TRUE Magazine
July, 1950

the SPY the Nazis missed

In the last two years of World War II, "George Wood" brought the Allies no fewer than 2,600 secret documents from Hitler's Foreign Office, some of them of the highest importance. Eisenhower called him one of the most valuable agents we had during the entire war. Here's how he did it

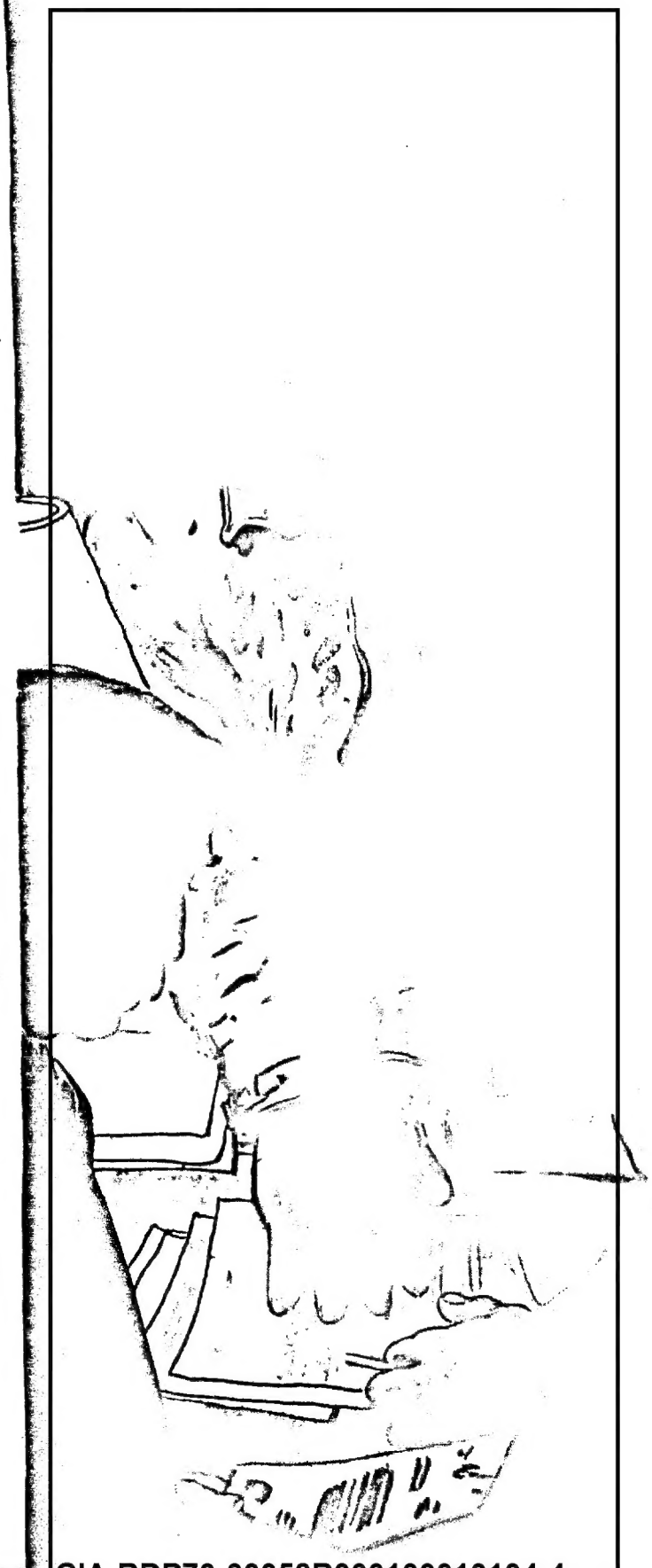
by Edward P. Morgan

 Illustrated by John Clymer

When I first heard the story about George Wood, I wouldn't believe it. I was having lunch in one of those Paris sidewalk restaurants with a friend of mine, an American who had been an intelligence officer in Europe during the war.

"This guy was a German diplomat," he explained. "Wood was not his real name, of course. That was the security alias General Bill Donovan's espionage boys gave him after he made his first contact with the Office of Strategic Services in Switzerland. He had a job in the *Auswaertige Amt*—the Foreign Office—in Berlin. A real inside job.

"All Wood did," he went on, "was to establish a secret line of communication between himself in Berlin and the OSS in Bern, right in the middle of the war. Via this pipeline he managed to syphon out of the Foreign Office files the contents of no less than 2,600



He spread the papers before the OSS men. There were 164 separate, highly-secret items.

classified documents, some of them secrets of the highest importance. He even made five trips from Berlin to Bern, himself, between 1943 and 1945, through air raids and all, carrying the stuff with him."

Some fantastic things had happened, it's true, but this business about Wood was incredible; I knew there had been a few defections in high places in Der Fuehrer's sinister hierarchy, but almost invariably the miscreants had been found out in time and swiftly purged. "Your man Wood couldn't have been an individual of any great shakes," I insisted, "or he would have been rooted out before he ever got started."

My friend took my needling patiently.

"Actually," he went on, "I never laid eyes on this fellow myself. But 'Operation George Wood' became famous among the high brass of Allied intelligence staffs. General Eisenhower is not a man given to the careless use of superlatives, but Ike himself once remarked that Wood was one of the most valuable agents we had during the entire war."

I said I suppose the Nazis got him, in the end.

"They never did. He's alive today, and all in one piece. And, as a matter of fact, he's among the unemployed. Wood never got a dime for his services. Wouldn't take it. Nobody that I know of even offered him a medal, and anyhow I suspect he would have refused that too.

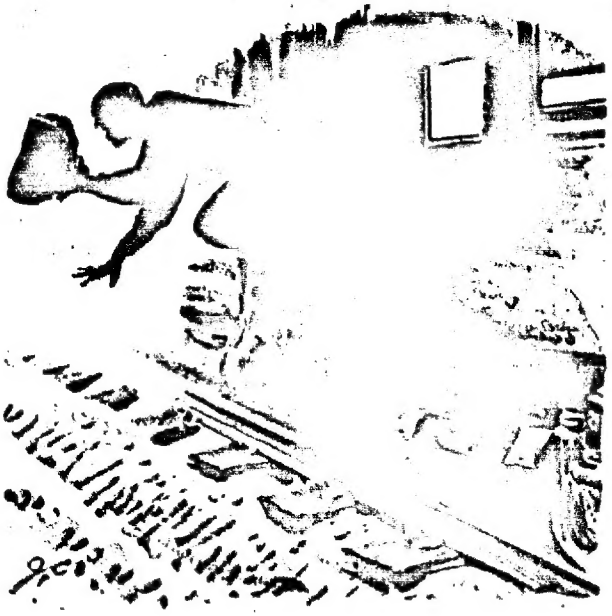
"He's an odd character. Sort of idealistic. A combination of guts and shrewdness and a lot of luck, I guess. What happened to Wood couldn't happen more than once in a million times, but there was that once. He thumbed his nose at the Nazis from the beginning, and got away with it. But gossip got round, and it's no accident that he has been unable to find any kind of spot with the new German government at Bonn. There are a lot of ex-Nazis holding down official jobs, but there's no room for Wood."

"Hasn't Washington done something about him?" I inquired.

"Well," my friend said, squinting his eyes, "I don't doubt that somebody tried. But these spy jobs are tricky business, you know. They seldom pay off with honors."

As we left the restaurant, I asked him if he had Wood's address or knew how I could reach him.

"No," he said, "but there's a man right here in Paris who will know, fellow named Mayer, Gerald M. Mayer. He's in



business here. Did intelligence and psychological warfare work in Switzerland during the war. Go see him."

I found Mayer easily enough, in a handsome office near the Champs-Elysées. "I was in on the launching of Operation George Wood," he said. "I happened to be the first American to contact him. It was in Bern, back in the summer of 1943. A stranger fellow I never met, but he was absolutely priceless. You never could put your finger precisely on what made him tick. You never knew when he was going to turn up, or what he was going to turn up with, but he always did and he always had the goods."

"Adventurers can come in handy sometimes," I suggested.

Mayer shook his head. "He didn't run risks for the excitement of it. Something more fundamental than that was driving him. Nobody ever looked less like a knight in shining armor, but there was something consecrated about him. I know that sounds corny but I can't explain it any other way."

He lighted his pipe and then went on. "See here, I can give you a lot of the facts but if you're really interested in his story, you must see Wood himself."

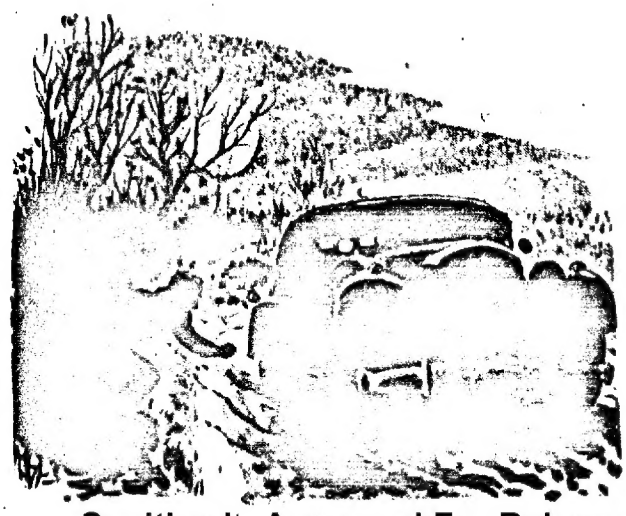
I reminded him that I'd hoped he could help me find Wood.

"Well, I'm ashamed to say that I've lost track of him. He went to the States for a while after the war. Somehow things didn't pan out for him there and he came back to Europe. We've got a mutual friend in Zurich, though—a doctor. Let me give you his name."

In Zurich, the doctor had an address for him all right, in Frankfurt-on-Main, Germany. "He's having a bit of a hard time," the doctor said, "and you may find him reluctant to talk. Personally, I hope he does. It may make the Germans realize what they owe to the few of their countrymen who were brave enough to stand up against Hitler."

