

シゲルマケン



隻影のベルフール 2

文・内田弘樹 イラスト・木菟あうる

原作・吉宗鋼紀(アージュ) キャラクター原案・CARNELIAN



ファミ通文庫





「よう、久しぶり」

Jürgen Bernhard
ユルゲンベルンハルト

オレの姿を見て、邸宅の門扉を開けた
美少女——ベアトリクス・ブレーメは、
目を丸くしながら呟いた。

「ユル……ゲン……?」

Beatrix Brehme
ベアトリクス・ブレーメ



「兄さんとベアトリクスが身を固めてくれるなら、

私はずっと、ベアトリクスと友人でいられます」

Irisdina Bernhard
アイリスディーナ・ベルンハルト



Schwarzesmarken

Bernhard in Shadow 2

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ベアトリクス・ブレーメ

高級官僚ブレーメ家の令嬢。口が悪く性格も悪いのだが、時々可愛げがある。自分の正体を見抜いたユルゲンに惹かれ、アプローチした。将来を強制しようとする父アーベルに反発している。



アイリスディーナ・ベルンハルト

ユルゲンの愛妹。優しくおとなしい性格で、誰にでも丁寧に話をするが、頑固な一面もあり、これと決めたらユルゲンの説得すら聞かない。統合学校の水泳部に属しており、そこでベアトリクスと友人となった。

オズヴァルト・カッツェ

ユルゲンの幼馴染。明朗闊達な性格で、細かいことは気にしない。統合学校卒業後、ユルゲンとともに空軍士官学校を受験。これに合格し空軍士官候補生となり、ユルゲンのクラスメイトのひとりとなった。

ヨーン・ヤウク

空軍士官学校でのユルゲンのクラスメイトのひとり。生真面目な性格で、ことあるごとにユルゲンと対立している。第二次世界大戦後にソ連から追放されたロシア系ドイツ人の血を引いている。



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アルフレート・シュトラハヴィッツ

国家人民軍の将官。参謀本部作戦課次長であり、戦車部隊の運用に詳しい。戦術機部隊の創設をめぐり、ユルゲンたちと対立することになる。



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Jürgen Bernhard

The eldest son of the Bernhard family. His father was a diplomat. He has an easy-going personality, and is also blessed with a keen mind. He dotes over his younger sister Irisdina a lot, which might seem to the outside observer as having a sister complex (Tsusukon/Siscon). After much trials and tribulations, he began dating Beatrix.

Beatrix Brehme

The young daughter of the elite bureaucrat Brehme Household. She has a sharp tongue and a bad personality, but she is sometimes charming. She became attracted to Jürgen, who had seen through her heart, and made her approach. She rebels against her father, Abel, who tries to force her future upon her.

Irisdina Brenhard

Jürgen's beloved younger sister. She has a chivalrous and gentle personality, and speaks politely to everyone, but she is also stubborn and will not listen to Jürgen's persuasion once she has made up her mind. She is a member of the swimming club at the integration school, where she and Beatrix became friends.

Oswald Katzen

Jürgen's childhood friend. Has a Bright and cheerful personality, and doesn't care about details. After graduating from the integration school, he and Jürgen took the entrance exam for the Air Force Civilian Academy. He passed the entrance exam and became an Air Force civilian cadet, and also one of Jürgen's classmates.

John Yauch

One of Jürgen's classmates at the Air Force Academy. He has a stubborn personality and is at odds with Jürgen at every turn. He is of Russian-German descent, having been expelled from the Soviet Union after World War II.

Tsaritsa Vikman

Another one of Jürgen's classmates at the Air Force Academy. She is the red one [\(u\)](#) of the team. She has a calm and collected personality and is not affected by the atmosphere around her. Tsaritsa is a judo expert, and before joining the Air Force Academy, she was aiming to participate in the Olympics.

Abel Brehme

Beatrix's father. He is an East German economic bureaucrat who belongs to the "Red Aristocracy" or (Nomenklatura). He has a level-headed personality and has a strong relationship with the secret police, the Ministry of State Security (Stasi). He is working to avert the collapse of the East German economy.

Alfred Strachwitz

General of the National People's Army, Deputy Chief of the General Staff for Operations, and is well informed about the continuous use of tank units. He comes into conflict with Jürgen and the others over the organisation of Tactical Surface Fighters (TSFs).



第1章
1974

Chapter 1: 1974

1

As the car vibrated in a pleasant rhythm, the light coming in interrupted my slumber. I looked out the window with a bit of bitterness, and saw a vast expanse of Russian snow, smothered in a morning haze.

The scenery in front of me was so hazy that my childhood memories came flooding back. The memory of riding the train to the east with my father, a diplomat, was vivid in my mind as it stimulated my boyish spirit of adventure.

However, there was a big difference between the luxurious train I rode back then and this excuse for a plank seat with a cushion....

Anyway, I wonder where we are now. I remember that we left East Berlin yesterday afternoon, crossed the border between Poland and Belarus just as the sun was setting, and changed trains in Minsk [\(2\)](#). How many hours had passed since I had decided to sleep as soon as the train lights were switched to night time?

"It's 8 a.m. and we're almost to Smolensk."

Yauch, the one sitting in front of me, politely informed me. An expression of doubt appeared on his face.

"Smolensk is the name of"

"I stopped by once. It's a city in western Russia."

Yauch appeared disappointed. More than trying to prove his excellence over me, he tries to pick a quarrel whenever the chance arises.

I heard a sarcastic laugh. It was Katzen, who was sitting next to Yauch.

"What is it?"

"No, I just thought it was the same as ever. You guys have been like this for two years now, haven't you?"

"I'd say 80% of the problem is Yauch's fault."

There is never a time when I have initiated anything, so there won't be any winds and waves unless Yauch gets involved.

"I am at the limits of my discontent. Jürgen always tries to avoid my challenges. Shouldn't the head of the class, when challenged, respond in a fair and honest manner?"

Yauch looked disgruntled.

"However, if we don't work together while studying in Moscow, the honour of East Germany may be damaged. I'm afraid I'll have to postpone Jürgen's rehabilitation until after we return home, and that makes me irritated."

"Why should I be rehabilitated?"

Aren't I a top student, just like you said?

"It's a big problem to have a sulky person like you representing the country! I'll be supervising you as your assistant, so be prepared."

"Oh, yes, yes."

I interjected with a few half-minded words to end Yauch's useless conversation, and turned my gaze to Vikman sitting next to me. Vikman was reading a paperback book fervently, ignoring the clatter of the three men. Her guts, or rather her pace, hadn't changed at all since we first met.

"What are you reading?"

"War and Peace." [\(3\)](#)

"Tolstoy?"

"I heard that the Russians adore Tolstoy. It might be a good conversation starter when we have the opportunity to chat ."

If I met someone for the first time and they suddenly started talking about Tolstoy, I would run away. It was interesting, but the story was heavy and long... I thought so, but didn't say anything. When you poke Vikman, you have to be prepared to have your hand bitten.

Vikman slammed the paperback shut and muttered quietly as she stared out the window at the endless snowfield.

".....We are entrusted with the fate of our Fatherland [\(4\)](#). Our relations with the Russians are indispensable."

The fate of our fatherland - Yauch, Katzen, and I kept our mouths shut at the meaning these words possessed.

Why are young inexperienced people like us being sent to study in the Soviet Union (USSR)?

During the two years we spent as trainees, there were various incidents that we could never have imagined. There were many unbelievable events that cannot be described in a single word, and two years ago they would have been just funny stories...

Vikman looked around at everyone and said with a serious look in her eyes.

"So, getting along with the Russians is definitely a must."

"And for me, In order to protect my irreplaceable existence", I added that in my heart.

October 10, 1974. More than two years had already passed since we had entered the Air Force Academy.

Moscow, the capital of the Soviet Union, is the headquarters of the socialist camp ⁽⁵⁾ and is the most populous metropolis in Europe west of the Ural Mountains ⁽⁶⁾.

Centred on the Kremlin Palace ⁽⁷⁾, where the Soviet Union's Central and Central Powers were located, the city's vast urban area spreads out in concentric circles, lined with numerous historical buildings and huge complexes of buildings. The population is said to be over 10 million, but the current influx of refugees from Central Asia is said to have added several million more.

After arriving at Moscow's Belorussky Station, we took a bus to the Kubinka Air Force Base ⁽⁸⁾ in the suburbs of Moscow.

It had been a long time since I had been to Moscow, so I was more nostalgic than surprised at the sights of the city. In particular, I remember going to the Red Square ⁽⁹⁾ in front of the Kremlin Palace often, perhaps because it was close to the dormitory of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of East Germany.

Whether or not I will have time to visit the Red Square during my six months of studying abroad depends on how things go from now on...

"A toast to our comrades from East Germany...."

