men grouped around the fire, evidently eating. After a moment, Zoll turns away from the window. The CAMERA is CLOSE on his FACE and we SEE him gape and stand rooted to the spot.

The CAMERA PULLS BACK to take in Zoll and the young girl.

Her head is bowed and she is fingering her blouse. The top button is already open. She doesn't look at Zoll and she slowly unfastens the second button. Zoll gulps, then looks at the old man who is lying on his side, eyes closed.

Zoll's eyes take in the rest of the room, the CAMERA PANNING with his gaze. Most of the women seem to be asleep, or are sitting with heads drooping, staring at the floor. Then, the CAMERA comes to rest on the young girl again. She is looking steadily toward Zoll who watches her in fascination.

She unfastens another button. Then she closes one eye in a slow wink and smiles at Zoll.

157 CLOSE SHOT - ZOLL

He holds his breath. He is perspiring slightly.

158 MED. SHOT - ZOLL AND GIRL

The door to the hall is in the b.g. The girl has now unbuttoned the last button and is looking smilingly at Zoll, who stands hesitant. 'But now, the tread of heavy BOOTS is HEARD in the hall. Zoll hurriedly jumps to the wall and comes to an attitude of strict attention. The door opens and Schnurrbart APPEARS.

SCHNURRBART

Everything all right?

Zoll manages to nod indifferently. Out of the corner of his eye he looks toward the girl. She is holding her blouse closed and staring vacantly at the floor.

SCHNURRBART

As soon as Kern has finished eating he'll take over so you can eat.

(his eyes rove over the prisoners)

They asleep?

ZOLL

(curtly)

They seem to be.

He is anxious for Schnurrbart to leave, but Schnurrbart takes his time. He comes all the way into the room, his eyes on the prisoners.

ZOLL

(impatiently)

What do you want? Everything is all right.

SCHNURRBART

Doesn't it seem funny to you that they're all asleep?

ZOLL

Why is it so funny?

Schnurrbart shrugs, goes OUT. Zoll kicks the door shut, quickly turns to look at the girl.

159 MED. SHOT - THE GIRL

She has opened her eyes and is looking encouragingly at Zoll. When he doesn't stir, she spreads her blouse open, puts her hand under her undershirt. with her other hand she beckons to Zoll.

160 CLOSE SHOT - ZOLL

He digs his teeth into his lower lip. He stands as if nailed to the spot. His eyes sweep over the heads of the other prisoners. pause upon the face of the man.

Although the old man is lying with closed eyes, Zoll looks at him suspiciously. But then he looks toward the girl again --

161 MED. SHOT - THE GIRL

She smiles at Zoll and begins to push herself along the floor toward him. This overcomes Zoll's fears. He takes one last look at the old man, then beckons to the girl with a movement of his head.

ZOLL

(softly)

Come. Come with me.

She hesitates and glances at the old man for the briefest moment. His eyes are still closed, his back is to them.

ZOLL

(hoarsely, with another
gesture)

I said--come.

The coquettish smile on the girl's face has vanished. There is fear in her eyes. She doesn't move. He takes one long stride to her, grasps her shoulders tightly, pulls her to her feet. He throws another glance at the old man who doesn't stir. Abruptly, Zoll pulls the resisting girl by the waist to the door. He throws open the door, pulls the girl into the hall.

162 MED. SHOT - IN HALL - ZOLL

looks madly around. There is a door on the opposite side of the hall. He turns to the girl, sees that she is trying with her free hand to button her blouse. Zoll shoves her toward the opposite door.

163 INT. OPPOSITE ROOM

as the door is flung open and Zoll, dragging the girl, COMES IN. The room is sparsely furnished, its chief feature being a huge wardrobe closet against the one wall.

As Zoll lays his tommy gun down in a corner, the girl suddenly breaks loose and runs toward the door. In two bounds, Zoll is at her side. He throws her to the ground, falls on her, panting with exertion and excitement. She tries to defend herself, her clenched hands battle against his face and she begins to scream. Zoll, who has ripped her blouse off her shoulders, drags one of the blankets over her face, smothers her screams.

164 HALL - THE OLD RUSSIAN

stands hesitant as he HEARS the MUFFLED SCREAMS.

Then he runs to the front door, peers cautiously out, RUNS OUT.

165 EXT. HOUSE - AT WAGON - THE MEN

have just about finished eating.

KRUGER

(sitting up suddenly)

What was that?

ANSELM

What was what?

KRUGER

(overlapping)

I thought I heard a shot.

STEINER

I heard it. It was a shot, all right...