Three years had gone by since my last visit to Frankfurt and the transformation of the city astounded me. The hideous piles of rubble had disappeared from the streets. Handsome new store fronts burgeoned oddly from the stony skeletons of buildings. Behind the plate glass windows, expensive cameras, alligator handbags, bolts of silk, carved bedroom sets, all beckoned with the opulent allure of Fifth Avenue. Intersections were choked with traffic—not jeeps and six-by-sixes of the occupation force but passenger cars, many of them American makes with German plates. Some local citizens must certainly be in the dough, I thought. Pockets bowed with prosper[illegible]

[Continued on page 98]



THE SPY THE NAZIS MISSED

[Continued from page 22]

and bananas bumped through the sidewalk crowds. In the heavy-carpeted luxury of the Frankfurter Hof (in the wing that had been restored), you could dine on caviar, poached salmon and Rhine wine, for a consideration.

Other embellishments had been added. Atmospheric embellishments, if you like. Everybody and his brother, it seemed, were writing their memoirs of the Hitler era. As fast as they could stock them, the kiosks were selling periodicals featuring the fateful saga of the German battleship Bismarck; a butler's reminiscences of life with Der Fuehrer; the latest recipe for German recovery from the pen of Herr Dr. Schacht, the Nazi finance wizard acquitted as a major war criminal at Nuremberg; and the like. A newspaper reported that a crusty old pedagogue in Wurttemberg-Baden had asked his class to write a theme on the causes of Germany's defeat and then answered the question himself with the explanation that traitors betrayed the country before the secret "V" weapons could be fully utilized. A man named Wonnerow leaped up in righteous wrath in the provincial legislature of Schleswig-Holstein to denounce the July 20, 1944, attempt on Hitler's life, and demand that those still alive among the *schweinhund* conspirators be hanged. And a cabinet minister at Bonn was eloquently justifying Germany's role in World War II.

The man who answered the door at the address the doctor had given me wore a rumpled pair of trousers tied around the middle with a length of rubber stripped from an old inner tube. He had a sallow face but a soft voice and a polite manner. "I am sorry," he was saying, "but Herr Wood does not stay here. He lives in the country; he only comes here to get his mail. If you would care to leave a message, *bitte*?"

I scrawled a long note on the back of an envelope and gave it to the man, explaining that I had come from Paris especially to meet Wood and that it was urgent that he get the message as soon as possible. I went back to my hotel expecting a long wait, but to my surprise there was an answer from Wood the next morning. He would be at home after lunch that day, if I cared to drive out.

The hamlet in which Wood lived lay snuggled in the Taunus Hills, a half hour's drive from Frankfurt, and not far from the massive Kronberg castle where a U.S. army colonel and a WAC captain had, a few years back, perpetrated the sensational theft of a fortune in royal jewels from a Hohenzollern princess. The house he had specified was a small, brown, two-story frame structure with a steep roof and a tiny yard. Cards bearing the names of three separate families were nailed to the gate. Wood was sitting on the front steps and when I got out of the car he came directly to meet me.

"So you've come," he said, giving me a strong handshake.

"But you hadn't been expecting me," I said, puzzled, "not before you got my note?"

His bronzed face broke into a broad grin. "The doctor from Zurich wrote that you were on the way."

I regarded him closely. He was a short, wiry man with a bald head rimmed with fine blond hair. His grey-green eyes were steady, intense, almost cold, but his look was softened by friendly little wrinkles fanning out from under his eyebrows. He wore an old soft shirt, open at the throat, revealing a navy blue crew-neck sweater. I would have guessed his age at not more than 40 although I knew already, from Mayer, that he was nearly 50. There was nothing of the stiff-necked German diplomat about him. He reminded me at first of a retired prizefighter running a massage parlor. And yet easy access to him was blocked by a manner at once intense and distant, mysterious.

"Come inside," he said, nimbly leading the way up a narrow staircase to a small but cheery bedroom. Two enormous feather comforters seemed about to ascend like linen-covered balloons from the twin beds. "This is home," he said, "and this is Gerda." His wife, a handsome brunette, stepped in from a little railed balcony, beyond which in the warm afternoon sun I could see the valley of the Main rolling away from the Taunus.

"You will be more comfortable out here on the balcony," she said. "One room gets a little stuffy when you live in it all the time. And the sunshine is lovely today; I'll leave you to enjoy it."

Wood and I chatted superficially at first about the world in general. The Russians' behavior depressed and alarmed him and he was convinced they were much farther along with atomic bomb development than even recent events indicated. He recalled that on a trip to Zurich in 1948, he learned that Swiss seismographs had registered an enormous explosion, supposedly an atomic blast in eastern Europe. This was more than a year before it was officially revealed that the Soviet Union had the bomb.

As for Germany? "This is my country," he said. "There is great energy here and there can be much hope if decent Germans are given more of a chance."

"Perhaps they have to take the chance," I said, "like you did."

He looked away quickly. "What I did is of no interest. It is of importance only to me. There were others who did as much or more than I did. Schwarz, the man with whom you left the note in Frankfurt, worked in the resistance too. He went to a concentration camp. I did not."

I tried to draw him out but he retreated into silence. "Listen," I said, finally, "I know more already about what you did than perhaps you think." Then, groping for his confidence, I began to relate the story of his first meeting with Mayer, as Mayer had told it to me. Wood made no move to interrupt but I had the uncomfortable feeling, when I began, of talking more to myself than to him.

Mayer, who spent his boyhood in Europe and spoke German fluently, had been sent to Bern from Washington in 1942 with the elastic title of "special assistant" to the American minister. He was given two assignments. The first was to run a psychological warfare branch of the Office of War Information, cooking up such projects as leaflet raids on the German lines and advising on propaganda broadcasts beamed to the Third Reich. In his other role, Mayer was a lieutenant of Allen W. Dulles, chief of the Office of Strategic Services' operations in Switzerland.

On the morning of August 23, 1943, Mayer was riffling through a stack of official mail in his office in the legation annex in Bern when his secretary came in and said that a certain Dr. O. was outside asking to see him. Bern at that time, like Lisbon, Madrid and the rest of the neutral capitals, was a nest of agents, counter-agents, and operatives as phony as rubber checks, and one of Mayer's jobs was to try to sort them out. Technically, in the eyes of the neutral Swiss, both he and Dulles were spies themselves, breaking the law twenty-four hours a day. Tacitly, the Swiss turned their backs on a good deal of sleuthing by both sides. But one indiscreet move and the offender was pitched out on the ear which he had been applying to more delicate operations. The legation had already given these OSS men the routine warning that if such an emergency arose they would not be eligible for any claim to diplomatic immunity. Mayer had never heard of any Dr. O. but he asked the secretary to show him in. "Tell him I can spare only a couple of minutes," he added.

He looked up a few seconds later to see materializing in the doorway the epitome of a Prussian general, in mufti. Tall and spare, with a smooth-shaven face and close-cropped grey hair, Dr. O. held himself as straight as a sword. He trained his ice-blue eyes on Mayer like a pair of pistols. The American half-expected him to whip out a swastika armband and give the Nazi salute.

Ceremoniously the doctor introduced himself as a friend of a banker from Basel whom Mayer remembered having met casually some months before. "It is he who has sent me to you," he said, with an accent as thick as pumpernickel.

Then he launched into an involved explanation of his own identity. He was a German but he had long since broken with the Hitler regime and now carried citizenship papers of a certain Latin nation. "For a long time," he said, "I have been cautiously seeking a reliable contact with the Allies. I have faith in their ultimate triumph, and I should like to do what I can to hasten the victory. My motives are not entirely unselfish. I am anxious to renew the peaceful pursuits to which my prewar life was devoted." (Like so many other Europeans bearing the same title, he was not a medic at all but a man of commercial affairs with a doctor's degree in something or other.)

Mayer sized his visitor up as a pompous ringer, at best a blacklisted businessman who had cultivated the bleeding-heart approach to the Allied cause in an effort to get some funds unblocked. Switzerland swarmed with such types. Mayer was anxious to get rid of him and asked him, quite bluntly, to come to the point.

With that the doctor drew a long envelope from his inside coat pocket. He extracted three typewritten sheets from the envelope, unfolded them slowly and spread them out before Mayer on his desk. They were all in German and headed *"Geheime Reich Sache"*—secret state document—addressed to Foreign Minister Ribbentrop, and signed von Papen, Abetz and Neurath, respectively. They were summarized copies of cables sent by these three ambassadors to their chief in Berlin.

From Paris, Abetz was relaying certain plans from the French Vichyites which might permit German agents to penetrate American and British lines in North Africa, via Algiers. Neurath was reporting on Czech morale. Despite the barbaric liquidation of the town of Lidice as a reprisal for the murder of Reinhardt Heidrich, the Nazi "hangman" of Prague, more than a year before, the Germans feared Czech resistance had not been crushed; the capital was restive again. Von Papen, from his strategic bailiwick in Turkey, was alerting Berlin on British attempts to sneak operatives into the Balkans via Istanbul.

If authentic, this information was obviously red hot. Trying to keep his voice casual, Mayer asked Dr. O. where he had got it.

The doctor fixed him with a steady gaze. "There is more from the same source," he replied in a low voice. "I am merely acting as an emissary for a friend who works in the Auswaertige Amt. This man is here now in Bern. He arrived yesterday as a special diplomatic courier. That was, how does one say it, the front which he used for travel. Actually he came with the avowed intention of effecting a liaison with the Allies. I have known him for years. I can assure you he is one hundred per cent anti-Nazi and is determined to work actively against Hitler, at his own peril. He wants to meet you, personally. As proof of his good will he sends you this data. He has much more information he wishes to give you."

Mayer asked Dr. O. to wait in the anteroom, and excused himself. He bolted upstairs to Dulles' office. Quickly he told Dulles what had happened and showed him the documents. The prospect of establishing a contact in the heart of Berlin, finding, as it were, a key to the top drawer of Nazi secrets, was too preposterous. This must be a trap.

"There are three possibilities," Dulles said. "This could be an attempt to break our code. The Germans figure we'll bite, cipher this stuff and radio it to Washington. They monitor everything, including Swiss commercial wireless channels. They'll be listening for these dispatches, in hope that a foreknowledge of the contents will give them the clue they need to decipher it. Or perhaps our friend is an *agent provocateur*. He plants the information with us and then tips off the Swiss police that we are spying. His rendezvous with us is proof and we are kicked out of the country. Still, there is just the glimmer of a chance that this man is on the square."

Mayer said he was keen to follow the glimmer, despite the odds. There was something about the doctor that had impressed him. Despite his overt [illegible] genuine. So Dulles agreed that they should pursue the game at least until they could see the courier and size him up firsthand.