The sound of glasses clinked in the reception hall of Kubinka base, and words of congratulations fluttered around in German and Russian. After arriving at the base, we were given a quick tour of the facilities and thrown into a party to welcome the arrival of the study abroad group.

More than a hundred Russians and East Germans, dressed in their respective military attire, gathered in the hall and chatted with each other at their leisure.

The food laid out on the tables was sumptuous, probably because of the importance placed on appearances since it was part of the diplomatic celebrations. In reality, however, the cold weather since last year has taken a heavy toll on agricultural production in Europe as a whole, and the situation does not allow for extravagance. I looked around the hall, feeling somewhat confused and uncomfortable.

The study abroad team that had been sent to Moscow consisted of 36 people, including me. In addition to that, there were about ten other people from the embassy in attendance.

I had been the top student at the Air Force Academy, so I was assigned to be the leader of this study abroad team in Moscow.

The sub-leader was Yauch, who was assisted by Katzen and Vikman. It was as if my old team was still in charge of the foreign study program.

In retrospect, I realized that the military had been training us from the beginning to handle the new weapons.

We were required to learn things that were not part of the Air Force's regular education program, and the cramming was so rigorous that I preferred to sleep in my dormitory rather than go home.

After a while, they informed us about the military's plans to conscript new recruits into a new established military department. When we first heard about it, Yauch said it was a bad joke, and Katzen looked up to the sky and laughed.

Anyhow, what we were told was a crazy plan to "weaponize on the ground a large MMU ⁽¹⁰⁾ EVA ⁽¹¹⁾ unit that mainly operates in satellite orbit. The explanation was that development was underway in the United States and the Soviet Union, but not even a test model existed in East Germany yet. That's why - from the point of view of the higher-ups - it was probably out of the question to allocate regular troops. Thus, we were to be trained as the first batch of new soldiers.

In the first few minutes of the party, we were chatting with Russians who were talking to us in a friendly manner over a large number of cups. The Russians' penchant for drinking is as strong as ever, and toasts are raised at every turn. The trouble is that the Russians have a habit of not trusting people who can't drink, and considering this, the study abroad team can't afford not to drink.

Suddenly, I saw a person approaching me, and I reflexively straightened my back as I realized that it was the East German ambassador of Moscow.

"How is it? your impression of the Soviets"

He had a glass of vodka in his hand and his face was red - he was already drunk.

"Bernhard's father has experienced Moscow for some time, hasn't he? I'm sure you've lived in Moscow too. But the prosperity of Moscow now is incomparable to that of Moscow at that time ."

I've had my background vetted - no wonder.

Normally, only people from East Germany who have absolute loyalty to the state - in other words, people with high political credibility - are chosen to study in Moscow. Legally speaking, people like me would be excluded. However, the military did not remove me from the study abroad program, as I had maintained my position at the top of the class.

There's no way this man doesn't know about these circumstances. In other words, I judged that this smiling conversation was only on the surface, and that the purpose was actually to warn me so that I would not cause any trouble in Moscow.

"I think what the Ambassador is saying is right. I was impressed by the phenomenal development of the city, which retains many historical buildings and the richness of its people's lives."

Satisfied with the bland but politically sensitive reply, the ambassador smiled with a red face.

"You think so, too? The Soviet Union is the most technologically advanced country in the East, and you should learn as much as you can from it."

"Understood"

I nodded.

"Diplomats tend to be dogs of the country they're assigned to, right? I've seen a lot of people like that since I was a kid."

The ambassador has been in Moscow for five years now — unless he is wearing a collar, he can't last this long.

"I hope you understand."

"Thank you."

Yauch seemed a little surprised by my response. I've given it a lot of thought, but I've already told Yauch and Vikman about my background. I've told them about my father's condition, though I've been vague as to why I need to continue to hold the top position. Both Yauch and Vikman seemed to have some thoughts on the matter, but their attitudes did not change after that.

"Jürgen, you at least are marked by the embassy, and no doubt the KGB will be mixed in, maybe even someone from the Ministry of State Security (Stasi). These are people who wait for someone else's misfortune. I don't want to imagine any trouble for the leader of the study abroad team."

Yauch's words were harsh as he stared at the back of the ambassador, who had started a conversation with another student.

Yauch is of Volga German descent ⁽¹²⁾ — which to say, he is of German descent who lived in Russia. The Volga Germans were forced to move to East Germany after World War II, and perhaps because of this, Yauch did not seem to have very favourable feelings toward the Russians.

"There is a possibility that they will try to take advantage of me."

The reason I gave a meaningless rebuttal was to protest against Yauch, who was usually lecturing me, but had used political language in a place like this. Sometimes this guy's emotions get the better of him and he gets lax.

"It's a complaint. Forget it."

As if he understood my true intentions, he mumbled something about being sorry, and then walked away.

Sighing, I took another look around the hall.

A hundred or so East German and Soviet soldiers and diplomats, a sumptuous meal. The conversations were politically benign — there was not the slightest sense of danger that the world might be lost to invaders from another planet.

Or maybe they just want to make it look that way because they are dealing with East Germany, a satellite state of the Soviet Union.

"BETA, is it...."

As I muttered the name of our would-be enemy, I began to recall and organize the events of the past two years from the bottom of my memory.

3

It is difficult to describe the past two years in a few words. Even if I could, I don't think people would be able to understand it. I mean, don't you agree?

"The landing unit of an alien life form discovered on Mars about 15 years ago fell to Kashgar in Central Asia and launched an invasion on the Eurasian continent."

"In fact, humans have been at war with alien life on the moon since 1967, and the U.S. and Soviet Union have been covering it up."

It's like something out of a clichéd science fiction novel. As is often the case, reality transcends fiction, but this is an extraordinary transcendence. What's more, it's in very bad taste.

The creatures - I'm afraid to say - are of alien origin hostile to mankind. They are called **Beings of the Extra Terrestrial origin which is Adversary of human race**, or **BETA** for short. The BETA are actually trying to destroy the human race, so it's not even funny.

However, if these two facts had been the only ones, the situation would not have deteriorated so much. But the reality is uglier and more tragic than a science fiction novel.

Neither the U.S. nor the Soviet Union, nor even the United Nations, disclosed the fact to the world even after the BETA landing unit fell on Kashgar.

Even China, the party concerned, did not publicly announce the disaster that had befallen its country. It would have been better if they had been concerned about upsetting the public, but they must have been trying to monopolize the unknown technology possessed by the alien-origin species, or some other nonsensical reason.

But what was the result — the opposite happened, and the BETA completely pulverized the Chinese army. In addition, they built a huge nest called a hive in Kashgar, and created a base for their invasion of Eurasia.

China responded to this crisis with direct action: a scorched earth campaign using nuclear weapons against BETA.

It is now unclear how many nukes were used in Central Asia, or how effective they were, but one thing is clear: this campaign was in some ways as much of a disaster for humanity as BETA.

The radioactive dust created by the massive nuclear bombardment flew into the sky and turned into a curtain blocking the sunlight.

As a result, what happened was that the decrease in the amount of sunlight falling on the earth caused the global atmospheric temperature to drop, ushering in the "nuclear winter ⁽¹³⁾" familiar from science fiction.

The nuclear winter had a serious impact on the entire planet, especially the Eurasian continent.

The unprecedentedly severe winter and subsequent cold summer took a toll on agriculture, especially in the black soil (Chernozem) ⁽¹⁴⁾ region from western Siberia to southern Siberia, which is one of the three major breadbasket regions ⁽¹⁵⁾, resulting in a famine that killed a lot of people, with many starving or freezing to death.

The damage in China, which has almost certainly suffered more than Europe from the cold weather, is still unknown, but I estimate that hundreds of millions of people may have died.

However, even after such a tragedy occurred, the fact was not immediately made public. Just like the contact on the moon, the facts were covered up.

It was not until a little over a year later that the U.S. and the Soviet Union made the facts known and announced that humanity was at war with BETA.

This summer, July 1974 - a new BETA landing unit fell in Athabasca, Canada.

In response, the U.S. military took even more extreme measures than the Chinese military, concentrating strategic nuclear weapons to crush the landing unit.

At the same time, the United Nations - more precisely, the United States and the Soviet Union — announced the existence of the BETA to the entire world.

The fanciful story that was suddenly revealed shocked the entire human race; that the same kind of life form that had been discovered on Mars had also been discovered on the moon, that they had the ability to travel through space, and that an advance team had landed in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region ⁽¹⁶⁾ (China). People urged both the U.S. and the Soviet Union to reveal the truth, but their request went unheeded.

Since then, the human race has continued to wage war against alien species without resolving the Cold War. Despite the fact that a common enemy has appeared before our eyes, the framework of international society has not been transformed.