KERN'S VOICE

(faint and far off)

Rolf -- Kruger --

ANSELM

It's Kern!

He and Kruger RUN OFF. Then the others follow.

166 FULL SHOT - KERN LYING ON GROUND

Anselm and Kruger run in, bend over him. Steiner and Schnurrbart COME IN.

KRUGER

He's hurt -- Kern is hurt --

Steiner looks grimly in the direction of the hut.

ANSELM

Maybe a company of Russians has come up.

SCHNURRBART

One shot, and it's a company of Russians!

KERN

(gasping)

The old Russian -- he ran past --

STEINER

What!

KERN

Sorry, Steiner -- I was in no position
to -- he grabbed my gun --

He falls silent, his eyes close. Steiner bends over to examine him.

KRUGER

How bad is he?

STEINER

(getting up)

He's probably finished. Do what you can
for him.

(looks grimly toward hut)

I think I'll have a few words with Herr
Zoll.

As he starts away, the men look down worriedly at Kern.

167 INT. HALL - OF HUT

as Steiner comes RUNNING IN. He is about to enter the room on the right when he HEARS WHIMPERING from within the room on the left. He listens for a moment, then the WHIMPERING IS HEARD AGAIN. Steiner lifts his foot, kicks the door in.

168 INT. ROOM - ZOLL

who is fastening the buckle on his belt, whirls around as the door flies open. The girl lies on the floor naked and whimpering. Zoll stares incredulously at Steiner in the doorway. For a few seconds they merely stare at each other.

Then Steiner comes slowly into the room and slowly approaches Zoll until he is right in front of him. The WHIMPERING of the girl STOPS.

STEINER

I hope you had a good time, because you're
going to pay quite a price for it.

He raises his gun. Zoll takes a step backward in terror.

ZOLL

(incredulously)

You're not going to shoot me?

STEINER

You left your post, you let a prisoner
escape, you've endangered all our lives.

ZOLL

But Steiner, he was asleep -- I swear it --
he was asleep.

Steiner hesitates, then his eyes fall on something.

169 CLOSE SHOT - THE SINGLE-DOORED WARDROBE

It fills the entire left corner of the room. It is massively built,
but has no lock, the door can only be closed by a wooden catch.

170 MED. SHOT - STEINER AND ZOLL

STEINER

(to Zoll, indicating
wardrobe)

Open the door.

Zoll doesn't move, his face reflecting fear. Then, involuntarily,
he glances toward his tommy gun -- out of reach in the farthest
corner of the room. Steiner catches his Glance.

STEINER

(coldly)

Don't try it. You couldn't get there.
Come on, open the wardrobe.

ZOLL

Not until you tell me why you want me to
open it.

STEINER

(in sudden fury)

Go on, go on, hurry up.

Zoll turns quickly, walks to wardrobe, opens the door a little.

STEINER

More.

Zoll pulls the door wide open. The wardrobe is empty inside, Steiner
nods in satisfaction. He turns his head for a moment to see that
the girl's gaze is fixed upon him. He turns to Zoll.

STEINER

If she had a gun she'd fill us
both. Get into the wardrobe.

Zoll, his eyes wide with fear, takes a quick step to the side.
Steiner steps up to Zoll, whacks him across the face with the heavy
barrel of his gun. Zoll lets out a wild shriek, presses both hands
against his nose, which streams blood. Steiner, ignoring his cries,
shoves him into the wardrobe. Steiner slams the door shut, pushes
the wooden catch down. From within, comes Zoll's MUFFLED VOICE --
"Steiner -- Steiner --"

STEINER

(loudly)

If you make a sound, I'll fire through
the wood.

From the side he tugs at the wardrobe until he has moved it somewhat away from the wall. Then, he squeezes between the wall and the rear of the wardrobe. He braces his back against the wall and, with a mighty shove, pushes the wardrobe over. It crashes to the floor, sending up a cloud of dust, behind which appears the girl's white face.

For a few seconds there is silence, then Zoll begins to SHOUT and KICK. Steiner hammers the butt of his gun against the rear wall of the wardrobe. The SHOUTING STOPS.

STEINER

Stop the racket. And don't be ungrateful.

For you, the war is over.

(he turns to the girl;
gestures)

You stay here.

He looks at the wardrobe with grim satisfaction, WALKS OUT.

171 INT. HALL

as Steiner COMES OUT. He HEARS a woman SHOUTING from the other room. Steiner crosses to the room.

172 INT. OTHER ROOM

as Steiner COMES IN. A woman SHOUTS at him.

STEINER

(looks at the wounded
woman)

How do you feel? Any better?