Mayer hurried down and told Dr. O. that he was ready to meet the courier that evening. "Make it my house at midnight," Mayer found himself saying, as if he were arranging a rendezvous with Dr. Fu Manchu. As it happened, the courier was to dine that evening with a colleague at the German legation. He and Dr. O. could meet afterwards and go to Mayer's apartment together. Dulles was to join them, incognito, at 12:30. Mayer lived in an apartment house on the River Aare in the Kirchenfeld district, the middle of the diplomatic colony. He drew the doctor a map so he could find his way without having to inquire and arouse unnecessary suspicion. Then the doctor left.

At that stage of the war, Switzerland was more than ever an isolated island in a belligerent sea. It was completely surrounded by Nazi territory. In some respects the legation in Bern was more out of touch with home than troops in the field were. There was no APO address, and Mayer himself had gone as long as seven months without a letter from his wife.

The only regular contact the legation had with Washington was via the Swiss radio. The only way to get out to another neutral or an Allied spot—short of attempting to run the perilous gauntlet of the underground—was by air. There was no secure schedule for a diplomatic pouch. Through a phenomenal gentleman of Moorish extraction nicknamed "The Spider" it was possible occasionally to pass something out to Lisbon, but this was a sporadic and unreliable route. And as it became progressively harder to move around and gather information, the need became more urgent. There were unceasing queries from Washington. With Mussolini toppled from his Roman pedestal, the Italian situation was what the experts loved to call "fluid"—and the south Italy landings (which, naturally for security reasons, Bern knew nothing about in advance) were in the final planning stage. The tempo of bomb strikes on the Reich—RAF by night, USAAF by day—was just quickening to a sustained rhythm of destruction. An opportunity to get even a keyhole view of what was going on in Berlin could hardly have materialized at a more fortuitous time.

Mayer reflected on these matters as the day dragged on, and he found it difficult to address his mind to problems of psychological warfare. He dined alone that evening and then went home to the orderly loneliness of his bachelor apartment, on the floor above the suite of an assistant U.S. military attaché. He left the door of his flat ajar so his visitors would not have to ring the bell. Then he mixed himself a highball and sat down with a magazine to wait.

Punctually at midnight the door opened softly. Dr. O. entered the room, followed by a short, stocky man in a black leather jacket. He was hatless and his bald head glistened in the soft light of the room. With the doctor towering beside them, Mayer and the stranger stood there face to face, eyeing each other. There was no introduction. They did not shake hands. For a moment they just stood there, in silence.

Then Mayer invited him to take off his jacket. Before the man did so he reached swiftly into his pocket. Mayer was unarmed and for a dizzy instant he wondered if he could rouse the Army officer below him if his visitor pulled a gun. But the German brought out a large, brown envelope, its flap open. There was the stamp of a swastika on the dark red wax which had sealed it.

"Dr. O. has told you that I had more material," he said, in Berlin German, without preliminaries. "You will find here, if I remember rightly, one hundred eighty-six separate items of information." And he laid the bundle on a low table in front of a divan.

Mayer examined the packet. It contained reports of German troop morale on the Russian front, an inventory of damage inflicted by underground saboteurs in France, memos of visits by the Japanese ambassador and other miscellaneous officials to

A True Book-Length Feature

THE SPY THE NAZIS MISSED

Ribbentrop. Some of the papers were verbatim copies of original documents; some contained paraphrases of cables or dispatches in tight, meticulous German script; some were filled with hastily scrawled shorthand notes. Each fragment of information would fit neatly somewhere in the vast, never-finished mosaic of strategic and tactical intelligence vital to the prosecution of the war.

As Mayer was scanning this material, Dulles came in, and was introduced as a Mr. Douglas, Mayer's assistant. Mayer poured highballs for the four of them. But nobody relaxed. The suspicion which had invaded the room seemed to emit waves of tension from the shadows, charging their postures and their conversation with rigid formality: the two Germans endeavoring with a kind of desperate dignity to dissolve their identity as enemies; the two Americans, aware, incredulous, challenging. They talked in German.

"You gentlemen will ask whether these dispatches are authentic and if so how I was able to get them," the courier said. "They came from material which crossed my own desk in the Foreign Office."

He explained that he worked as an assistant to a Dr. Karl Ritter, who was the Auswaertige Amt liaison officer with all the German armed services. Ritter dealt not only with cables and documents arriving by pouch from German missions abroad but with war plans, secrets of submarine warfare, moves of the army, including military government in occupied territories, and the activities of Goering's Luftwaffe.

"My job," the courier went on, "is to sift this information, to arrange its priority of importance before it reaches Ritter's desk for action."

Mayer and Dulles exchanged glances. Ritter was well known to them. As German ambassador in Rio de Janeiro he had once been one of the most active and dangerous principals in the huge Nazi spy network in Latin America. He was a cold, shrewd and ruthless operator. His own defection or the spectacle of his having anybody but the most loyal Nazi fanatic as an aide seemed equally unthinkable.

"How long have you had this position?" Mayer asked.

"Three years," came the crisp reply. "I tried long ago to get out of Germany on a mission such as this but one has to be patient. However, I have been in the foreign service nearly twenty years, long before the Nazis ever came to power, and I have acquired a certain experience." He squared his shoulders as he said this and there was a defiant ring of pride in his voice.

The Americans already knew that a tenuous German underground existed, a ghostlike web consisting of certain Army officers and civilians, divided over the crucial issue of whether they should assassinate Hitler or kidnap him and form an anti-Nazi government to sue for peace. Among the plotters were members of the old German nobility, labor leaders and politicians. This extraordinary stranger might be one of them, but to probe the possibility now would risk betrayal of information.

"We have no way of knowing," Dulles put in, "that you are not an *agent provocateur*."

"You would be naive," the courier confessed, "if you did not suspect that. I cannot prove at this moment that I am not. If I were, however, I would hardly have been so extravagant as to bring you the contents of so many documents. Two or three would have sufficed."

He paused and cleared his throat. Dr. O. leaned forward in his chair. "If my friend will permit me," he said, "I should like to repeat a phrase he used when he came to my hotel yesterday. He said 'it is not enough to clench one's fist and hide it in one's pocket. The fist must be used to strike.' We drank a toast to that."

Dulles and Mayer, in spite of themselves, were becoming genuinely impressed. Still. . . . Damn it, even if he were on the level, there had to be a catch. Perhaps a bargain for the release of some captured German on the grounds that he was part of the conspiracy. At least the asking price for the courier's services would be something more than carfare.

Dr. O. smiled as if he had been able to read their minds. "I must confess," he said, "that our first approach was to the British legation. I am better acquainted there. But when they asked what would be involved in a financial way and I told them 'nothing,' they refused to take me seriously. They laughed and said it was a joke and not a very good one."

"What are the conditions?" Mayer asked.

The courier turned first to him and then to Dulles, "Gentlemen," he said slowly, "I hate the Nazis. To me they are the enemy. I have a similar feeling about the Bolsheviks. They both menace the world. But we are in the middle of a war and this is no time to bargain. Try to believe that I am a patriotic German with a human conscience and that there are others. All we ask as payment for our services is help and encouragement and support after the war."

"We can hardly divine now what will happen after the war," Dulles said. "It must be won first." And he reached over and knocked on the table in front of him with his knuckles.

It was past 3 a.m. The two Germans could safely stay no longer. The courier had to catch the next train back to Berlin. He explained that his second trip might have to be to Sweden. They would want time, of course, to check on his story, but then if they desired him to get in touch with the legation in Stockholm he would need an alias for identification. Nobody remembered later just how the name George Wood was invented. Perhaps it came from Dulles' symbolic drumming of the table top. Anyway, Wood it was; somehow it sounded like a good omen. This time the men shook hands, all around, and George Wood and Dr. O. went quietly down the stairs.

I glanced across the balcony at Wood. He got up abruptly from his chair and started pacing up and down. "Yes," he said, "yes, that is the way it began." Now that the bottle of recollections had been uncorked, he seemed willing at last to let them flow.

"How did you manage to get to Bern in the first place?" I asked.

"From the first day I found myself in touch with Nazi secrets, I knew I would have to find a way, somehow, to get them out," he answered. "I tried, before Pearl Harbor, to reach certain Americans in Berlin through church sources, but this failed. One had to move like a snail. Months went by without my being able to do a thing. It became obvious that the only way to make a satisfactory contact would be on neutral territory. Switzerland seemed the best place. I knew the country. I had friends there, foremost among them Dr. O. It would be a short trip. But I would have to furnish a valid reason for an exit permit."

Wood decided to attempt the most innocent gesture first. Nazis not infrequently managed excursions to certain spots outside the Reich for a rest. He was not a party member; but a tired government official was entitled to a little relaxation too. He applied to his superiors for permission, explaining that he would like to take a brief vacation skiing in the Swiss Alps, or Italy, it didn't really matter. He was refused. Nearly a year elapsed before he dared make another approach. (It wouldn't do to get some party underling curious about his anxiety to travel.) This time he explained it had become necessary for him to divorce his second wife, who was Swiss, and he must go to Zurich to engage an attorney for proceedings. That could wait, he was told. When eventually he volunteered as a special diplomatic courier, he was informed there were others available.

Months later, a solution materialized in the form of Fraulein Maria, a strong, acutely perceptive young woman who was assistant chief of the courier section of the Foreign Office. Her father was a Prussian nobleman. One day Wood went to her and said quite openly, "I find I must go to Switzerland to check on certain business interests of some friends. Would it be possible for me to take the next special courier's assignment?"

"There is a pouch to be ready for Bern in about a week's time," she replied quickly, "and I think it can be arranged to have you carry it." That was the third week of August, 1943.

"My God!" I said, breaking into the narrative, "how could you bust right up to her like that? How could you know whom to trust?"

"One got so one could almost smell the difference between enemy and friend," he said. "One's instincts grew sharper under the Gestapo, the way a blind man is supposed to develop a sixth sense. I had known who Maria was for a long time. We would see each other in the corridors, in a restaurant, on a subway train. We had never conversed except perhaps about the weather but in some way I sensed a recognition and trust between us."

The exit visa came through and Wood made the trip to Switzerland without event. As a diplomat he was not searched; he had strapped his secrets to his leg, under his trousers. But in a way, Bern was more dangerous than Berlin. Dark, unholy realm that it was, he knew every side street in Berlin. He had not been in the Swiss capital for years. It seemed new and strange. He had to be careful not only of camouflaged Gestapo agents but of the Swiss secret police, constantly sniffing for the odors of espionage. His movements were inhibited. He should stay only two days in Bern, three at the most. He could not seclude himself in a back street hotel. He was obliged to stay in the Terminus on the Bahnhofplatz, where the Foreign Office ran an account, where a room had already been booked for him. And where, certainly, his movements would be watched, the people he spoke to checked, his phone calls recorded. It took hours before he was able to slip out to a public telephone, in one of those sidewalk booths that looks like a clothes closet with windows in it, and make the call to Dr. O. which led to the rendezvous in Mayer's flat.