The BETA invasion has continued relentlessly, and now the battlefields are not only mainland China, but also Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, and Iran.

This series of events has even had an impact on my life.

The biggest impact was the shortening of the curriculum at the Air Force Academy, as the outbreak of the BETA war increased the need to expand the force, and since last summer, the duration of education was shortened from four years to two.

Two years after entering the Air Force Academy, I was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Air Force. I was not expecting to be assigned to the field so soon, so it would not be a crime to be surprised.

But that wasn't the only big change.

After I was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Air Force, I was placed in the custody of the Army. It wasn't that I had done anything wrong, but it was ostensibly a measure to promote exchange between the Air Force and the Army, and about half of my classmates, including Katzen, Yauch, and Vikman, had suffered the same fate as me.

We were trained not only as infantrymen, but also in the handling of helicopters and heavy machinery. We complained that we were being selected as test subjects for a cramming program, but we had no choice.

Then we were ordered to Moscow to study. The purpose was to acquire all knowledge of the "tactical surface machine", a new large bipedal weapon and an advanced form of the MMU, which is currently in development and is being deployed by the U.S. in the battle against the BETA in various countries, and become capable people who would be the cornerstone of the East German tactical machine crafts.

If you had told me two years ago what I was doing now, I probably would not have believed you.

However, it's not as if I don't have a sense of reality about the current situation.

Before the truth about the BETA war was made public, Europe had been baptized in a nuclear winter, and even as a student at the Air Force Academy, I had some inkling that there was an abnormal situation developing somewhere in the world.

Rumors of a nuclear war between China and the Soviet Union in Central Asia were everywhere, and there was talk that East German troops might eventually be deployed. So, it is true that the students of the Air Force Academy, including myself, did not feel too much doubt about the shortened curriculum.

In addition, the "nuclear winter" had an impact on the lives of the East German people.

Fresh foods have disappeared from supermarkets such as Haro. The number of processed products such as meat and cheese also decreased drastically, and the selection in the stores became quite lonely. As is typical of socialism ⁽¹⁷⁾, it was a relief that the price of basic foodstuffs did not skyrocket, but the transportation infrastructure was damaged by the snow, and a large amount of money was spent to repair it.

Although the East German army was not directly involved in the fight against BETA in Central Asia at the behest of the Soviet Union, it was mobilizing its reserves. At the same time, counter-intelligence and thought control within the country was being carried out by the Ministry of State Security (Stasi), and it was no longer possible to listen to Western TV and radio as casually as before.

The only thing that was fortunate for me was that even under these circumstances, my sister Iris and my girlfriend, -who I no longer hesitate to declare as such- Beatrix, continued to live a peaceful life.

The two of them lead a very normal student life, but because of the curriculum reduction at the Air Force Academy, I was only able to return home about once a month, but that didn't stop us from making detailed plans in advance and spending time together.

Both Iris and Beatrix will be in the tenth grade at the integration school this year. Next year, they will graduate and begin their new paths.

I still haven't heard what kind of career path they have in mind. But even so, I hoped that they would at least spend their daily lives in the same peaceful way as before.

"Are you Second Lieutenant Jürgen Bernhard?"

I heard a voice behind my back, blending in with the tumult of the hall, and turned around in one beat.

What I saw was the rank insignia of an East German Major General. The color of his collar was pink - he was from the Tank Corps. His age is probably in his forties but his face was fearless, and the brown eyes under his wide forehead seemed to have a sharpness lurking in their calmness.

"—Yes, I am second lieutenant Jürgen Bernhard"

The Major General's face broke into a faint smile.

"I'm Alfred Strachwitz, Deputy Chief of the General Staff for Operations, and I'm here in charge of the T Committee. I'm sorry I didn't get a chance to greet you before you left, but I look forward to working with you."

"It's a pleasure to meet you too, Major General."

I smiled and shook the hand that was offered to me — of course, I was not at peace inside.

The General Staff is the heart of the military. Of all the departments, the only one with the name "Operations" is the Operations Division, which is in charge of providing operational guidance to the army, and being the deputy director of the Operations Division means that he was one of the top two in the Operations Division. In effect, it can be said that he was in charge of the East German Army's operations.

Although the East German army is completely integrated into the Soviet Union's chain of command, I have heard that in the past, during the political uprisings in Eastern Europe, the East German Army General Staff drew up plans for intervention by the East German army and put them into action.

In addition, the T-Committee was supposed to be the committee under the direct control of the Ministry of Defense that had led to our recruitment and study in Moscow. We hadn't been told the details, but rumor had it that it was an organization to conduct preliminary research for the introduction of tactical fighters into the East German army. In other words, the "T" at the beginning of the name may have been taken from the first letter of the official name of the tactical machine, "Tactical Surface Fighter".

Major General Strachwitz grasped my hand reassuringly. His grip was large and genial.

"A lot of interesting rumors have reached my ears, so I was looking forward to having a long talk with you ."

"Interesting rumors?"

Without being able to grasp Strachwitz's intentions, I parroted his question. In this kind of situation, we should not give out any information.

"Yes, and I'm sorry, too. You were suddenly transferred to a new position, and were made a candidate to pilot an unknown weapon such as a tactical fighter, and then transferred to Moscow. I'm sure there were many things you didn't understand, even if it was to protect your fatherland."

"I've heard that tactical fighters are a new concept in weaponry, and on top of that, that they are proving useful in the fight against the BETA. I have the feeling that I can live up to the expectations of my country, but I am not entirely convinced."

Unable to decipher Strachwitz's true intentions, who made a statement that could be taken as disturbing, I replied in an exemplary manner.

My words were not entirely a lie.

Rumors that the U.S. was developing a large bipedal weapon with three-dimensional maneuverability had already been whispered during my time at the Air Force Academy, and there were rumors that it would be the main weapon of the next - so-called - World War III, just as the aeroplane had been during the last war.

It was a known fact that the United States and the Soviet Union were using large Manned Mobile Units (MMU) in satellite orbit, and it would not be strange if an expanded and developed version of the tactical surface fighter was being developed. However, I never dreamed that they could be used on Earth and deployed in battles against space creatures...

After the truth about the BETA was made public, the U.S. disclosed information about its new weapon, the tactical fighter, to the entire world and began propagating that the tactical fighter could be the trump card in the war against the BETA.

According to the information released at that time, in 1972 — that is, one year before the BETA landing units fell on Kashgar, the U.S. had already started selling tactical fighters - officially speaking, the McDowell F-4 (Phantom), the first ever tactical fighter - to Western countries, and within the same year, contracts for licensed production had been signed with several countries.

In other words, not only the U.S. and the Soviet Union, but also every other advanced country in the world was making preparations for the war against BETA while concealing the events on the moon from their citizens. I can only assume that the intention was to disperse the point of origin. Well, I'm not going to say anything about that now.

And finally, the U.S. Army has already started deploying F-4 (Phantom) units, and some of them have been put into actual combat.

At present, most of the main battlefields in the war against BETA are in the territory of the eastern camp, so perhaps they are being deployed around Iran, which is counted as one of the western countries.

Under these circumstances, the Soviet Union, following the U.S., introduced tactical fighters and began to deploy the F-4 (Phantom) in actual combat. This fact astonished us, and at the same time made us determined to become TSF pilots.

This was because the Cold War was not over yet, nevertheless, the U.S. was still providing new weapons to the Soviet Union, it's sworn enemy.

Moreover, based on the current state of deployment, there was no doubt that the two countries had established a cooperative relationship at a very early stage. This means that both the U.S. and the Soviet Union are more wary of visitors from another planet than their counterparts who have nuclear weapons capable of destroying the earth thousands of times. Coincidentally, it was possible to determine that they believed that the tactical fighter weapon was effective against BETA.

In the Soviet Union, the F-4R (Phantom), which has undergone cold-weather modifications, has been officially adopted, and the development of its own TSF is also underway. Although the details have not yet been made public, it seems that the development of tactical fighter units is proceeding at a rapid pace.

However, I'm sure the upper echelons of East Germany are not so optimistic that they would devote their resources to a game in this situation. It's reasonable to assume that they've recruited us because they have high hopes for us. It was not that I didn't have my concerns, but I had enough material to be convinced.

The only thing I knew about tactical fighters was this much — the only information I had been given beforehand was how to operate the MMU, which was crammed in right before I graduated.

If it were possible, I would have liked to visit the Brehme family and ask Beatrix's father, Abel, some questions before I went abroad, but unfortunately he was busier than ever since the UN announcement, so I couldn't do it. Considering his position as an economic bureaucrat, he had no choice but to do so as the cold weather was having a serious impact on the East German economy.

"...as long as tactical fighters are based on large MMUs that are suitable for low gravity operations, it makes sense for it to be operated by a pilot with an aptitude for three-dimensional maneuvering. And if we are going to acquire new skills, I think it's only natural that the mission be given to us, who can be educated at the candidate stage, rather than to divert our current combat force capabilities."