The woman just stares up at him. Steiner kneels, looks at the bandage.

Anselm, Kruger and Schnurrbart come RUNNING IN, in a state of great excitement. The former has a roll of maps in his hand, the latter carries a walkie-talkie.

ANSELM

Sergeant -- we were rummaging through
the second wagon and look what we --

STEINER

You picked a lovely time to go souvenir
hunting. What good is a Russian walkie-
talkie to us? What have you got?

ANSELM

A pretty goddamn good map. It's not only got their positions in front of Krimskaya -- it's got ours, too.

STEINER

Why, that's almost German efficiency.

He spreads the map on the table, looks at it critically.

KRUGER

What do you make of it?

STEINER

A work of art. What Colonel Brandt wouldn't give to have this.

(looks at map again)

Their Company Three is pretty well spread out. Right opposite is a hill marked on our side.

(again examines map)

The best spot to cross looks like Number Three's spot.

KRUGER

Through a whole company?

ANSELM

And in our gorgeous gray-green uniforms, some chance we'd have.

STEINER

It's the only chance we have. The dark will give us some --

He pauses, as his eyes fall upon the Russian women. He stands silent as the men look at him. Then he turns to Kruger.

STEINER

Tell them to undress.

KRUGER

Who?

STEINER

(impatiently)

Them, the women. Tell them to undress.

173 CLOSE SHOT - WARDROBE - ZOLL

can be HEARD BANGING FEEBLY on the door.

174 OTHER ROOM

The men are in various stages of donning the women's uniforms. They are grumbling.

SCHNURRBART

Where in hell is Zoll?

There is a sudden silence. The men look at Steiner, who is searching around for a blouse.

STEINER

I don't think we have to worry about him.

KRUGER

Has he skipped out?

STEINER

What would you have done in his place? Hurry up, or we'll have a Russian regiment on our necks.

KRUGER

(bursting out)

Suppose we do sneak through the Russian lines? Our own men will mow us down, us looking like a pack of damned Russians!

A silence falls upon the men.

STEINER

Don't you prefer a German bullet to a Russian one? Where's your national pride?

Bitter, raucous laughter from the men.

The men, the uniforms in their arms, start for the door, with backward glances at the women. The men GO.

175 MED. SHOT - STEINER AND KRUGER

who are bringing up the rear. The old Russian woman SHOUTS some thing.

STEINER

What did you say?

KRUGER

She still wants to know where the young girl is.

STEINER

Tell her when we're gone, to look across the hall.

Kruger speaks to the woman. The wounded woman moans.

Steiner, his face expressionless, bends, lifts the bandage. inspects the wound.

KRUGER

How does it look?

STEINER

(getting up)

She's a goner. Very soon now.

The wounded woman, looking up at them intently, speaks in low, halting tones. Steiner looks inquiringly at Kruger, who shrugs.

KRUGER

She says how do we like it now that they have us on the run?

Steiner is silent a moment.

STEINER

Have you got an answer to that?

KRUGER

No.

STEINER

(grimly)

Then, let's go.

He stalks OUT, followed by Kruger.

176 FULL SHOT - THE WOMEN

are donning whatever clothing the men have left behind.

Others have draped blankets around themselves. Three

women are bending over the wounded woman. From the expressions on their faces we know that the end is near for their wounded compatriot.

177 MED. SHOT - WOMAN AT WINDOW

She is peering out cautiously. After a few moments. she turns and says something in Russian to the other women.

Several come hastening to the window, look out.

178 LONG SHOT - WOMEN'S POV

In the b.g., we SEE the men walking off. with Steiner in the lead, they DISAPPEAR into the woods.

179 MED. SHOT - WOMEN - AT WINDOW

They turn and their faces express grim satisfaction.

Then, a large woman, evidently the leader, looks through the open door, across the hall to the door beyond. Her face sets. The women follow her gaze.

180 INT. OPPOSITE ROOM - THE WARDROBE

is lying flat on the floor. The CAMERA MOVES UP CLOSER to it.

181 INT. WARDROBE - ZOLL

is lying on his stomach, his head resting on his arms, his mouth to a small crack in the planks. After a moment, he raises himself up on one elbow, listens carefully. He thinks he hears something -- but evidently he is mistaken.

He lies flat on the floor again. Then he reaches for his

glasses which are lying by his side. He inspects them; they are broken. He shakes his head in anger. He presses his mouth to the crack again, breathes. The heat is intense. He wipes the Perspiration from his face. Finally he opens the buttons of his shirt, pulls down his trousers and turns over on his back. He lies still and quiet for a few moments, then an expression of great fear comes into his face. He calls out!