"That was a painful interview," Wood recalled. For years he had disciplined himself never to waste talk. One unnecessary word dropped might spring a trap to catch somebody. But this was different. He had to convince the two Americans of his good faith or the whole gamble would be worthless. He had to identify himself completely. He gave them the name of his first wife and the date of her death. He told them the address of his son, whom he had left with friends in South Africa when he was repatriated to Berlin soon after the war started, and the name of his second wife, from Zurich, who had remained in Capetown.

Dulles and Mayer sat up till sunrise that morning poring over the data and sorting out the most urgent information. They decided to gamble and code this up for a wireless to Washington. They got this message off during the day, along with a lengthy dispatch to OSS headquarters reciting the details of personal history which Wood had given them, and asking for speedy checking.

Wood himself, meanwhile, was on the train on his way back to Berlin. The ordeal of the rendezvous was over now and he settled back comfortably in a corner seat of his compartment. Although he had had only snatches of sleep since setting out from the German capital more than four days before—he'd scarcely rumpled the sheets of his bed in the Terminus—he was not tired. He felt the same exhilarating sensation he remembered having when he made his first successful ski jump after long and careful practice. To be sure, the Americans had given him no guarantee of their cooperation (actually, the OSS in Washington was to reply within a week confirming the salient facts of his history but he was not to know of this for months). And the risks ahead were even greater. But he had made the first fearsome leap after waiting for such an interminable time.

Somehow all the reckless little deeds that he had done before this, the token gestures which had seemed so necessary but at the time so futile in themselves, fell into place now with a new and satisfactory significance. He had taken his stand, such as it was, from the first. There was the time in Madrid in 1934 when as an embassy secretary he had helped and encouraged a German businessman to renounce his citizenship as a protest against the ugly portent of the new regime in Berlin. He had also made it a point to attend the wedding of the daughter of a friend of his; the friend's wife was Jewish.

Once he had opined to an embassy stenographer that Mussolini was a pig, a view which the girl zealously reported to the *ortsgruppenleiter*, the German colony's party minion in Madrid. When the latter confronted him with the indiscretion, Wood readily admitted it. Apparently startled into admiration by his frankness, the *ortsgruppenleiter* appealed to him as a "man of strong character" to join the party. Wood replied that since he had not been a Nazi before Hitler rose to power, if he became one now it might be taken for an opportunist.

Again, Wood recalled the time his mother had suddenly moved away from her handsome flat in Lichterfelde to a dreary abode in the shabby northern sector of Berlin. Her apartment had overlooked an SS parade ground and she couldn't bear to watch the Elite Guard strut. The most passive kind of resistance, perhaps, but to him this silent defiance of an old lady had not been empty or lost.

It occurred to him now, as the train crawled furtively north with its crew alerted against air attacks, that even his own foolish insistence on stalking through the streets of Berlin with an umbrella and galoshes had a certain positive meaning. Nazis glared at him as he passed; no virile Aryan would ever be caught in the company of such decadent English trappings.

Wood closed his eyes and slipped off to sleep. When a shudder of the train roused him hours later he saw they were pulling into Berlin.

Even though it was late afternoon, he went straight to his office in the Wilhelmstrasse. It had to be back to business as usual if he was going to get on with his own most unusual business. He would have to be more careful than ever to protect himself now. He would have to buckle the armor of silence around him even more tightly and seem to lose himself in the duties at his desk. That was one of the most maddening things about the whole operation, to have to lock it all within himself and not be able to confide fully in anyone the details of his secret task. He had acquaintances and friends who, he knew, were resisting in their own way, but rarely did they dare invade one another's orbit to coagulate their conspiracies. Most of the time each remained a tiny separate cell, suspended in the dark fluid of danger and uncertainty.

While the bombings of Berlin had been getting sharper, the city was still quite whole and full of people. Yet as he crossed town this afternoon, Wood observed a spectral grayness about it he hadn't noticed before.

There was a message on his desk, marked urgent. "Report to the security officer at once," it said. Needles of apprehension stabbed at the back of his neck. Discovered already?

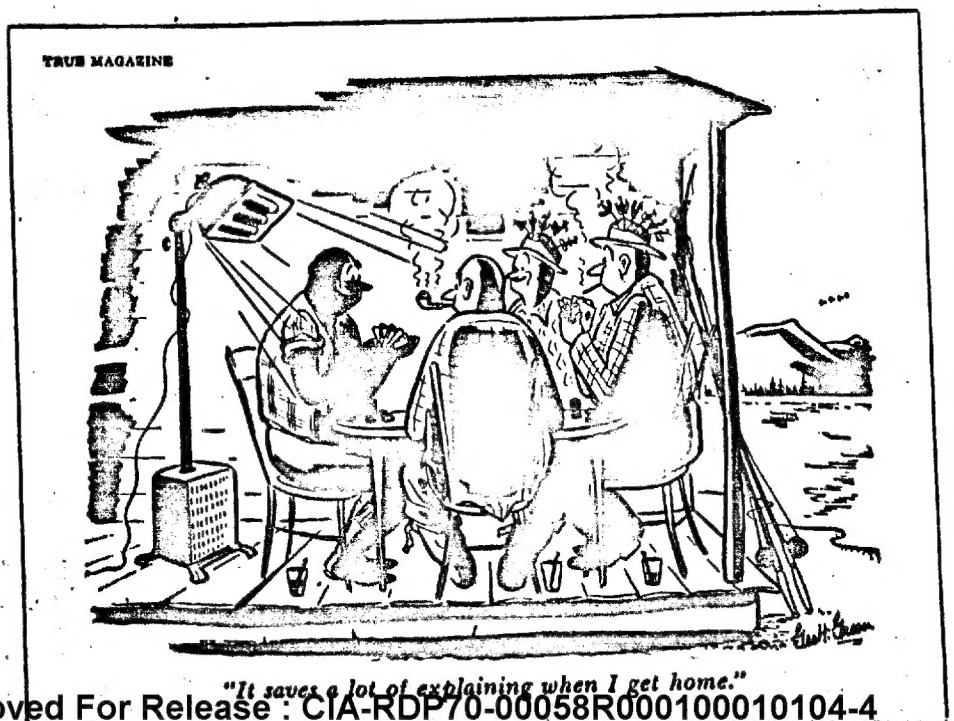
The security officer was a large pallid-faced man with deep-set eyes which seemed always to smoulder with suspicion, a suspicion which he could drill into a victim with a single look. When Wood entered his office, he was sitting stiffly at his desk, holding a telegram between his fingers as delicately as if it had been a tea wafer.

"You have been to Bern on a courier's mission?" he asked. His voice was cavernous.

"Jawohl!"

"It has come to our attention that you were absent from the Terminus Hotel virtually the entire night of August 23-24."

"That is quite correct," Wood replied with a cold smile. "One needs a little relaxation at times. You know how often one drifts



"It saves a lot of explaining when I get home."

THE SPY THE NAZIS MISSED

around a strange city. A few drinks at a bar, a young woman. . . ."

"Most indiscreet," the official cut in, "and not necessarily true."

"I confess I thought afterwards I had been a little careless," Wood returned, calmly, "so I took precautions."

He extracted a slip of paper from his wallet and handed it across the desk. The security officer scanned it hastily. It was a certificate from a doctor's office in Bern stating that Wood had been given a prophylactic and a blood test on the morning of August 24.

"Very well," his inquisitor said grudgingly. "But take care how you waste your time in the future."

Hastening back to his office, Wood encountered Fraulein Maria in a corridor. They greeted each other. She had known about his summons. "They always make it a point to impress a new courier with their vigilance," she said. He breathed more easily. Nevertheless he knew he could have had a most uncomfortable time. He congratulated himself for having had the presence of mind to get that certificate a few hours after leaving Mayer's apartment; he would certainly remember to do that again. All at once he felt the need of a drink and as soon as he could dispose of the papers on his desk he hurried out to Kottler's restaurant and ordered a "two-story" cognac before his dinner.

Kottler's was in Motzstrasse near Kurfurstendamm, the Fifth Avenue of Berlin, where Wood had a comfortable bachelor apartment. It was one of his favorite spots. He knew the musician there, a zither player. They had a little understanding. Each time Wood appeared the musician would strike up an old German battle song and Wood and his companions would boldly sing Schiller's words to it, which began:

"Auf der Welt die Freiheit Verschwunden Ist,
"Man sieht nur noch Herren und Knechte."
("Freedom has vanished from the world,
"One sees only masters and slaves.")

The musician played it now and smiled. It fed Wood's courage more strongly than the brandy, steadying him against the dizzy lurch of a universe at war. As he ate, the air raid sirens screamed. It was a heavy raid tonight but he refused to budge.

For several weeks, Wood worked furiously at the Foreign Office. His secret cord strung so vulnerably to Bern was not a telephone line or a hidden radio set that he could plug in at random. He dared not press his plot. Time after time he had to watch vital but perishable information rustle through his office which he was helpless to divert to the Allies. An order for reinforcements to Kesselring in Italy, for instance, would be known to the Fifth Army front before he could arrange another journey and get the news into the hands of Dulles and Mayer.

He was fortunate, especially in these long frustrating intervals, to be able to draw on the companionship of Gerda, a cool, compassionate dark-haired woman who happened to be a trained nurse. They had met one day while he was buried in a routine job in the visa section, long before he was transferred to Dr. Ritter's department. His chief, a glowering ex-furniture mover with the improbable name of Martin Luther, had just dressed him down for not displaying the prescribed unctuous courtesy to Storm Troopers when they called on business. Gerda appeared at his desk to apply for an exit permit for an important Berlin surgeon to visit Stockholm. She had made the application form out all wrong and Wood patiently showed her how to do it correctly.

"And how must I sign it?" she asked.

He had assumed she was the doctor's wife and suggested she sign it that way.

"No, no," she replied, "I am the doctor's assistant. I meant, shall I write 'Heil Hitler!' at the bottom?"

Wood looked straight at her and said evenly, "Madame, you may write anything you like."