I continued to speak, keeping in mind the origins of tactical fighters, the world situation, and the political norms desired by East Germany.

"Of course, I have my misgivings about being exposed to a completely new concept of weaponry But I believe that I can overcome any difficulties with the people I spent two years with at the Air Force Academy and with my comrades in the Soviet Union."

"I see, ... You've just been nominated as the leader of the study abroad team."

Strachwitz smiled - a somewhat frightening smile.

"I'll tell you something. After you finish your studies, the Soviet Union will provide you with up to three platoons of twelve F-4s (Phantoms). At the same time, a test unit will be formed. You will be involved in setting up this unit."

"..... Only twelve planes?"

"You don't like it? Worst-case scenario, it could be one platoon."

That's even worse.

"I've heard that tactical fighters are the trump card in the war against the BETA, so I thought they'd be introduced on a larger scale."

"I'm afraid there is a difference of opinion on the deployment of tactical fighters in Eastern European countries," Strachwitz sighed, scratching his head.

"Our country is the front line of the Cold War, but now the front line for the Soviet Union is Central Asia."

"Are you saying that this is not the time to provide a satellite country with a ready-made force? If that's the case, I suppose we could build a production plant in East Germany and have them manufactured under license."

"Unfortunately, this is not possible at present. Just as there are no fighter jet or tank factories in East Germany,....."

Well, I guess that's not wrong... I nodded at Strachwitz's reply.

In East Germany, there is no proper military industry. The reason is simple: the Soviet Union still does not trust East Germany because it is a country with which it once traded conflicts, and it believes that it could turn against the Soviet Union at any time. It would be too risky to build a factory for the production of tanks, fighters, and TSFs in East Germany.

The formation of the T-Committee and the dispatch of foreign students may be the best diplomatic effort East Germany can make.

"Whether it's a ban on information or the transfer of new technology, it will take some time. You've heard very little about the BETA, haven't you?"

"It's all gossip."

Both the U.S. and the Soviet Union are so thorough in their control of information that we don't even know what the BETA looks like. The information that comes in is fragmented, and it is hard to believe that the BETA is using lasers to neutralize human air power.

To be honest, I don't think it's possible for a creature to exist that can shoot down an aircraft with a laser of such high power, but it seems that the alien species has technology that cannot be measured by the common sense of earthlings.

"Rumor has it that the aerial bombardment unit has been wiped out."

I wondered if Strachwitz had more information than I did — I decided to take a chance and cross that bridge.

"A ground force deprived of air support is like confronting a pistol with an empty hand. We need to find a way to regain air superiority at all costs."

He unofficially admitted the rumor outright - does this mean that it's not a problem to reveal information at this level?

"The main force of the Soviet Union's forces engaged with the BETA in Central Asia right now is the ground troops. The fact that the Soviet Union has been able to prevent the expansion of its area of control means that the ground troops can be the main force in the war against the BETA. The Soviet army is probably fighting with mobile strikes based on the conventional deep-strike doctrine, using a concentrated tank force."

The longitudinal-deep attack doctrine is a military philosophy that forms the basis of the Soviet military. To put it simply, the doctrine is based on breaking through the front lines and crushing the enemy by launching widespread and wavelike attacks against them.

To take it to the extreme, both the Soviet Union's military and the East German military, which is subordinate to the Soviet Union, exist for the purpose of achieving the longitudinal deep attack doctrine. Research began before and after World War I, and it is now a traditional art of the Soviet military.

Strachwitz tilted his glass again and continued.

"For many years, the East Germans, together with the Soviets, have been working out this doctrine. If we were to change this doctrine with the introduction of tactical fighters, it would require a major reorganization. It would cause a great deal of opposition within the military, and it would also place a heavy burden on the East German economy."

In the back of my mind, the conversation I had with Abel came to mind - if the Soviet Union's economic development continues, the East German economy will collapse in another 20 years.

I wondered how much of an impact the BETA war would have on the East German economy. To be honest, I had no idea.

"..... Indeed, I suppose you're right."

I just gave a small nod. Strachwitz stared at the ceiling for a while, then whispered to me.

"By the way, Second Lieutenant Bernhard, I heard that you have a beautiful younger sister, and that you are very fond of her."

"....., is there a problem?"

Strachwitz's intentions are still hard to read.... No, it's not the fear not knowing. There is a definite possibility that Strachwitz is a member of the Soviet Union's State Security Committee (KGB) ⁽¹⁸⁾ or the Ministry of State Security (Stasi).

However, I was under the political protection of my girlfriend's father, a high-ranking bureaucrat named Abel Brehme. I'm not sure if he was trying to interfere politically with me, but a cold sweat ran down my spine.

"I see. Then"

Strachwitz's mouth twisted in pure delight, and his right hand went to his breast pocket. I gulped down my spit.

"You have got to see this!"

With an appropriate onomatopoeic sound, Strachwitz pulled something out of his breast pocket. If you look closely, you will see that it is a photograph of a leaf, showing Strachwitz and a little girl in his arms.

"..... yes?"

I didn't get the meaning of it, But Strachwitz asked briskly, confidently showing his white teeth.

"What do you think of this beautiful girl?"

A beautiful girl - I wondered if I should describe a girl as young as a kindergartener that way, but I intuitively decided that this was not the place to go into it, so I'll just give my impressions for now.

"Well, let me see..... I think she looks very clever and cute, and the ponytail suits her a lot."

"Is that so! As expected! Hm, Hm, I knew you'd understand!"

Strachwitz tapped me hard on the shoulder. It hurt.

"Actually, this beautiful girl is my daughter. Her name is Ursula. Yes, Ursula! [\(19\)](#) I named her after a Christian saint! Our country is very fussy about religion, but this was the only name that was appropriate for her!"

Strachwitz was still tapping me on the shoulder. It hurt.

"Isn't she cute? Ursula is my precious and only daughter, and she's absolutely adorable, even if I take away my favouritism. She has smooth hair, brown eyes like mine, and charming features just like my wife's!"

Strachwitz stroked the picture of Ursula with his fingertips as if she were a jewel.

"Aaaa, Ursula, ... I can't wait to see you! I want to hug her to my heart's content and smell her sweet, childlike, milky scent! Oh, Ursula, please forgive your father for leaving you on a business trip to Moscow! What a cruel father he must have been to make you feel so lonely! Don't worry, I'll buy you a lot of souvenirs at the department store in Moscow!"

After a kissing gesture to the photo, Strachwitz turned his gaze straight to me.

"I knew you'd be able to relate to me after hearing how much you doted on your sister! After all, it's nice to have a family!"

"Yeah, uh huh."

"Oh, I can't stay like this. Not only you, but also our Russian comrades must be taught about Ursula's charm. I've heard that Russians value family more than Germans! I'm sure they'll sympathize with me!"

He looked around the hall - appeared to know someone, and shouted loudly.

"Well, well, well, Lieutenant General Vladimir! I haven't seen you since the exercise three years ago! How is your daughter, who will be ten years old this year, doing? Well, mine too."

I could do nothing but stare dumbfounded at the back of Strachwitz as he walked toward what I assumed to be the Russian general.

What was that? Just now? That's the Chairman of the T-Committee and Deputy Chief of Staff Operations of the National People's Army (NVA)? You sure about that, East Germany? There's a lot wrong with that guy. For some reason, I'm so angry.

"Are you okay?"

It was Vikman who called out to me, startling me. The glass of Vodka in her hand was almost empty, although Vikman seemed to be barefaced.

"Omae,..... Are you drinking? Or not?"

"I'm drinking. This is my tenth glass."

A normal person would have fallen into a coma around that time, though to say, I've never seen Vikman drunk.

"You're as strong as a Russian."

"I've been trained in the dojo since I was a child."

That's how Olympic athletes are.

"What's going on?"

"There were a number of Russians who tried to seduce me. I've crushed them all."

I involuntarily burst into laughter. I already have a girlfriend named Beatrix, but I can also say that Vikman has a pretty well featured face, and there was no end to the number of men who tried to seduce her when she was at the academy. Whenever she got involved with such men, she would invite them to judo practice and beat them without question with her signature seoinage (back throw).

To add to that, I was in the same group as Vikman, so we often worked together, but I had always been very coy about the fact that I had a girlfriend and a beloved younger sister, so I never got involved in any unpleasant disputes over this monster, the back-breaking pixie.

"..... So, what did you accomplish there? You talked to Major General Strachwitz, didn't you?"

So she was checking on my behavior while getting the Russians drunk...

"This study abroad experience is full of unknowns. I'm not complaining that I can't be a fighter pilot anymore, but I feel puzzled. If you've got something for me to hold on to, please let me know."