ZOLL

Steiner -- ! Steiner -- Kruger -- !
Schnurrbart! I'm in here -- !

There isn't a sound, and Zoll's fear grows.

ZOLL

(yelling)

Steiner -- do you hear me! Let me
out! Schnurrbart -- it's Zoll, I'm in
here -- !

His shouting has become frantic. He pounds on the door.

He crooks his body and beats his heels against the bottom of the wardrobe. He digs his hands into the crack of the door and pulls until his fingers are bleeding. At last, he lies still, punting for air. Then, his expression freezes. There is the SOUND of softly advancing FOOTSTEPS.

The wardrobe begins to move. Twice, Zoll is jolted against the wood -- and suddenly there is DAYLIGHT.

182 EXT. WARDROBE - THE CROWD OF WOMEN

are grouped around the wardrobe, the door of which has been smashed open.

183 MED. SHOT - ZOLL - ON FLOOR OF WARDROBE

Stunned, he pulls himself up to a half-sitting position and blinks in speechless terror at the crowd of mocking faces that are bending over him, at rows of breasts bulging out of dirty underwear. Suddenly, dozens of hands reach into the wardrobe, grip his hair, his clothes, his limbs, pull him up and hurl him to the floor of the room. As he starts to defend himself, his arms and legs are pinioned, his clothes torn off, and a rain of merciless blows beat down upon him. Russian CURSES fill the air.

184 CLOSE SHOT - ZOLL'S FACE

as the blows rain on him. Just above him is the face of the young Russian girl he has raped. Her hair hangs in tangled strands over her forehead, her eyes gleam like green glass lighted from within. She does not strike him or curse him as the others are doing. She only stands stooped above him, staring at him in silence. And as Zoll looks into her face, the blood runs down his forehead, bubbles out of his nose and mouth. He jerks and writhes under the kicks and punches.

185 FULL SHOT - WOMEN

as they beat Zoll, who is hidden from the CAMERA.

Suddenly, there breaks from him a SCREAM that no longer resembles anything human. The scream paralyzes the women.

For a moment, they stop the beating. Several hold their hands to their ears. Then, one woman shakes off the paralysis. with both feet at once, she jumps on the bellowing, twitching, bleeding body. The others spring on him, too, stamping, screaming and kicking.

186 CLOSE SHOT - DOZENS OF BOOTS

as they jump up and down mercilessly on Zoll's body.

187 LONG SHOT - FROM HALL - THROUGH OPEN DOOR

at the spectacle. Gradually, the kicking and jumping stop. The women turn, file slowly OUT of the room. Two of them have their arms around the softly weeping young girl. When the last have walked PAST the CAMERA, it STARTS to MOVE SLOWLY TOWARD the battered body in the center of the room.

188 CLOSE SHOT- ZOLL'S FEET

lying quietly on the floor. A ray of SUNLIGHT is coming

through the window -- and we see the feet lying in a pool of flickering LIGHT.

189 INT. DARK ROOM

dimly LIT by one candle. At the window, his back to CAMERA stands a half-dressed man. Evidently, he has been roused from bed. O.S. we HEAR another man's VOICE.

MAN'S VOICE

--They'll be coming through at Hill 124 at 0400. Sergeant Steiner and what's left of his platoon. Their signal will be two flares in quick succession. Then a count of four and a third flare. We are to hold our fire.

The man at the window turns and we SEE that it is Captain Stransky. His lips are set tight. The CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal the scene as Stransky's bedroom. The man who has been speaking is Lieutenant Triebig.

STRANSKY

(after a moment)

I see. Who received this message?

TRIEBIG

Corporal Stemple.

STRANSKY

was there anybody with Stemple?

TRIEBIG

No, sir.

Pause.

STRANSKY

How well do you know Stemple?

TRIEBIG

(a split second's hesitation)

Very well, sir.

STRANSKY

He's a very good -- ah -- "friend" of yours?

TRIEBIG

(not looking at him)

Yes, sir.

Stransky looks at him closely.

TRIEBIG

He knows how I feel about Sergeant Steiner.

A look passes between the two men.

STRANSKY

Then I take it that only you, I and this
Stemple know about this message.

TRIEBIG

That's right, sir.

Pause. Stransky indicates two packed bags on the floor.

STRANSKY

You know, of course, that I'm leaving
for Paris?

TRIEBIG

Of course, sir.

STRANSKY

(evenly)

I could arrange to have you sent for. Or
would you have some objection to
continuing on as my adjutant in Paris?

For a moment, Triebig merely gasps.