From then on they were friends. Soon she was inviting him around to the doctor's clinic where certain other people had formed the habit of gathering to discuss, however cautiously, matters not limited to bodily ailments. Awkward questions

to whisper antagonisms to the millenium of terror.

At the clinic Wood became acquainted with a lively young medic from Strasbourg named Jung who had been unable to get back to France when the war began. As an Alsatian, the Germans insisted he was German, not French. They were about to force him into service as a doctor on the eastern front when Gerda's chief succeeded in getting him assigned to the clinic staff as an "indispensable" assistant. "If you ever need a doctor," Jung once told Wood with his eyes twinkling, "come to see me. Sometimes an overworked government employe needs an excuse for being sick. A doctor can prescribe for that, too."

Wood was an insatiable chess player and usually he convened with a group of friends every Wednesday night for a game. Now he had to be more careful to account for his time so when he had a spare hour he made it a point, for appearance's sake, to play chess with some guard at the Foreign Office.

Despite his painstaking precautions, there was the constant danger of some unexpected event threatening to upset his whole plans. One night one of his schoolday chums, heir of a wealthy family, and now a lieutenant in the Army, burst into Wood's flat. He was in civilian clothes.

"Where is your uniform?" George asked him in alarm.

"I left it in the barracks," the officer replied. "I have deserted." Then he broke down and wept and implored Wood to escape with him to Switzerland. "Look," he continued pathetically, pulling a gold watch from his pocket, "this will bring enough money to get us there."

"You fool!" Wood exploded. "Don't you realize that guards and dogs patrol every foot of the frontier? It would be suicide."

He hustled the distraught lieutenant back to his quarters before he was missed, trying not to speculate on what would have happened if the police had pulled one of their frequent surprise house checks for passes and identity cards while they were in the apartment.

He spent long hours at the office. Surreptitiously while he worked he would dash off a shorthand memo about a certain document and stuff it in his pocket. Occasionally it would be his responsibility to destroy top secrets; some of these he kept until he could transcribe their contents. He never could risk leaving such evidence at home or secluded in his desk. He had to carry it with him; often he would be going about with dynamite on the papers in his pockets.

By late October he had learned of certain developments in Spain and Ireland which he thought made it imperative for him to attempt another journey. He was in luck. Another pouch was being readied and it would be for Bern again, not Stockholm. Maria put him down for it.

Wood went to the clinic one afternoon and told Dr. Jung he was feeling ragged, but not ragged enough to excuse himself from work. Jung gave him an injection and next morning he had a fine high fever, sufficient for sick leave. Gerda smuggled him some coffee from the hospital supplies and at home he set to work assembling his notes, drinking cup after cup of coffee to keep him upright.

It is impossible to explain precisely why the Nazis did not put their finger on George Wood and rub him out. Providence, fortune, whatever you want to call the thread of destiny that weaves the jerky pattern of men's lives, provided part of the answer. A bomb hits one house and spares another. A mortar shell bursts in the middle of a combat patrol and tears away the bodies of all but one soldier, who is left untouched. The greater the danger of death, sometimes, the more indestructible some men seem to become. Afterwards, of course, they slip in the bathtub or on a banana peel and suffer a broken back, and that's fate too.

Yet in the man-made horror house of Berlin, Wood could never depend on the dice. Up to a point he had to play the Nazis' game. In his mind he burned them in the acid of hate and contempt but from day to day he worked with them, drank with them, beat them at chess. They were, in fact, a little in awe of him. He had impressed the party man in Madrid, the Gruppenleiter, with his "strength of character." They had a certain respect for his outspoken attitude—so long as he did not speak out too loud. Perhaps their calloused consciences drew some kind of balm from their toleration of this nonconformist; it could rebut the enemy lies, could it not, that the Nazis stifled the last breath of opposition?

And after all he was a meticulous and indefatigable worker.

There was no question about that. Department heads outbid each other for his services. When Rudolf Leitner, former chargé d'affaires of the German embassy in Washington, was named minister to South Africa in the late 30s, he had insisted on taking Wood to Capetown with him. He had to go to a great deal of trouble to get him because the post called for a party member. And now, of course, Dr. Ritter was most satisfied with him.

As Wood and I talked through that sunny afternoon, the times and the places of the story emerged, but the earlier mold of emotions and instincts and secret reasons that lay as a larger pattern behind the events remained elusive. I remembered Mayer's remark that Wood was a man you couldn't quite catalogue. "You must have had a constant struggle with yourself," I blurted impulsively. "Apart from the danger, you must have been bedeviled all the time by the realization that a lot of people would brand you not only a traitor but a thief."

He drove a fist into his open palm with an angry thump. "How many times did I ask myself whether it wouldn't be better to break openly with the Nazis and try to escape?" he said. "I stayed on at first, thinking Hitler would never last. When I realized my mistake, it was too late. It became clear that the only way to get rid of the terror would be to lose the war. One must quicken the Nazis' defeat. I remember a friend once told me that 'high treason against the Hitler Reich has become a moral duty.' To me the traitors were the Nazis. I resisted repeated pressure to force me to join the party. They hobbled my career with secondary assignments in reprisal. In spite of them, I worked my way inside. Still I was troubled. I knew a former member of the Reichstag, a Catholic prelate. I went to see him. I asked him what to do. 'God may have put you in that spot for a purpose,' he told me."

Wood's father was a saddlemaker who taught him the virtues of industriousness and efficiency so well that he became an official of the German State Railways in Berlin before the age of 25. George thought the diplomatic service offered broader horizons and went to night school and then to the university where he passed his Foreign Office exams. He was determined, however, not to become a functionary fitting snugly into some bureaucratic pigeonhole.

"My father had a fine sense of justice," Wood said, "and he used to tell me that the slavish obeisance which so many Germans gave to 'authority' was dangerous. The things I rebelled against as a boy may not seem so important now. I hated the hats and the high celluloid collars that were the hallmarks of conformity and obedience in the days of Kaiser Wilhelm II. I joined an outing club where one didn't have to wear them. It was called the Wandervogel. Roaming bird, the name means. We took long hikes and communed with nature and wondered deeply about the world. We loved Germany and were proud to be Germans but we felt, inarticulately perhaps, that it was just as important to be members of the human race."

The Nazis, he said, and a lot of other Germans who were fired with aggressive ambitions, could have learned much from his mother. "She once read me a verse from St. Matthew which I never forgot, 'For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?' " But probably no Nazi would understand that.

Impulsively, Wood strode over to the entrance of the balcony, caught a ball of paper between his heels, jumped up and arced the wad neatly into a wastebasket in a corner of the bedroom.

"I've always loved sports," he said, "boxing, fencing, track, everything. I like to keep in trim. I can still run four hundred meters in less than 3 minutes. My muscles are strong. Here, feel this." He rolled up his sleeve and flexed a bulging bicep. It was solid as an oak branch.

"I won a lot of trophies," he continued, "but I never took one of them. I do things for the sake of doing them. That is enough. I don't like trophies or medals or uniforms."

And yet, I reflected to myself, it was an invisible badge of courage which had helped him survive. His courage was not the flamboyant, storm-the-ramparts brand. The quality and strength of bravery cannot be weighed in bone or muscle; its measurements are hidden inside the human frame. Wood was a man a little smaller than his fellows and his battle against this discrepancy had toughened his spirit too. In World War I, he was the youngest and smallest of a burly company of sappers. He could find no boots to fit him properly and as a result he contracted such a grave infection on one foot that the medics prepared to amputate it. He refused to let them and finally recovered.

Wood never seemed to be rattled. He was always one jump ahead of the enemy. There were Nazis who were shrewd with the craftiness of men gone mad, but the mass of them were dimwits stunted by their own brutality. Wood knew, or sensed, when to adopt the cold-eyed, steel-jawed attitude of official superiority and when it was smartest to look meek and stupid.

The Gestapo had a neat trick of swooping down on an apartment house at night, throwing the master electric switch to plunge the building into darkness, and then banging on doors shouting "Open up! Police inspection!" As soon as locks were unbolted the current would be turned back on. Then, too late, a wayward tenant would realize that in his surprise and fear he had forgotten to conceal a telltale note, a clipping or, more likely, tune the radio away from the forbidden band of the BBC. Wood never forgot, and he always kept a flashlight at hand.

On occasion, however, he was capable of extravagant rashness.

"Call the bouncer—I really must go home."

THE SPY THE NAZIS MISSED

The night before he left Berlin on his second trip to Bern, he was almost killed. He hated air raid shelters. Inside them he felt trapped. As a ministry official he was able to get a pass permitting him to move about during alerts. This night he had gone to the clinic to tell Gerda good-by. Then the sirens raised their hellish wail and the thunder of a heavy RAF attack shook the city as it lay starkly under the white light of the magnesium flares. The all-clear had not yet sounded when Wood walked down Unter den Linden.

He was just turning into Wilhelmstrasse when a warden ordered him to halt. "Get off the street," he said curtly. Wood produced his pass. As the warden examined it under his torch, a delayed-action bomb blew up directly in front of them, not fifty yards away, knocking them both violently to the ground. After some seconds they staggered to their feet, stunned, drenched with particles of debris, but unhurt. Wood politely expressed his gratitude to the warden for having stopped him, gave him one of the few Havana cigars he happened to have left from his previous trip to Switzerland, and walked on past the crater to the Foreign Office to finish some work.

In his preparations for the journey, Wood had followed the same careful routine that he had worked out in August, adding one ingenious variation. He didn't like the idea of strapping his own secrets to his leg. It was both dangerous and undignified. He knew that special courier pouches were not weighed. They were usually no more than a single large envelope with documents sealed inside. The morning after the raid, when Maria handed him the envelope, he took it back to his office and placed it in a wide shallow drawer in his desk. Using the drawer as a shield he slipped the packet into a larger official envelope. Then he quickly drew from his pocket the secret material he had gathered for his mission and enclosed that with the legation packet in the larger envelope. Now he sealed it, in the same way the other had been sealed, with wax and the official steel stamp bearing the swastika. Instead of a trunk with a false bottom, he had a pouch with a false top.

He left Berlin from the Anhalter Bahnhof in the early evening. Ordinarily the train trip to Bern took eighteen hours but now air raids sometimes made it a nightmare that dragged on for three days. As soon as he could, he drew the attendant of his car aside and, handing him a handsome tip, requested to be among the first warned if there was an alert. He was terrified of raids, he explained apologetically, and the attendant's courtesy would reassure him. Actually, the warning would give him time to dispose of his incriminating enclosures if danger seemed critical.