After weaving my thoughts for a bit, I answered.

"It paid off, in more ways than one."

I took a survey of the hall and saw Strachwitz talking to another Soviet general, this time proudly showing him a picture of his daughter. Respecting the Russian spirit, he was drying glasses of Vodka one after the other in between conversations. To the casual observer, he looked like a doting parent whose childishness had gone beyond the "K" mark.

I am still not pleased - but I can't quite figure out why, either.

Vikman chuckled.

"You are certainly not fond of him"

"I won't deny it, but what do you know about the Major General?"

Vikman turned her gaze to Strachwitz.

"He was one of the most capable officers in the army. He was highly regarded in the field, and during the Prague Spring he led the 9th Tank Division to quell the disturbances."

The "Prague Spring" was a revolutionary movement that broke out in Prague, the capital of Czechoslovakia, in the late 1960s. At one point, the revolution even led to elections in Prague by the citizens, but later the Warsaw Pact Organization (WTO) forces, led by the Soviet Union, overran Prague and the revolution ended in failure.

During the Cold War, East German troops participated in only one full-scale operation, the Prague Spring, except for security operations on the border between East and West Germany and at the Berlin Wall.

And the 9th Tank Division is one of the few tank divisions in East Germany that is considered to be the most elite. If he was involved in the Prague incident as the commander of the 9th Tank Division, and if he had achieved results, he would be an outstanding person. It was only natural that the Soviets would remember him.

He later moved to the General Staff and became a key figure in the modification of the East German army's equipment, and it is thanks to him that the latest equipment such as the T-72 main battle tank and the Mi-24 (Kakadur) Hind ⁽²⁰⁾ attack helicopter are deployed in the army, only a few years behind the Soviet Union.

"Really?"

It makes me angry to think that this unpredictable man might be the best choice for the chairman of the T Committee.

However, the fact that he is a key figure in the current East German military means that he is someone who is positive about the current system and may make conservative decisions. In particular, he would probably try to avoid anything that would threaten the existence of the tank armed forces, which is where he stands — the introduction of tactical fighters.

East Germany was the main battlefield of the Cold War, and the East German army, along with the Soviet army, was supposed to hit the West with its superior tank forces in the event of an emergency. The tank department was the place where the key personnel gathered. If you are in Strachwitz's position, you cannot ignore his opinion that it would be unacceptable to lose the position of the main force to those who handle tactical fighters, a weapon that is neither from the sea nor from the land.

"It's not funny, is it"

I couldn't help but let out a genuine thought.

But since I was given the task of creating a tactical fighter unit, I needed to demonstrate its usefulness. If Major General Strachwitz is really a conservative, the worst that can happen is that he might become an obstacle.

Besides - and this is a very fishy story - if the creation of a Tactical Surface Fighter unit is realized, it will definitely become a political platform for me. After all, I don't have a predecessor. In other words, from the standpoint of career advancement, there is no greater advantage than this.

"Likes and dislikes don't matter in wars"

I nodded obediently.

"I know, so I need to find out how much this study abroad experience will require of us in this war."

"Right."

After muttering this, Vikman chuckled again. Just like you would expect, I was curious and asked her again.

"What is it this time?"

"I'm sorry, I just didn't think you would be oblivious to. the real reason why you don't like Major General Strachwitz."

"If you don't mind, I'd like to hear it."

"He's like you, you know."

Vikman said something outrageous.

I, on the other hand, froze on the spot.

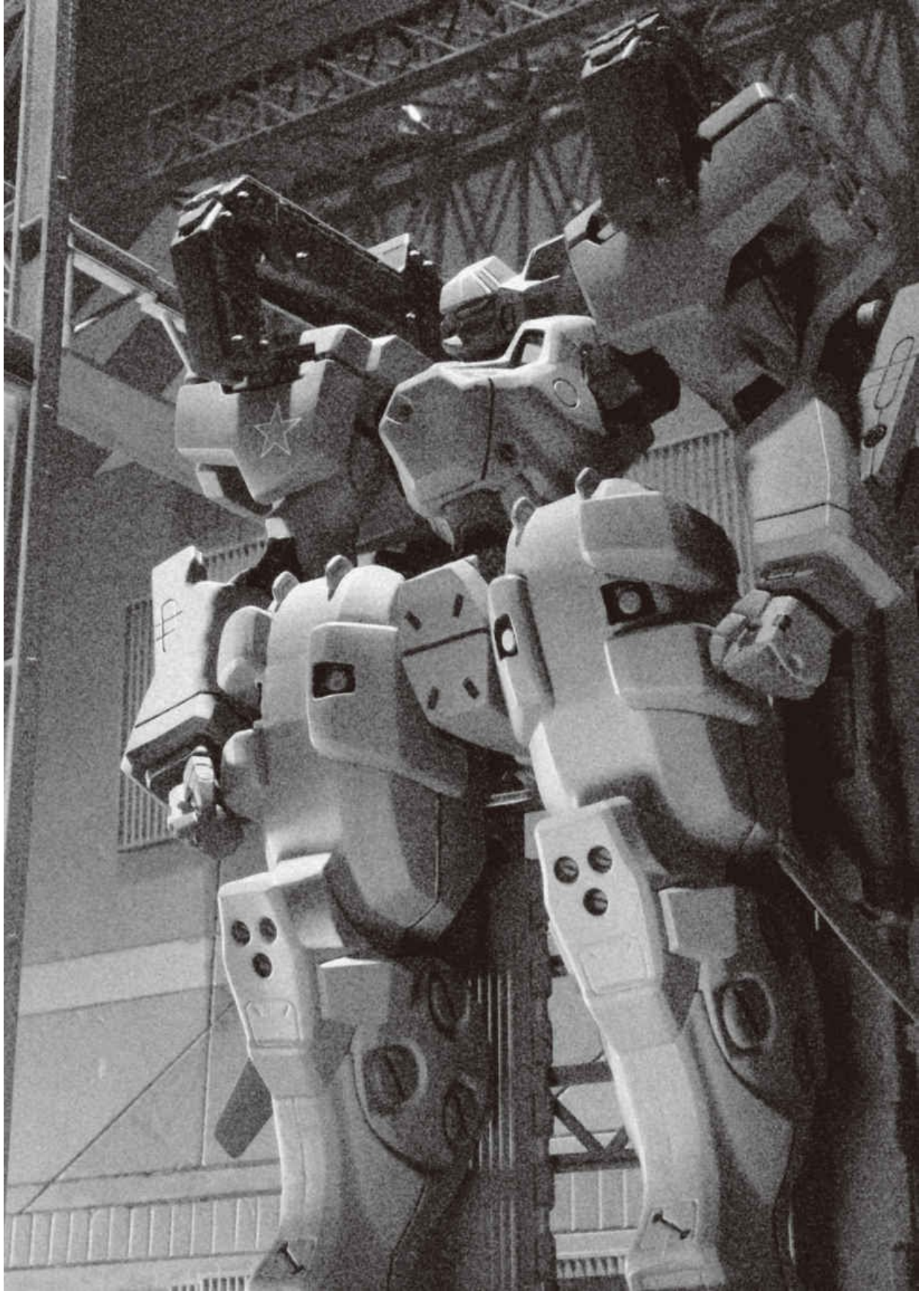
I ... Resemble him? That person who goes around boasting about his daughter?

"The spitting image of you. On the surface, he is politically considerate, but by showing his humanity, he makes the other party less cautious. I think that's what you've been doing, don't you? The fact that he has gone beyond the level of doting on his family and has traveled beyond the horizon of common sense is also similar. Is this what you call dōzokuken-o [\(21\)](#)?"

I want to deny it, but I also feel aggrieved that doing so would make me seem like I'm being too forward.

Again, Vikman smiled at me, who sank in silence, and then said, as if to pierce me.

"So, perhaps you and the Major General can be the best of friends."



In a huge hangar next to the runway at Kubinka Air Base, a giant wrought from composite material - a tactical fighter- stands tall.

"This is the F-4R (Phantom), owned by our military."

One of the instructors attached to the Soviet army announced in Russian as he walked to the giant's feet.

According to his prior briefing, he himself was a former Air Force pilot who had flown the F-4R (Phantom) as a pilot, and had participated in battles against BETA in the vicinity of Kashgar.

"This TSF is a modified version of the McDuell F-4 (Phantom), the first TSF ever developed by the United States, for use in cold climates."

As I listened to these words, my consciousness was completely taken away by a bipedal weapon that I had seen for the first time in my life. I had also been trained to pilot a large MMU in an indoor swimming pool, but it was not this large.

I understand that this is a tactical machine that is considered to be the trump card in the war against BETA. However, I can't imagine this weapon in action.