TRIEBIG

(stammering)

You don't know how grateful I would be
to you for that.

STRANSKY

(after a moment)

If I sent you out on a patrol --
just four men -- two machine-gunners --
If, in the dark, you saw half a dozen
men in Russian uniforms advancing on
you, could anyone blame you if you opened
fire?

Triebig blinks. Stransky's voice changes. It rings like steel.

STRANSKY

Get that creature Steiner off my neck and
I guarantee that you will survive this
war. He must not come back even if you
have to kill him with your bare hands.

Triebig stands stunned, incapable of speech.

STRANSKY

I know from reliable sources that the
men in this bridgehead have been written
off. Everyone south of Perekop will suffer
the same fate as the sixth Army at
Stalingrad. Do you want to be here then?

TRIEBIG

(a hoarse whisper)

No.

STRANSKY

within five days after I reach Paris,
you'll have your orders to join me.
You know my connections. What do you
say, Triebig?

TRIEBIG

(stares up at Stransky's
flushed face, swallows
hard)

I -- don't know.

STRANSKY

You have the choice. You can rot here in
a grave, or guzzle champagne in France.
Which do you prefer?

Pause.

TRIEBIG

May I know one thing?

STRANSKY

What is that?

Their eyes lock.

TRIEBIG

Why is it so important to you? If you
are leaving here in a few hours, it
shouldn't matter to you what happens to
Steiner.

Stransky steps over to the window to stare out into the darkness.
Finally:

STRANSKY

(in measured tones)

What happens to Steiner is more important
to me than whether we win or lose the
war.

(turns)

But you will not understand that.
It's my personal affair, Triebig. Are
you going through with it or not?

The CAMERA MOVES UP to a CLOSE SHOT of Triebig's face as he stands,
indecisive.

190 CLOSE SHOT-KRUGER'S FACE

The CAMERA PULLS BACK to SHOW that he is looking at the outstretched figure of Kern who is covered by a blanket up to his chin. The SCENE is an open field. It is quite dark. Schnurrbart comes RUNNING IN.

KRUGER

Do you honestly think we can slip through?

SCHNURRBART

Well, we'd have a better chance if we didn't have to --

(Looks at the sleeping figure of Kern, lowers his voice)

-- lug him along.

KRUGER

What else can we do? Too bad about Kern. That's all we needed.

Suddenly the SCENE DARKENS. The men look up.

191 MOON - THEIR POV

It is covered by thick clouds.

192 MED. SHOT - SCHNURRBART AND KRUGER

SCHNURRBART

That's the end of the moon for tonight. That's lucky anyhow.

Suddenly Kern turns on his side and lets out a terrible cry.

Kruger and Schnurrbart start. The scream continues to issue out of Kern like an endless coil of sound unwinding and unwinding from his throat.

SCHNURRBART

Kern! -- Kern! -- for God's sake --!

But the screaming continues.

193 FULL SHOT

Steiner, Anselm come RUNNING IN. Steiner kneels at Kern's side.

SCHNURRBART

(anxiously)

He'll have the Russians on our necks --

The screaming continues.

ANSELM

(hysterically)

Shoot him! Shoot him! Or it's the end of us!

Steiner turns such a look of scorn upon Anselm that he subsides immediately, shame-faced.

STEINER

(holding flashlight close to Kern's face)

Be quiet now -- You don't have to be afraid -- we're all with You.

The screaming, which has been dwindling, stops. Steiner bends to listen to his heart.

KRUGER

If we only had a medic with us.

He ought to have a shot or morphine.

STEINER

(dully)

He's dead. silence a moment.

ANSELM

Why be hypocrites about it? It's better for Kern and it's better for us. We couldn't get through the lines carrying him.

STEINER

(enigmatically)

Yes, he was good enough to die in time.

ANSELM

What do we do now, bury him?

STEINER

We haven't got the time. Let the Russians do it.

SCHNURRBART

At least we're going to have some sort of service, aren't we?

STEINER

I see. You believe in God?

SCHNURRBART

At any rate, I believe we are dependent on Someone who decides our fate.

STEINER

I believe in God, too, but I think He's a sadist.

Pause. The men are silent.

STEINER

All right. For the sake of Schnurrbart who believes in God, and so that it shouldn't be brought up against us at the Peace Table, we'll have a service.

(grimly)

Gather around.

They do. Steiner looks down at Kern.

STEINER

If Kern had died at home, a few dozen, maybe even a hundred people would be standing around his grave in their best dark clothes. And they would say, "So young, it is always the best who go first" -- A few weeks later they would have forgotten him. Let us not forget him. And let's not feel too sorry for him. At least now, he's rid of his guilt. Cover him up -- and let's go.