It must have been about four in the morning when the porter rapped sharply on the door of his compartment. "Blue alert, sir," he said and hurried on. That meant an attack was imminent. The train had stopped. Wood had kept his clothes on; now he grabbed the pouch and his small handbag and darted out the vestibule door down to the graveled fairway edging the tracks. They were in a wooded section, somewhere, he guessed, between Frankfurt and Karlsruhe. A remnant chip of moon made the rails shine. Other passengers began scrambling out of the coaches. A baby cried. A man's voice cursed harshly; he couldn't find his suitcase in the darkness. Wood slipped down into a ditch behind the train, beside the right-of-way.

From far off he heard a rising hum. It blossomed into a roar of engines and abruptly the raider was upon the train, a maverick Mosquito bomber, swooping low and lacing tracer machinegun bullets at the locomotive. There was no answering ack-ack. (With rare exceptions, only the *Sonderzug*, Hitler's express train, was equipped with anti-aircraft guns.) The plane was gone. Suddenly around a curve of the track ahead there was a flash and the great enveloping thud of an explosion. The plane had planted a bomb on a trestle. It was not a square hit but daylight revealed a twisted, impassable track. It was late the next afternoon before another train chuffed up to the other side of the trestle and the stranded passengers could make their way to it through the gulch to resume their journey. There were no more attacks but the spy had now become hopelessly behind schedule.

At Basel, both German and Swiss customs had to be cleared in the Badischer Bahnhof in the German enclave of the city. Despite his well-schooled courage, Wood invariably felt the cold hands of fear clutching his bowels as he crossed a frontier. His heart pounded, sometimes so hard he thought it would make his coat flutter. He felt the same flat panic today. A voice kept repeating inside him as he went through the barriers, "You have something here which if found could hang you." One customs man seemed to be regarding him oddly. Did he suspect? Outwardly, Wood was steady, his gaze as cold as a mackerel's. He kept the pouch in plain sight. The official glared at him, nodded and motioned him on. He was clear.

He hurried into the men's room of the station and locked himself in a toilet. He tore off the outer envelope of the pouch and tucked his own documents in his coat. He burned the extra envelope and flushed the ashes down the bowl. Then he took a taxi across the Rhine to the Schweizer Bundes Bahnhof where he caught the train to Bern.

Wood delivered the legation envelope first and then telephoned Dr. O. that he had arrived. Over a beer two hours later the doctor informed him that the Americans had been anxiously awaiting his return and wanted to see him that night. Mayer would pick him up on the Kirchenfeld bridge over the Aare at 11:30 p.m. in his car, a British Triumph.

The signal arranged for identification in the blackout was the pair of blue running lights on the Triumph's fenders. When he reached the middle of the bridge, Mayer switched them on. Wood darted out of a shadow along the railing and hopped in.

"It's mighty good to see that you've made it again," Mayer said. "We are going to Dulles' house but we must go separately." He drove to a footpath along the river bank where he let Wood out after directing him how to reach the house through the garden. Then he drove off and returned to the house from another direction. A few minutes later in the seclusion of Dulles' study, Wood was displaying the fruits of his second mission.

The German legation in Dublin had been operating a secret radio station, menacing Allied shipping. After sharp State Department protests the Irish government silenced it by taking custody of a vital piece of the equipment. Now Wood produced a cable showing the minister was attempting to smuggle in a duplicate part.

In a new move to combat French resistance, Ambassador Abetz had forwarded a plan invented by Laval calling for the arrest and possible execution of relatives of soldiers in the DeGaulle forces.

There was a cable from the German embassy in Madrid stating, in effect, that "shipments of oranges will continue to arrive on schedule." Wood had discovered that Franco was cunningly breaking a pledge to the Allies by smuggling tungsten—for tempering steel—into Germany in orange crates.

The most alarming item was a message from the German embassy in Buenos Aires which had arrived in Berlin just before Wood left. It reported the impending departure of a large convoy from a U. S. Atlantic port.

The German and the two Americans were not to know until long afterwards the effect of the intelligence they had dealt with behind drawn blinds in Bern that night, but it was little short of profound. Among other things, a convoy's schedule was altered in time to miss a submarine rendezvous, and an Anglo-American petroleum embargo was slapped on Spain as a reprisal for the tungsten smuggling.

Wood explained that to fill in the blank spaces between his visits he would occasionally try to get coded messages out via third parties who would deliver them as innocent-looking family greetings to a brother-in-law of Dr. O. in Zurich. He showed Mayer the key to an intricate cipher he had devised one evening while listening to Furtwaengler conduct a symphony in Berlin. "Sometimes I can think best when I am listening to music," he said.

He had also figured out how they could signal him to confirm receipt of information by this third-party circuit. "Through contacts of his own," he said, "Dr. O. can arrange to have food parcels sent me, sardines, butter, coffee and the like. Have these mailed at regular intervals. But only include the coffee when you have received something; then I will know my message got through."

Before Wood departed he made two more requests: he wanted a [illegible] and a gun. "Photographing documents will save a lot of time," he

explained. "I can send you or bring you the microfilm."

Mayer managed to get him the camera next day but he objected that a gun would only compound his jeopardy if he were caught. "Never mind." Wood laughed as they shook hands in farewell, "I will get one later in Germany. I won't shoot the Wehrmacht with it. I will use it only in an emergency—on myself."

As winter came, only a few of Dr. O.'s food packages had to be dispatched without the confirming consignment of coffee. Wood discovered an old colleague who had worked with him in the service in Spain and was now a regular courier. There were some people in the government whose sentiments were anti-Nazi but who were afraid to do anything; others dared participate in nothing more than vicarious opposition, a sort of keeping the right hand from knowing what the left hand was doing, technique. Even they had their usefulness. The courier was willing to carry an occasional note of greeting to the Zurich "brother-in-law." Assistance also came from an eccentric in the Foreign Office named Werner, who after repeated difficulties with the Nazis managed through his seniority to get a semi-retirement status. He moved as far out of sight as possible, to a small mountain *Hütte* in the Bavarian Alps near the Swiss border above Lake Constance. Werner found a way to pass an occasional message along, taking care never to inquire about contents or destination. He was to provide a port in the storm for Wood, later on.

On one occasion, Wood succeeded in spiriting out a roll of microfilm in a watch case. It had become next to impossible for civilians to get things like watches repaired in Germany so there was nothing particularly bizarre in Wood's request to his courier friend to leave the watch with the in-law in Zurich to be fixed.

The secret circuit from Berlin to Bern became heavily laden with important news. Washington and London were burning to get German war plant production figures in order to gauge the effectiveness of the air war. Wood was able, not once but several times, to transmit to Bern condensations of the latest surveys on industry, together with soundings on public morale under the bombings.

It was Wood who found out, through a dispatch from von Papen, in Ankara, that the butler in the household of Sir Hughie Knatchbull-Hugessen, the British ambassador to Turkey, was a Nazi spy. Unlike Wood, this man—Cicero Diello—made a fortune in espionage. Wood intercepted a memo in which the Foreign Office laid down sterner occupation measures for the Balkans. A warning from him made it possible for the Allies to ferret out agents that the Germans had tried to hide aboard a train repatriating wounded prisoners of war.

One day Bern got an urgent message from Washington ordering a concentration on intelligence about the Japanese. It was impossible to guess when Wood might show up again and it was folly to try to send him a coded message. Mayer hit upon an idea. He simply had a contact in Zurich mail Wood an open postal card. "Dear Friend," it read, "perhaps you remember my little son. His birthday is coming soon and I wanted to get him some of those clever Japanese toys with which the shops here used to be full, but I can find none. I wonder if there might be some left in Berlin?"

Wood himself arrived in Bern shortly after that, bringing extensive data on the Japanese, including the battle order of the Imperial fleet which, it turned out, the U. S. Navy was able to use in confirming that it had correctly broken the Jap code.

Long before the spring of 1944, evidence began reaching Bern from various sources in Germany making it appear that a real conspiracy to do away with Hitler was building up in the shadowy pockets of the German underground. Wood was not directly connected with the plot but a few of his friends were privy to some of the preparations and one day in the spring of 1944, Wood came into possession of information giving a detailed analysis of the [illegible] on the Eastern front, which he was able to relay to Bern. This enlivened but did not decide the debate among Allied strategists on the possibilities and the wisdom of dropping a block buster on the Fuehrer's field stronghold.

Then, finally, on July 20, 1944, a one-armed colonel named von Stauffenberg planted a time bomb, concealed in a brief case, under the map table in a flimsy wooden barracks where Hitler was holding a staff conference at his East Prussia HQ. The bomb exploded but Hitler miraculously escaped with minor wounds. The most important anti-Nazi conspiracy of the war was crushed.

Wood had not been heard from, directly or indirectly, since early June, and as the frenzied arrests and "trials" followed in the wake of the tragic failure of the bomb plot, Mayer became convinced that Wood had been caught and killed. They had no news of him actually until late September, when they received second-hand word via a traveler that he was alive and well in Berlin.

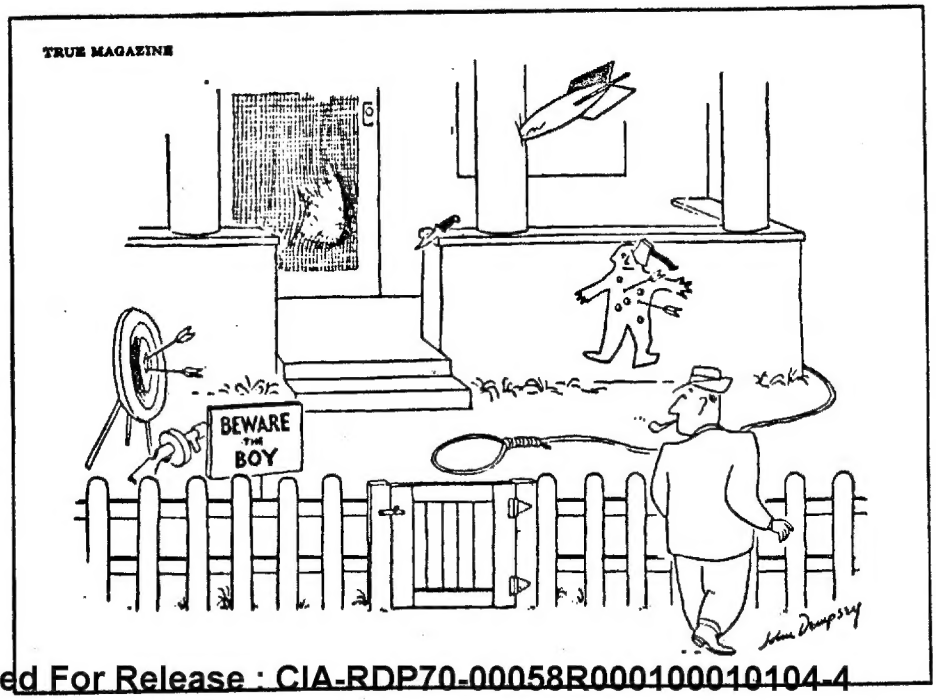
He might have been among the missing if it had not been for the womanly intuition of Gerda. Some weeks before the attempt, she took a message for him, from a friend, requesting that he attend a meeting with some army officers on a certain night in Potsdam. She felt uncomfortable about it and she failed to give Wood the message until the meeting was over. Subsequently every man at the meeting was executed, except one—an informer. The group had been a splinter of the revolt.