It is inferior to aeroplanes in speed, and inferior to tanks in firepower. The frontal projected area is huge, and the complicated mechanism proves that it is not easy to maintain. The fact that this thing is being used as a weapon is hard to understand.

"From now on, you will undergo classroom training, simulator training, and then training on the actual TSF. At the same time, you will be given maintenance training to learn the structure and characteristics of the F-4R (Phantom)."

The instructor continued, pointing at the F-4R (Phantom) with his thumb.

"The tactical Fighter is made up of a completely different concept from the conventional weapons you know so far. You may be Air Force Academy or Army Air Corps cadets, and you may have some familiarity with three-dimensional maneuvering in aeroplanes, but cast away your common sense — this is my consolation advice from a former fighter pilot in the Soviet Air Force."

In the 36-member Moscow study team, 24 were from the Air Force Academy and 12 were from the Army Air Corps Academy. The term "Army Air Corps Academy" can easily cause confusion, but the point is that it is a school for becoming a helicopter pilot.

"The tactical Fighter is still in its infancy as a weapon, and even in the Soviet Union, it is difficult to say that it has gained full trust."

The instructor lowered his voice.

"The F-4R (Phantom) is the Soviet Union's main tactical fighter, but most of the fighters currently in service were imported from the United States, or their parts were imported and assembled in the Soviet mainland. As a result, the number of operational fighters itself is small, and maintenance parts are always in short supply. Furthermore, the sharing of combat records is restricted due to the need to maintain secrecy."

The darkness of the U.S.-Soviet cooperation runs deep, and even the information the instructor is giving is likely to be far from the truth, I thought.

"However, if not only the Soviet army, but also your comrades in the Warsaw Pact armed forces, such as yourselves, operate tactical fighters and achieve results, the value of tactical fighters will surely be recognized and they will become an indispensable part of the people's victory. In this sense, I hope that the next six months will be meaningful for all of you."

The instructor asked all the students if they had any questions.

I had one question I wanted to ask him, but before I could put it into words in my mind, one of the students raised his hand.

Casimir Hempel - I believe he was a graduate of the Army Air Corps Academy and an even more "intense" military enthusiast than I was.

"I heard that the Soviet military is developing its own TSF, the MiG-21 (Balalaika). What are the differences between the MiG-21 (Balalaika) [\(22\)](#) and this F-4R (Phantom)?"

"I can't tell you, gentlemen, because it would violate confidentiality."

Hempel looked blatantly disappointed. I made eye contact with Katzen, who was standing next to me, and held back a wry smile. Hempel is a maniac who can recite the names and specs of Western weapons at a glance, so it's only natural that he would want to know about the potential successor to the F-4R (Phantom).

Perhaps sympathizing with Hempel's obvious disappointment, the instructor continued with a bitter smile.

"However, if it's to the extent of a rumor, then I will tell you a few things"

Hempel's eyes suddenly lit up, what a self-interested guy. I mean, He should make it a habit to think first about why the instructor has decided to speak, or else, he would get manipulated by the information.

"The first and most important thing is that the MiG-21 (Balalaika) is a purely domestic tactical surface fighter. If we can mass-produce a purely domestically produced, up-to-date tactical fighter, we will be able to solve the problem of deployment numbers on the front lines."

A purely domestic tactical surface fighter... At these words, the Air Force Academy group had a subtle expression on their faces, knowing the reality of the operating rate of the jet fighters introduced from the Soviet Union. However, I felt a little hope.

If mass production is to be carried out in East Germany, the MiG-21 (Balalaika), which is also in the East camp, should have a lower hurdle for introduction than the F-4R (Phantom), which is involved in the contract problem of licensed production with the United States.

"The MiG-21 (Balalaika) will reflect the lessons learned from the F-4R (Phantom) and will be designed to be more suitable for front-line operations. The combat data obtained by our country should be a great advantage in the development of the new TSF. Any other questions....."

I was the only one who raised his hand.

"I would like to know about the formation of tactical fighter units in the Soviet Army. Since tactical fighters are a completely new concept of weaponry, I believe that we should be adapted to their formation and operations."

Just in case. I've heard from my conversation with Strachwitz that there is one squadron of twelve planes, but I wanted to confirm because I don't trust him.

"The formation of the tactical surface fighters follows that of the Air Force. In other words, four planes make a platoon, three platoons of 12 planes make a squadron, and three squadrons of 36 planes make a battalion. In the Soviet Union, however, a battalion or larger may be accompanied by a command platoon, as is the case with tank units. In the current situation where the air force has been hollowed out, it is necessary to have a department to fill it, and this has been adopted as the best formation for the war against BETA."

A faint commotion; it would take thirty-six giants like the F-4R (Phantom) to form a single tactical surface fighter battalion. No doubt it would be a spectacular sight.

In my mind, I quickly simulate the procedures required for operations in East Germany, wondering how large a base and how many logistical personnel would be needed to operate such a huge weapon in one place.

Common sense tells us that the quickest way to do this is to use an airfield of the Air Force, like the one at Kubinka. However, since the Army would be taking over an Air Force airfield, it would be inevitable that there would be a backlash.

And how is this possible in East Germany, a country with a smaller land area and fewer bases than the Soviet Union? How would it be possible to train the huge number of rear echelon personnel that would be needed? Does East Germany have the organizational flexibility to do so?

"As for the formation of battalions and above, three battalions constitute one regiment. However, at the moment, there are hardly any tactical surface fighter units of regimental size."

"There are not enough of them", the instructor muttered.

"Aren't they incorporated into the formation of the Tank Division?"

"Yeah. There's also the issue of sharing operational information and expanding logistics. And, well, there's a lot going on around here."

The instructor laughed, and the foreign students laughed as well - he reluctantly admitted that even within the Soviet military, there was a rift between the tactical surface fighter units and the other ground forces.

After the laughter subsided, I asked again,

"I have one more question. I heard a rumor that there is a species that can disable air power. What methods are being used to deal with this enemy?"

Everyone's eyes focused on me. It seems that my question, which touched on confidential matters, was too much for the instructor to finish on a rumor level. After some silence, the instructor replied in a clerical tone instead of the light tone he had used before.

"I can't give you a specific tactical answer right now."

"I understand. Thank you, sir."

Just as I was thinking that it would be profitable just to confirm the existence of an enemy that nullifies air power, the instructor continued with his words.

"However, if I were to share one of my experiences, it would be"

I raised both my eyebrows, because I noticed the change in how the instructor referred to himself in first person.

The instructor used a strong tone of voice as if to curse.

"They are not something that can be dealt with through theoretical discussions here."

The scenery was as if you were flying in a jet fighter plane with an all-glass cockpit over a vast snowfield.

I know that this is not reality, but a virtual space. This is the first time I've done simulator training, but to be frank, I'm still not used to it at all.

The reason is that the three-dimensional maneuvering that is the selling point of TSF is a tricky one, and the flight characteristics are completely different from those of aeroplanes.

The sky and earth are reversed, and the landscape gets torn backwards in an instant... I thought I was used to such maneuvers, having repeated them many times in jet fighters during my time at the academy.

In my head, I understand that tactical fighters can fly in a lower speed range than jet fighters. However, when you are used to the speed of a jet fighter, you feel as if you are stalling.

"—You bastards, How many times do I have to tell you so you would understand! You are gaining altitude! It's fine if you're pessimistic about your lack of talent and want to get shot down by the enemy, but don't use your precious TSF as collateral damage!"

Instructor Evgeni Gertzen - the same person who first introduced us to the F-4R (Phantom) two months ago - gave the order as if it was a real battle.

"If this were a battlefield, you'd be dead in a heartbeat! You can't even use it as a bulletproof shield!"

All the foreign students, including me, shouted in a pained voice, "Copy!"

"I want you to be able to handle the F-4R (Phantom) as if it was your own limb! If you can't do that, the likes of three-dimensional maneuvers would be impossible for you! Quickly pack your bags and go home!"

I was struggling to stabilize the plane's attitude by forcibly gripping the stick.

The control system of a tactical fighter is made up of not only physical operations like the stick and foot lever, but also thought control through reinforced equipment, but since the pilots had almost no experience, they had to rely on the OS and avionics. I was told that the boarding data would be stored in the enhanced equipment, and eventually it would be optimally matched to the TSF- but for now, we just have to keep trying.

Nevertheless, the experience of struggling like this made me realize, even if I didn't like it, that the tactical fighter was a completely new concept of weaponry.

It has mobility not found in ground-based weapons and three-dimensional maneuverability that exceeds that of attack helicopters. Although there is a limit to the amount of ammunition it can carry, it is more than enough if you consider how to operate it. This high level of versatility should be a great weapon in terms of its ability to respond quickly to unexpected changes in the war situation...

"Cartoshka 1, leader plane, keep track of the rest!"