Steiner STRIDES OFF. The men stand a moment, then follow him OFF.

DISSOLVE TO:

194 EXT. SLOPING FIELD - NIGHT - FULL SHOT

AS SEEN FROM a trench. The CAMERA MOVES UP to a MED. SHOT of Triebig and four MEN in the trench.

Two machine guns have been set up. We SEE Triebig stealing a furtive look at his watch. Then he looks out over the field, his eyes trying to pierce the darkness. The CAMERA FOLLOWS his gaze, MOVES SLOWLY DOWN the field. In the b.g. we begin to perceive a huddled mass. The CAMERA MOVES CLOSER and we SEE Steiner and his men, lying flat on the ground. Steiner is looking at his watch. Then he looks toward Schnurrbart who raises a flare gun, FIRES TWO quick FLARES.

195 MED. SHOT - TRIEBIG AND THE FOUR MEN

their FACES VISIBLE in the LIGHT of the FLARES. Triebig's expression is tense. He turns to the men who are manning the machine guns.

TRIEBIG

Look sharp -- we may be getting visitors.

The LIGHT from the FLARES dies away. A brief interval and the THIRD FLARE goes up. In its light, we SEE Steiner and his men running for the trench.

TRIEBIG

Russians! Fire!

The two MACHINE GUNS OPEN FIRE. The SCREAMS of men mix with the RATTLE of guns. We SEE three men drop. Then the LIGHT is gone. All is darkness again.

TRIEBIG

(peering into the darkness)

Steady now -- they may be coming on again.

Moment's silence, then:

STEINER'S VOICE

(shouting)

Sergeant Steiner here, don't shoot!

Triebig's face goes white. Now, figures are SEEN running again, for the trench out of the darkness, their arms upraised.

STEINER

It's US -- Sergeant Steiner! Don't shoot!

For a moment Triebig stands paralyzed, his face contorted.

Then, when Steiner is almost upon him, Triebig raises his tommy gun, points it at Steiner's chest.

ONE OF TRIEBIG'S MEN

(frantically)

Don't Lieutenant -- it's one of our men!

Triebig, unheeding, is about to press the trigger when the man hits his arm. Triebig's GUN FIRES harmlessly into the sky. Steiner and another figure jump into the trench.

196 MED. SHOT - TRIEBIG

slumped against the rear wall of the trench. He is staring wildly at Steiner who is bent over double, trying to catch his breath. His companion is also breathing heavily.

We SEE it is Kruger. The man who had deflected Triebig's aim addresses him.

MAN

You see, Lieutenant, I was right. It's our men.

Triebig, still staring at Steiner, can't answer. Now Steiner is standing erect. He fixes a steely glance on Triebig.

STEINER

Why did you fire?

(savagely)

You got our message!

Triebig finally finds his voice.

TRIEBIG
Uh--uh--what message?

KRUGER
(with nervous anger)
We said we were coming through in Russian uniforms -- and where and when --

TRIEBIG
(not looking at anyone)
I don't know anything about any --
(his voice trails off)

KRUGER
Schnurrbart sent it. He --
(looks around)
Where's Schnurrbart?

A silence falls as the men turn to look through the darkness at the field. Finally --

STEINER
(voice low but tight)
Is Anselm there too?

KRUGER
(barely audible)
He must be.
(pause, puzzled)
I don't get it. How could they help seeing it was us?

Steiner turns to look at Triebig. Then he turns back to his men.

STEINER
(voice still low)
Bring them in.

KRUGER
(stupidly)
Who?

STEINER
Who do you think? Schnurrbart and Anselm.

KRUGER
But they must be dead.

STEINER
I know they're dead. Bring them in.
(to Triebig's men)
Give them a hand.

Triebig's men look to him for approval. Triebig barely nods his head, so they scramble up the trench with Kruger and DISAPPEAR INTO the darkness.

197 MED. SHOT - TRIEBIG AND STEINER

as Steiner turns to face the terrified Lieutenant. Triebig waits for Steiner to speak but the Sergeant doesn't say a word. He just looks at Triebig's ashen face. For a few brief moments, Triebig tries to stand up under Steiner's unrelenting stare but he cannot -- and breaks.

TRIEBIG

(hysterically)

It wasn't me -- I begged him -- ! But he insisted --

Steiner's face shows no surprise.

TRIEBIG

He could have me shot, Captain Stransky!