After the aborted coup, Wood volunteered to help one of the principal conspirators, Dr. Karl Goerdeler, former mayor of Leipzig, escape to Switzerland. But Goerdeler had vanished and the only one of Wood's contacts who would know where he was hiding, a Berlin businessman named Bauer, had already been arrested and thrown into a concentration camp. Goerdeler was later caught in the village of Konradswalde, on the western border of East Prussia, tortured and executed.

Wood himself was investigated after July 20 but with an ineptitude which reflected plainly the edges of decay that were beginning to eat into the hard flesh of the regime.

Wood's inquisitor was a Nazi block leader whose regular job was driving an omnibus. He called at the Foreign Office twice when Wood wasn't there. The second time he left a note asking Wood to be at home at 8 p.m. and await him.

The bus driver was officious and blustering at first. He demanded to know what Wood did with his spare time. Wood explained that as a government official he had few hours to himself but that occasionally he played chess—the Auswaertige Amt guards could verify that. Then, adopting a confidential tone, he spoke of the importance of his position. "You can readily see," he concluded, "that with such urgent matters to attend to I have no time for nonsense."



THE SPY THE NAZIS MISSED

This logic impressed the bus driver. Still he was puzzled. In view of the somewhat extraordinary fact that Wood had never become a party member, would he kindly make a declaration of his political convictions?

"My political convictions?" Wood was pensive. "*Ich bekenne mich positiv zum Endsieg*—I confess to myself the positive belief in final victory."

It did not occur to this poor lackey that they might not be thinking of the same victory, and he seized upon the remark with gusto. "*Wunderbar!*" he explained. "An admirable sentiment. Allow me to write it down at once. I must tell my superiors."

Nevertheless, as the purges spread, burning through the autumn like a grass fire to consume hundreds of victims, Wood realized that he too might be trapped at any moment. He was forced to interrupt his activities and halt his sporadic traffic via other messengers. Even the smallest gamble was too big to risk.

At the same time, the tide of Allied triumph was swelling. Secretly Wood could hope that the end would soon be in sight. Paris was liberated and then Brussels. Aachen became the first German city to fall and then the Siegfried Line was pierced. The Russians swept inexorably westward. The force of air attacks on Berlin increased steadily, transforming the city into a crumbling inferno where people had to burrow underground like moles to work, and even to stay alive.

In the midst of this tumult, a tiny corps of civilians early in 1945 hatched a plan to stage an uprising in Berlin and seize the capital with the support, they hoped, of a force of American paratroopers. The core of the resistance would lie in the Reichsbanner, an association of World War I veterans who were largely of Social Democratic—liberal—sympathies and who had been supporters of the Weimar republic. Wood was in on the idea from the start and became convinced that there was a good chance it could be made to succeed.

Wood canvassed his friends to select men to act as guides and scouts for the invaders. A census of bicycles and motorbikes was taken. It was decided that the Americans could best land around the Wannsee and Schlachtensee, two lakes lying between Potsdam and Berlin. From there they could infiltrate into the heart of the city. A GHQ was even designated for them, in an office at 28 Unter den Linden, near the site of the U. S. Embassy, the Adlon hotel and the Brandenburg Gate. The office belonged to Bauer, a businessman who was Wood's friend.

Wood now succeeded in getting out to Bern again. He discussed the operation with Dulles and Mayer, who relayed the idea to higher headquarters. Apart from its strictly military ramifications, the plan involved a thinly disguised attempt to get the capital into western hands before the Red Army engulfed it. Many Allied strategists believed it should be tried. Subsequent developments were to make the operation look more alluring than foolhardy but top level decisions reserved Berlin for GI Ivan instead of GI Joe.

Despite the danger that he might not be able to come back out again, Wood elected to return to Berlin. If the decision against the paratroop operation were unexpectedly reversed, he wanted to be on hand. He was going to arrange to have Gerda evacuated from the city if he could. And there was still vital intelligence work to be done, particularly in trying to keep track of key Nazis and determine if possible what resistance they might be proposing from the so-called redoubt of Bavaria and other potential hideaways.

If the city he had left was a tumult, what he came back to was a cataclysm of disorder. Twelve hundred American planes bombed Berlin one morning in plain daylight. In March the RAF hammered the city with gigantic raids for seventeen consecutive nights. The western armies vaulted the Rhine at Remagen and the Russians drove to Stettin. The land siege of the capital itself was about to begin.

Gerda was unable to leave the clinic. "This is my post," she told him. "Somehow or other I'll manage. We shan't be separated for long."

For seemingly interminable days it looked as if Wood would not be able to leave Berlin any way except on foot as a refugee, which would be futile. Courier service was disrupted. Exit visas were not being issued: too many messengers had landed in neutral spots and neglected to return home. Railway travel from Berlin was out of the question. There was no scheduled traffic. What trains were moving were filled with troops, and officials of the highest priority. Ironically, it was Dr. Ritter himself, Wood's boss, who unexpectedly furnished him clearance and means for the trip.

Ritter, a bachelor whose somewhat dashing manner belied his 60 years, had a friend, a concert singer, whom he was anxious to get out of the city to relative safety. He asked Wood to drive her and her 2-year-old daughter to Bavaria in Ritter's personal diplomatic car, a huge, black Mercedes. George asked one of the staff doctors at the clinic to do his best to look after Gerda, and in return agreed to take the doctor's wife, whose name was Dorchen, along in the Mercedes.

One momentous morning shortly before the first of April, Wood left Berlin with the two women and the child, for the wildest ride of his life. They had planned to depart right after an early breakfast but an air raid delayed them until nearly noon. The weather was gray and bitter cold and the roads were icy. George had not driven a car of any kind in years. The brakes did not hold and his rear vision was completely blocked by the enormous load of belongings which the singer had hysterically insisted on bringing along, and which somehow they had managed to pile into the back seat. This obliged all four of them to jam themselves together in front, so tightly that before George could shift gears the women had to hoist their knees to one side.

Their destination was a village called Ottobeyren, southeast of Stuttgart. Normally, over the autobahn past Leipzig, Nuremberg and Munich, the trip was a matter of a few hours. It took them nearly three days. They had to dodge on and off the autobahn to avoid troop convoys, or bypass bridges which sappers had blasted to cover the Wehrmacht's retreat. Soldiers and wandering civilians glared at them. They were delayed at improvised checkpoints where nervous sentries inspected their papers and waved them dubiously on.

Late the first evening the engine died and Wood could not revive it. After an hour they were able to flag down a charcoal-burning truck which took them in tow. Dazed with fatigue, choking from the truck's dense exhaust fumes, Wood stuck to the wheel all night while they were drawn jerkily southward. Next morning a mechanic found and repaired their trouble—a clogged carburetor. They ran out of gas five times and had to barter and scrounge for it at farmhouses and fuel dumps. The diplomatic plates only helped a little. They reached Ottobeyren, in a state of virtual collapse, late the third afternoon and found beds in a monastery.

Leaving the singer, her daughter and the Mercedes with the monks, George and Dorchen set out on foot next morning for the neighboring town of Memmingen, where they hoped to be able to catch a train for Weiler, about seventy kilometers south, just above the Lake of Constance. Werner, the eccentric ex-diplomat, had a cabin in the *Bayerischewald* back of Weiler, and Wood hoped to be able to deposit Dorchen there while he went on to Switzerland.

Though the night's rest had only partially refreshed them, it was a relief to be rid of the concert artist, who had screamed and wept through most of the journey from Berlin. The pair of them made good time over the snow-covered road. Dorchen was a facile, bouyant companion and she refused to let George carry her suitcase. He had a heavy knapsack, the standard equipment of German wartime travelers, strapped to his back over his leather coat. This time he carried no diplomatic pouch or secret envelope of his own; what data he had was filed in his head. In the pack, however, were concealed the gun which he had told Mayer he would finally get, and a small portable radio set. He carried the latter to intercept air raid alerts.

After being informed at the Memmingen station that a train was due "sometime this morning," they had just put down their luggage on the platform to wait when two SS non-coms accosted Wood.

"Show your papers," they commanded.

He produced his Foreign Office pass but the men were surly. "[illegible] growled. "These are probably forged. You are under arrest. You will come with

us to the Gestapo *Leitstelle* (local headquarters), both of you. With your baggage."

When Wood started to protest they shoved him roughly ahead of them. "*Aber schnell!*—But quickly!"

As they entered the Leitstelle, George leaned toward Dorchen. "Try to keep your suitcase behind you, so they won't notice it," he whispered.

There was a Gestapo captain on duty. Wood placed his knapsack on a chair directly in front of his desk. The captain glowered at Wood. "Why are you not in the Volkssturm?" he demanded. There was a sneer in his voice, betraying the professional's contempt for the pathetic "people's army" dragooned in a final effort to stave off collapse.

"I am a member of the Foreign Office on an official mission," Wood retorted hotly. "Here are my papers." He slapped them down on the desk.

The captain eyed them disdainfully. "You are a courier. Where is your diplomatic pouch?"

"I am going to Bern to pick up a pouch," Wood lied.

"And the woman?"

"She happens to be a relative of Dr. Ritter of the Auswaertige Amt whom I am escorting to Friedrichshaven." He was gambling that the substitution of identities would not be checked and that they could bluster their way to freedom.