The instructor's angry shout echoed in my headset, forcing me to pull my thoughts back from where they had left off. Only my plane, which had increased its speed too much, was sticking out. I hurriedly reduced the speed of my plane.

My own voice echoed through the ruined city.

"Cartoshka 1 to Cartoshka 2! Target acquired on radar! They're approaching from the south of the city... Close in and draw their attention to us! Target it and attack!"

"Cartoshka 2, copy!"

Katzen replied vigorously. By the way, "Cartoshka" means potato in Russian, and it was a name that I was grateful for, given to me by Instructor Gertzen.

Me and Katzen began to move toward the target area in a series of short distance leaps (Short Boosts) through the streets of the city - a movement in which we repeatedly made small leaps with intermittent jets.

Three months after the start of our study in Moscow - that is, another month and a half after the start of training in the virtual space - we had begun training in anti-BETA warfare.

However, the information about BETA was not disclosed yet, and it was still a mock battle in the virtual space on the simulator, against instructors or foreign students.

Today's exercise in the city center was against the same platoon of Vikman and Yauch. They must have been using Cartoshka 3 and Cartoshka 4 codes.

Honestly, I don't know how combat training between tactical fighters is effective against the unidentified monster known as BETA, but for now, we just have to go through the curriculum we've been given.

Not to say it was without its interesting aspects. After all, we had known each other since our days at the Air Force Academy. We knew each other's temperament and behavioral patterns.

The TSF that I had just seen was steadily closing the distance between us while destroying the points where we might be ambushed.

"Cartoshka 2! The one approaching is definitely Cartoshka 3. If they get into close combat, it's going to be nasty!"

Cartoshka 3 — Vikman, as expected of a former Olympic candidate, showed an outstanding sense of short-range combat in both aeroplanes and tactical fighters. She was also the most skilled fighter on the study abroad team in tactical surface fighter combat. Although she does not admit it, she seems to be more lively as a TSF pilot than as an aeroplane pilot.

"Cartoshka 4 is probably waiting to see how we'll do. If Cartoshka 3 comes in contact with them, it will provide support, and if we attack from a distance, it will come after us."

Cartoshka 4 - Yauch is an all-around type with no weaknesses. He has a high average skill level, and he doesn't use any unorthodox tactics.

On the other hand, Cartoshka 2: Katzen's piloting skills are in the middle of the pack, but he is the type that can read the intentions of his colleagues and move flexibly accordingly, and he himself says that he is more comfortable to be someone's colleague.

"— So, what are you going to do?"

"No change in plan. I'm going to run into Cartoshka 3. The protocol is..."

—As it turns out, this exercise ended in victory for us.

As expected, I was the first to make contact with Vikman's F-4R (Phantom). I was pushed into a dogfight, but soon after, Katzen succeeded in attacking her from a blind spot at high altitude, just as I had instructed.

I've always been told not to gain altitude, so much so that my instructor has been in my dreams, so perhaps she didn't expect me to attack from such a place. He didn't miss and succeeded in hitting her with a high-explosive projectile.

After that, however, we had quite a fierce battle. Katzen did a boost dive, but crashed, leaving me and Yauch in a one-on-one gun battle. In the end, after the gun battle, I escaped at full speed to a dead-end compartment, and Yauch followed me. I did a flying kick to the dead end wall, and although my main leg was damaged, I was able to change direction, but Yauch crashed into me and was unable to move, ending with a victory for me and Katzen.

"You're still as reckless as ever, you!"

After the exercise was over, Yauch came out of the simulator and glared at me, half in disgust, half in anger.

"This exercise was indeed a rivalry between tactical planes, but our real enemy is the BETA! And yet, to use such tactics.....! It's not just cowardly, it's inhuman!"

"Vikman's preemptive defeat was absolutely necessary. If it weren't for that, I would have been defeated by Vikman first."

"There you go again with that nonsense!"

"I believe the main focus of this training is to learn the tactical maneuvers necessary to operate a tactical fighter."

Following these words, I whispered in Yauch's ear.

"You are aware of the characteristics of the F-4R (Phantom), aren't you? That sluggishness..."

Yauch was somewhat quiet, then nodded hesitantly, "Yes."

The F-4R's maneuverability is certainly far superior to that of attack helicopters, as I've discovered during my simulator training over the past two months, but there is no small amount of stiffness when the jump unit generates a large amount of thrust or after an action. This lag can be fatal, especially in close-range combat, so you need to think two or three moves ahead.

If you turn off the auto-balancer, you can shorten the lag time a bit, but you run the risk of falling over or putting unexpected stress on the joints.

For this reason, even if it was a medium-range artillery battle, it would not be able to handle an ultra-close combat battle using a short sword for close combat, and Vikman was the only one among us who could do that. In this way, getting close to the BETA would be like dying.

"If you're going to be fighting an enemy at close quarters, it's best to know how far you can recklessly go."

"Well, you have a point."

Yauch nodded and continued grimly.

"But I must also point out that you are still as cunning as ever. I suggest you fix that."

Yauch jabbed his index finger at me.

"I'm sure you've learned to listen to others a little better since Vikman warned you about it when you first entered the Air Force Academy, but it seems to me that you're still essentially the same. Those who do not question the means will one day be crushed by the same hand."

"Thank you for your advice, but this is my way of doing things. Otherwise, I wouldn't be here."

I replied, sticking my tongue out at him.

"Well, I suppose you can only really choose your means when you really need them."

After the simulator exercise and dinner, I collapsed onto the bed in my room at the dormitory.

As in East Germany, foreign students had two days off per week, and could take Saturdays and Sundays off, but there were hardly any proper rest days because of the Moscow city tour and a party invitation by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and I was not able to go home for Christmas or the New Year's holidays.

In the Soviet Union, Christmas was celebrated on January 7 according to the Julian calendar, in accordance with the traditions of the Russian Orthodox Church, and although the country was the headquarters of socialism, unlike East Germany it was celebrated on a much larger scale.

Instead, we were allowed to make phone calls from our quarters to East Germany, and the foreign students lined up in front of the pay phones to drown their sorrows.

A Russian mechanic I had befriended during training told me that all the phones on the base were tapped by the KGB - but it was better than nothing.

"Come to think of it, I wonder if it arrived..."

I got out of bed with what little energy I had left and looked at the envelope on the desk. It was addressed to me, and the sender was jointly named Irisdina and Beatrix. It was the letter they had sent to me.

Having visited the Soviet Union with my father when I was a child, I had anticipated that it would be difficult to contact them by phone, so I had recommended that they write to me.

I opened the package with a snap and took out the contents. Inside were two letters and some photographs. The photos were snapshots of Irisdina and Beatrix, both of whom were smiling happily. My mouth loosened up as I caught a glimpse of them.

The two letters were written by Irisdina and Beatrix, each in their own handwriting, and they were reporting on their recent situation in their own way.

From what they wrote, it seems that both of them are spending their time in good health and getting along as well as ever.

Both academics and club activities are going well, especially the latter. They seem to have been selected to advance to the national competition in the winter. Of course, the event is synchronized diving - the event in which they excel the most and the event that led to our meeting.

On the other hand, the winter in East Germany is even harsher than last year, and there is a lot of traffic chaos in Berlin. However, the food supply is somewhat better, and mass merchandisers like Haro are beginning to stock up.

At the end of Irisdina's letter, she wrote, "I know it's cold there too, so please take care of yourself so you don't catch a cold," and Beatrix's letter ended, "If I can't stay with you for the next New Year, I'll make

sure you never see Iridina in a bathing suit again. And following that, in Iridina's handwriting, she added, "Beatrix misses you." Thank you, my sister, but I know without being told.

I dare say, the two of them were humming and hawing together while writing these letters. It was easy to imagine the scene. Beatrix's horrible advice notwithstanding, the fact that the two of them are continuing their peaceful life together is the best news and encouragement for me.

Thanks to the support of the Brehme family, Iridina, who continues to live alone, has not experienced any trouble. In fact, thanks to the friendly rivalry with Beatrix, her grades at school are improving. Probably, if nothing happens to her, Iridina will at least be able to go on to high school and qualify to enter university.

If she could get into a university and get a job in a public institution, the chances of Iridina being involved in the war would be slim to none.

This may not be the best thinking for a military man, but I didn't care. To me, Iridina was an existence that I had to protect, even at the cost of my life. I would take any means necessary to achieve that.

Well, maybe it's not Iridina that I should really be concerned about, but the path of my girlfriend Beatrix, but in her case, her father will protect her.

In addition, the relationship between Abel and Beatrix is still in a state of cold war, and lately, Abel and I spend more time talking than him and Beatrix. It seemed that Abel's coercive thinking and Beatrix's independent thinking were parallel and would never cross.

Just as my thoughts reached that point, there was a knock at the door. When I opened it, I saw Yauch with a tense look on his face.