(his hysteria grows)

I said to him -- what does it matter to you what happens to Steiner --

I begged him -- I --

He is practically shouting now. The men can be HEARD RUNNING back from the field. Steiner slaps Triebig hard, across the cheek, silencing him. His head is down as the men APPEAR carrying two bodies. with the help of the other men they lower the bodies into the trench. Not a word is said. Finally the silence is broken by Kruger.

KRUGER

They're finished all right, both of them.

STEINER

(after a moment)

Take them back to Battalion. The least we can do is bury them decently.

(as the men are slow to comply)

Hurry up, it'll be light soon.

198 CLOSE SHOT - TRIEBIG

as the men set about picking up the bodies, he looks anxiously at Steiner.

199 CLOSE SHOT - STEINER

His eyes are fastened upon the two bodies. He doesn't look at Triebig.

200 FULL SHOT - THE GROUP

as they start down the trench with the two bodies. Triebig and Steiner are in the rear. As Triebig starts to follow, Steiner steps quickly to his side.

201 CLOSE SHOT-STEINER AND TRIEBIG

STEINER
(a fierce whisper)
Stay here!

TRIEBIG
But --

STEINER
(his gun in Triebig's
ribs)
Stay here!
Triebig freezes.

202 LONG SHOT - THE GROUP

From Steiner's and Triebig's ANGLE, the group DISAPPEARS into the darkness.

203 MED. SHOT - STEINER AND TRIEBIG

Triebig turns terrified eyes on Steiner who is looking in the direction of the departing men. Then he turns to Triebig.

STEINER
(pointing to top trench)
Climb up.

TRIEBIG
Why?

STEINER
Climb up!

TRIEBIG
(quavering)
You're not going to shoot me--?

STEINER
I promise you I am not going to shoot
you. Unless, of course, you don't get up
there at once.

Triebig casts an anxious, appealing look at Steiner who waves to the top of the trench with his gun. Triebig raises himself to the top, sits on the edge.

STEINER
Stand up!

Triebig stands up slowly, then turns around.

TRIEBIG
Steiner, I --

STEINER

Turn around!
 (as Triebig hesitates)
 Turn around, or I shoot!

Triebig turns. He is now a figure in the darkness. Steiner reaches into his belt, takes something out -- SHOOTs OFF a FLARE. The figure of Triebig is BRIGHTLY ILLUMINATED.

TRIEBIG

(screaming)
 Steiner -- !

But his scream is lost in the RAT - TAT - TAT of bullets from the Russian side. Triebig's both hands reach into the air. He reels, falls heavily back into the trench. For a moment, Steiner looks down at the dark shape, the LIGHT of the FLARE gone. Then he turns, walks quickly in the direction the men have taken.

DISSOLVE TO:

204 EXT. KRIMSKAYA STREET HOUSE - DAY - LONG SHOT

A SENTRY stands guard outside. Steiner, dressed now in a rather makeshift German uniform, walks INTO the SCENE, exchanges a few words with the Sentry, ENTERS the house.

205 INT. ROOM OF HOUSE - BRANDT AND KIESEL

are facing the door expectantly. It opens and Steiner COMES IN. Brandt greets him with an outstretched arm.

BRANDT

Well, well, Steiner--you're a wonder!
 (pumps his hand vigorously)
 How you ever got through with your platoon--
 !

STEINER

(wryly)
 Another man and me, Colonel. That's my platoon.

KIESEL

I imagine you have a long report to make, Sergeant. You'd better have a cigarette first.

He reaches for his cigarette case.

BRANDT

I don't have to hear the report to know there's an Iron Cross in it for you, Steiner.
 (quickly)
 Now, don't tell me what I can do with it.

The PHONE RINGS. Brandt picks up the receiver as Kiesel lights Steiner's cigarette.

206 MED. SHOT - KIESEL AND STEINER

BRANDT'S VOICE

Yes, yes, Captain Stransky.

Steiner stiffens. This is not lost on Kiesel, who snaps his lighter shut.

207 MED. SHOT - BRANDT ON PHONE

Steiner and Kiesel in b.g.

BRANDT

(coldly)

I'm sorry, Captain Kiesel and I will be needing my staff car almost immediately. It's only a mile and a half to the air strip. You can walk it in twenty minutes -- Good-bye, Captain.

(dryly)

I hope things aren't too rough in Paris.

(hangs up)

I could let the bastard have the car, but to hell with him. Let him walk.

(to Steiner)

Well, I'm anxious to hear your story. It must be astounding.

STEINER

May I make a request, Colonel?

BRANDT

Of course.

STEINER

Could I have a few hours sleep before I make the report?

BRANDT

Why certainly -- even though I'm consumed with curiosity.