Out of the corner of his eye he glimpsed one of the SS men staring first at Dorchen and then at the knapsack on the chair. Suddenly it seemed to Wood as if the gun and the radio were about to burst through the canvas. A sickening feeling of despair seized him and it occurred to him in a swift vivid summation of all the risks he'd run that this time the candle of his luck had burned out.

"All the same," he heard the captain saying, in a taunting tone, "you will have to wait until we get a signal through to Berlin to clear you."

A quick gorge of anger swelled in Wood's chest, stifling his panic. He sprang forward, thrusting his chin out to within a foot of the officer's face.

"What kind of an insult to Der Fuehrer's foreign service is this?" he shouted, pounding on the desk with his fist. "Subjecting an official emissary to an inquisition not worthy of a common criminal! It will take hours, perhaps days, to establish contact with Berlin. This is no affair of yours. I demand that we be released immediately!"

The outburst seemed to cow the captain.

"If you insist on checking with somebody," Wood swept on, "check with your headquarters in Munich. They will have a record of my travel orders."

This gave the officer an out and he took it. As he picked up the phone, the SS guard who had been eyeing the knapsack, stepped toward Dorchen. She was sitting on her suitcase, her skirt spread over it. "Madame," he said curtly, "have you something in that case you are trying to conceal?" She rose and opened it. There was nothing inside but her toilet articles and clothing.

Now the captain had Munich on the line. Yes, they knew of Wood's trip and the fact that somebody connected with another Foreign Office official was supposed to be traveling with him. No reason why they should be held.

"This is not regular procedure," the captain said to Wood. "This should be referred to Berlin. But under the circumstances I will release you."

"You will have nothing to worry about," Wood said, shouldering his pack.

On the way to the station, George squeezed Dorchen's arm. "You did beautifully with the suitcase," he said. "When you're carrying contraband, put it out in plain sight and pretend to be worried about something else. It usually works."

She laughed, but her face was pale. "I guess I didn't tell you," she said, "that I was carrying a pistol in my own pocket, in my coat."

The train that wheezed in fifty minutes later was a freight but they sandwiched themselves into an open box car already crowded with people. The track had only been temporarily repaired after bomber attacks and the train could do no more than crawl. After ten hours it stopped dead. They were still twelve kilometers from Weiler, it was 10 p.m., pitch dark and snowing. There was nothing to do but walk. Well after midnight they stumbled up to Werner's blacked-out cabin and knocked on the door.

"Full house already," Werner said as he greeted them, "but we can certainly find you a place to sleep." His visitors included an attractive Peruvian señora, a young Persian engineering student who had been caught in Germany at the outbreak of the war, and two men in staff officers' uniforms of the Wehrmacht.

Dorchen was given Werner's bedroom and George collapsed on a couch in an alcove off the living room. He was so tired that sleep hit him like a blow, knocking him instantly into unconsciousness.

Over a black, bitter brew of malt coffee the next morning, Wood chatted with the two officers. Werner had told them he was a dependable friend. They explained, somewhat uneasily, that they had brought a convoy of some five trucks out of Berlin loaded with "important material" from the German general staff offices.

"Oh yes, of course, I know," Wood said casually, "the intelligence files on Russia."

They stared at him, startled. "Yes, but how did you know?"

"I was told about it before I left Berlin." As a matter of fact, he had heard only vague talk about the move. His answer to the officers was a smart guess.

The staff files included some of the most complete intelligence in existence on Russia and the Red Army. Headed by a colonel, a group of eleven officers, including these two at breakfast, had decided to try to get the files out of Berlin before the city fell to the Russians. They had a motive of their own: they intended to offer the material to the western Allies in return for their own freedom. The convoy had met with a string of misfortunes and become scattered. Some of the trucks were destroyed in an air attack. One or two others were hidden not far away in the woods.

Wood persuaded the officers to give him a description and

THE SPY THE NAZIS MISSED

location of the cache. Then, after leaving his gun and radio with Werner and borrowing a bicycle from the Persian student, he said good-by to Dorchen and the others and pedaled to Bregenz where he had to get a visa for Switzerland. His diplomatic passport won him priority at the consulate and he was able to cross to St. Margareten in time to catch a train for Bern via Zurich. After his harrowing trek from Berlin, it was deliciously relaxing to stretch out in the swift, tidy comfort of the train.

In Bern, people seemed consumed with excitement, like a crowd flocking to the rail to watch the finish of a horse race. No particular event stood out, it was the spectacle of a legion of events sweeping to a climax, the approaching end of the war, which gripped them.

Somehow, Wood felt strangely left out of it. Dulles and Mayer had already received a tip about the convoy of intelligence files. They were grateful for the additional details Wood gave them; the information would be dispatched to Army G-2s at the front for action. The general situation was so fluid that most of the other data Wood had gathered in Berlin proved of little use. Everything not directly fastened to the great single fact of military victory in Europe seemed inconsequential.

Dulles became involved in delicate negotiations in highest secrecy which were to lead in a few short weeks to the surrender of the entire German force in Italy: 600,000 men. Every day brought some new exciting development. On April 14, von Papen, who had long since returned from abroad, was captured in Hamm, in the Ruhr pocket, with his son. On the 18th, the U. S. First Army took Leipzig and Halle, through which Wood had passed so recently on his last exit from Berlin.

Consumed with frustration, Wood decided to try a daring maneuver of his own in Bern. He went to the German minister, a tall, austere and aging man named Koecher, and attempted to persuade him to surrender the legation to the Allies.

"The Nazis have lost the war," he argued. "Further resistance is criminal. You will soon see Germans emerging who have fought the regime underground. It is their turn to take over. Some of these men and women have been working in the Foreign Office. I am one of them. If you give up the legation now it may encourage other mission chiefs to follow suit. Anything that will hasten the inevitable collapse, even if it shortens the war by merely a day, is an act of assistance to the German people."

To Koecher, himself an ardent Nazi who had consistently helped move Nazi spies through Switzerland, this was heresy. "I am loyal to Hitler," he stormed. "Get out!"

Shortly after this encounter, by inexplicable coincidence, Wood was arrested by Swiss military police on the suspicion that *he* was a Nazi spy. When he told them of his meeting with the minister, they freed him.

With the surrender signed and the fighting stopped, Wood could scarcely realize that his perilous messenger run was over. He went to Zurich and initiated the long-delayed divorce proceedings against his Swiss wife. He wanted to return to Berlin at once but the Russians were stalling the establishment of the Allied Control Commission and it was not until June that he finally got back. This time he made the trip in the bucket seat of a U.S. Army C-47. He found Gerda safe but on the point of exhaustion from overwork. A typhoid epidemic had broken out in the fetid ruins of the city and the hospitals were jammed.

And now the kindly gods who seemed to have bequeathed George Wood a charmed life through unbelievable years of bloody tyranny and war appeared to abandon him all at once. A GI corporal was speeding him to OSS headquarters, a house in the Dahlem sector of Berlin, one morning when they ran head-on into a truck. The impact pitched Wood onto a pile of rocks fifteen yards away, breaking his jaw, three ribs, his right ankle and fracturing his skull. An emergency operation saved him from death but he was trussed to a hospital cot for more than five weeks.

When he recovered he found that his divorce had been snagged in a thorny patch of legal technicalities. It took months to straighten it out and get the decree. After he and Gerda were married, he did some [illegible] for the American intelligence agencies. But Berlin was an obscenely desolate place, and there was always the risk of [illegible] by the Russians. They went to Frankfurt. He was able to get a job. While he continued to look, Gerda found this cubicle for them in the house of a friend in the Taunus, where I was listening to the story that afternoon.

"We're lucky to have this one room," Wood said to me now. "There are two other families here besides ourselves. Technically we're breaking the law because as Berliners, or non-residents, we are supposed to register with the burgomeister, but that involves a lot of red tape. That's one reason, though, why I get my mail in Frankfurt, as a precaution. Pity we weren't Nazis."

Chuckling, he pointed to an impressive *schloss* set in a growth of fir trees on a knoll a quarter of a mile away. "The gentleman who owns that was a party member," he said. "It made things much less complicated and much more profitable at his factory. Military government kept him out of circulation for a while but now he's back in business, a prosperous substantial member of the community, too busy to be bothered, of course, with taking in roomers to ease the housing problem."

"Can't you go down to Bonn and raise hell about something like that?" I demanded. "Do you have to be unhoused and unemployed too?"

Housing was a colossal task, he said: the government was getting around to it gradually. As for a job, he couldn't count on it but he had hopes something would turn up at Bonn eventually. Perhaps, he reflected, he shouldn't have made that demarche to Koecher, the minister in Bern. Koecher was dead now. After the surrender he had been expelled from Switzerland and turned over to the Allies. In a fit of dejection he committed suicide in a French army detention camp, but not before he had uttered to fellow prisoners a vituperative denunciation of Wood as a traitor who had sold out to the enemy for a fortune. Some of those prisoners were free men now, and talking.

"Mayer told me you made a trip to the States," I said. "Didn't anything attractive turn up there?"

"It was a honeymoon for Gerda and me," he said. "New York is a wonderful place. America is so big and so abundant. I went into Macy's once and saw so many things I found it difficult to, to respire. People were very nice to us. I would have liked to have stayed but we must have arrived at the wrong time. Most of the officials I wanted to see seemed to be away on business. We never did get to Washington."

"By the way," I said, "whatever happened to Dr. Ritter?"

"He was captured and convicted as a minor war criminal. He served a term in prison. He's out now and I learned just the other day he is going to Rio de Janeiro to marry a matron of Brazilian society he met when he was ambassador there."

"Look, George," I put in impatiently, "if I were in your shoes I'd be breathing fire at this point. Was what you did worth it?"

He laid a hand on my arm. "If I had it to do over again I would have to do the same thing," he replied.

As I got up to go he handed me a manuscript. "Read this when you get time," he said, "you might find it interesting."

When I got back to the hotel in Frankfurt I opened the manuscript, thinking it would be some autobiographical notes which Wood had, for some reason, been too reticent to discuss. It was an article entitled "High Treason and Resistance," written by a well-known German intellectual named Rudolf Pechel who had spent three years in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp for his role in the underground. There was a passage near the end which had been underlined in pencil. This is what it said:

"It remains unimportant that the resistance failed to reach its goal and that the surviving members of the resistance are today as lonely as they were under Hitler. Each great idea and each courageous deed bears the fruit in itself. We didn't expect any thanks."—Edward P. Morgan

A True Book-Length Feature