KIESEL

There's an empty room in the next house. Why don't you nap there -- and report when you're rested.

STEINER

Thank you very much. I'll do that.

He GOES. The two officers are silent for a moment.

BRANDT

Stransky in Paris...! What I cannot understand is why this creature is the one to escape. Stransky of all people.

(walks to window and looks out)

Do you know what I'm looking at? Steiner running down the road like a madman.

KIESEL

Which road?

BRANDT

The road to the air strip.

Kiesel runs toward the door.

BRANDT

(sharply)

Where are you going?

KIESEL

I've got to stop Steiner... he'll kill Stransky.

BRANDT

You will stay here.

Kiesel continues to stand, indecisive, at the door.

Brandt's tone becomes harder.

BRANDT

I have given you an order.

KIESEL

Colonel -- you are making me guilty as an accomplice.

BRANDT

(straightening up)

I am on the point of leading my regiment into a cul-de-sac from which it has not the slightest chance of escaping.

(ironically)

If the whole fuhrer business were to start tomorrow, what would I most likely do? I'd close my eyes again - I'd click my heels, I'd march, I'd heel! Germany will lose this war but Germany will survive.

(puts bottle on the table)

-- My last bottle of wine. Captain, will you join me in drinking to the success of Steiner's mission -- whatever it is?

He starts to pour.

208 EXT. AIR STRIP - LONG SHOT

There are several small planes on the field. Several MEN are lounging about. One small plane stands on the edge of a runway. Its MOTORS are WARMING UP. The CAMERA SWINGS AWAY from the strip towards the road leading to the air strip. A tiny FIGURE is DISCERNIBLE in the distance.

209 MED. SHOT - STRANSKY

A bag in each hand, is walking toward the strip. The SOUND OF RUNNING FOOTSTEPS behind him causes him to turn.

A figure is running towards him. His jaw drops as he sees it is Steiner. Steiner is now close to him. He has a Luger in his hand. The bags fall from Stransky's hands as he sees the Luger.

STRANSKY

Steiner--!

STEINER

Clasp your hands behind the back of your head.

As Stransky hesitates, Steiner makes a menacing move with the Luger. Stransky puts his hands behind his head.

STRANSKY

Are you aware of what you are doing?
You're dealing with an officer --

STEINER

I think that for the time being, we can forget about the differences in our rank -- and class.

STRANSKY

Steiner -- you'll hang for this --

STEINER

I doubt it.

STRANSKY

I don't know what you're planning, but you'll never get away with it. This is a heavily traveled road.

STEINER

In that case, I'll be quick. For a long time, Captain Stransky, I haven't had anything to live for -- for a long time -- but the Russians couldn't do it, disease couldn't kill me?

(MORE)

STEINER (CONT'D)

poor Lieutenant Triebig couldn't do it.
Not even you could manage it.

(moves closer to Stransky)

And not wanting to live, yet not willing
to die, do you know what that kind of a
conflict does to a man?

(laughs in Stransky's
face)

Now, in a crazy sort of way I am grateful
to you, Captain Stransky.

Thanks to you, I am willing to die.

I could shoot you and then the Army would
hang me. But, no, that isn't good enough.

STRANSKY

(his dignity going, his
voice rising)

Are you out of your mind? Steiner,
if you'll just think for a moment --

STEINER

I did think, Captain Stransky.

I thought and thought -- and did nothing!

STRANSKY

(whimpering now)

Steiner -- Steiner -- you're mad --
you're absolutely mad!

Steiner steps close to Stransky. With his free hand, he pulls a
grenade from his belt.

STEINER

Stand close to me, Captain.

STRANSKY

(backing away)

No -- No -- You can't --

STEINER

(pulls Stransky to him)

This will do for the both of us
-- the final fraternization --

STRANSKY

(a whimper so low it can
scarcely be heard)

Steiner -- please -- Steiner --

Steiner pulls the pin from the grenade, holds it between himself
and Stransky.

STEINER

What's the count before it goes off?

STRANSKY

(his lips move, but no
sound comes out)

-- Steiner --

STEINER

Count with me, Captain -- One --
Two --

The CAMERA STARTS to MOVE UP and AWAY from Steiner and Stransky.

STEINER'S VOICE

-- Three -- Four -- Five -- Six --

The CAMERA is at TREE TOP LEVEL now -- Suddenly there is a SHATTERING REPORT. The branches of the tree tremble.

The CAMERA STAYS on the tree for a moment. The leaves stop trembling. There is a vast silence now. The CAMERA starts to PULL AWAY AGAIN. As it DOES:

FADE OUT:

THE END