"We received an official notice from the T committee. Our request to visit the front lines was granted permission from the Soviet government. We'll participate as well."

Yauch said in a firm voice.

"The whole study abroad team?"

"No, just our platoon. The rest of us will stay on base. But I heard that some of the T-Committee will be joining us. We leave early tomorrow morning. We are going to Kazakhstan."

Kazakhstan - the Kazakh Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, one of the Soviet Union states, and is located in the southernmost part of the Soviet Union. It is a country in Central Asia, and is also close to Kashgar. For this reason, it has always been exposed to BETA attacks, and even now the Soviet army is engaged in a defensive battle.

"That's a bit sudden."

"It's for the Russians' convenience. We have no choice but to obey them. However, we will definitely be able to see tactical fighters in action on the battlefield. It's a definite plus for us."

I nodded, then said something that had been bothering me for a long time, but I hadn't been able to ask.

"What do you think, Yauch? About being transferred and having your dreams of becoming an astronaut cut short. Now that you have been kicked out of the Air Force and became involved in the creation of a TSF unit."

I said in all seriousness. What awaited us in the future was actual combat. Even as a military observer, there is still the possibility of death.

"It never crossed my mind"

For some reason, Yauch sounded positive.

"If you are involved in the creation of a TSF unit, you may be involved in the reform of the entire East German army. If we can succeed in that, defend East Germany, and win the war, ... It's not like you don't have those thoughts too, right?"

"Once you're a hero, there's a chance you'll make it up into space."

"Yeah. I'm willing to bet on that possibility, for the day when the universe becomes a frontier for mankind again. But first, we have to take back the moon and Mars from them."

Yauch then added, a bit embarrassed.

"So I'm counting on you. You seem to be able to see things that I can't. I'm in your care, comrade."

I thought I saw the innocence that had been lost from me in the sight of Yauch closing the door with his back to me.

With a rattling and loud vibration, the truck carrying us moved through the streets of the city.

The name of the city is Uralsk. It is the capital of the West Kazakhstan Province in the western part of the country, and located near the border with Russia, only about 40 kilometers away. It has a population of about 200,000 people and is located on the west bank of the Ural River, which divides western Kazakhstan into east and west. It seems to be a town with quite a long history.

However, as we gazed intently on what's outside the truck window, we didn't have the mental capacity to recall such things.

"What the heck is this?"

It was Katzen's dumbfounded voice in the back seat. Yauch and Vikman also had a similar expression on their faces.

In the world outside the truck - the city of Uralsk -, there was a scene that seemed like hell on earth.

A fierce blizzard. It was not the kind of blizzard you see in East Germany or Moscow. Visibility was less than a few dozen meters, and the temperature outside was 25 degrees below zero. The truck we were riding in was a vehicle modified for cold weather, and although the interior was heated, we were sure our body heat would be taken away in an instant if we got outside.

To make matters worse, the city was shrouded in darkness. It was only eleven o'clock in the morning.

In the shadows of the buildings, there were many thin, emaciated figures. However, the flame of life was definitely lost from them. There must be many more frozen corpses lying on the snow-covered streets.

Some people were barely moving, but they were ripping off what little winter gear they had from those who had frozen to death.

This is hell, isn't it? But socialism denies religion, so this can't be hell? If that's the case, How can this scene be described?

"It's even worse than I imagined."

Major General Strachwitz, who was sitting in front of me, muttered to his adjutant in German. I wondered if he was speaking his native tongue on the ground, or if he was being considerate of the Soviet soldiers escorting him.

"I didn't realize the situation had gotten to this point."

"Can't they even afford to help the refugees?"

The Adjutant muttered, as if in disbelief.

Strachwitz nodded.

"It's more likely that they don't even allow refugees to pass through Russian territory at this point."

"As expected. Is it to curb public unrest?"

The whole of Kazakhstan is now a battlefield. The neighboring countries of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan are also being invaded by BETA. At the very least, the number of refugees must be over 30 million. What would happen if such a large number of refugees entered Russia in such a short time?

I had mixed feelings. The Soviet Union's policy was outrageous, but I could understand the concern that it might shake the system of the nation.

Some of the refugees must have witnessed the BETA. If such refugees were to flow into Russia and spread the truth about the war, ...

"Nonetheless, A blizzard to this extent. It's a miracle we made it to Uralsk at all, considering that the transportation network is dead, and our means of transportation could have been limited to walking"

The Adjutant nodded silently. I, on the other hand, was horrified at the thought of another possibility.

If the BETA continued to chip away at the Soviet Union's territory, how many refugees would be created? There are more than 100 million people living in Europe and Russia west of the Urals. How many of these people will flow into East Germany? If East Germany has to shelter the incoming refugees, that alone could bankrupt the economy of East Germany.

"..... I'd say only about a million of them made it out alive to the Soviet army."

The conversation between Strachwitz and his Adjutant continued.

"It's probably better to think of them as having been killed by nuclear winter rather than by the BETA. But are they even capable of invading in an environment like this?"

"I don't know, but the BETA are also active on Mars and the moon, which are far harsher environments than here - It's best not to measure by our common sense."

Before I knew it, the truck passed through the city center and reached the national highway on the east bank of the Ural River. The number of frozen corpses lying on the side of the road was not decreasing, and this made us feel heavy.

Then, in the middle of the snowstorm, we saw a group of black steel - a tank unit. They were probably Soviet T-72s, and there were about 30 infantry fighting vehicles in the vicinity.

According to what we were told by the Soviets on the move, there was no clear front line on the battlefield between the BETA and humanity; there was a human-controlled area, a BETA-controlled area, and a middle zone where neither side controlled, and all areas were unstable and shifting.

It seems that BETA is not clearly expanding their frontiers, but rather repeating the movement of going on the offensive in search of a new base when it exceeds the capacity of the area centered on the hive. Although they seem to be heading relatively westward most of the time, the point of their offensive is not constant, and they may be invaded from unexpected directions.

For this reason, it is said that the Soviet army has deployed its main ground forces in the West Kazakhstan, Orenburg and Chelyabinsk provinces of Russia to prevent the BETA from advancing westward. Perhaps the T-72 battalion we just saw is part of that force.

That was all the explanation from the Soviet side, but it was enough for me to know that a military science nightmare was emerging.

After all, the three main battlefields I just mentioned were over 1,500 kilometers long. It was a vast distance that rivaled the golden age of the Russo-German War ⁽²³⁾. Moreover, BETA has also penetrated from central to eastern Kazakhstan, which is not a main battlefield. A total of 3,000 kilometers of the frontlines — even the Soviet army, which possessed the largest number of troops in the east, would be unable to construct a proper defense line. Furthermore, the Soviet Union has not clearly reported on the expansion of BETA's area of control, perhaps in order to suppress civil unrest, and there is an air of forbearance in the outward mobilization, perhaps to prevent leaks of the deployment area.

"..... So far, the battlefield has been contained outside Russia, but if it were to spread to the Russian mainland, the Soviet Union would not be able to avoid moving into a state of total war."

With his gaze fixed on the tank corps, Strachwitz expressed his view.

"In particular, if Western Kazakhstan is breached, the next targets will be the Caspian Sea ⁽²⁴⁾ and the cities on the west bank of the Volga - Astrakhan, Saratov, and Stalingrad. All of these cities are centers of heavy industry in the Soviet Union. They will be preparing to evacuate their factories, but at least they will be determined to defend the Volga River. If the Volga River is breached - Moscow will be in danger. In that case, the capital may have to be moved."

"Are you saying we could abandon Moscow?"

"Even in World War II, the Soviet Union tried to move its capital to Gorky City ⁽²⁵⁾."

The Adjutant gulped. After a pause of several seconds, Strachwitz added in a quieter voice.

"And if the Volga River is breached and the battlefield extends into Ukraine - even into Eastern Europe, then if the BETA moves further north from Moscow and reaches the Baltic and North Sea, we may have to intercept the BETA while being separated from the Soviet Union."

It was the worst future imaginable.

"However, no matter how much the BETA continues to expand its area of control, the Soviet army is the most elite in the east, and it is unlikely that the current front will collapse in a short time."

The Adjutant was about to utter a rebuttal, as if clinging to something, when suddenly, as if out of nowhere, the truck reversed and began to head back towards Uralisk. It also increased its speed.

"What's wrong?"

Asked Strachwitz. The Soviet guide answered with a puzzled expression after talking to the people in the passenger seat.

"I'm told that the BETA offensive has begun. Based on the direction of the offensive, there is a possibility that the Zhiguli base could become a battlefield."

The Zhiguli base was the TSF base we were going to visit. It was only about twenty kilometers from the front lines.

"We're changing our inspection destination to the Teploye base in Russian territory. Worst case scenario, Uralsk may become a battlefield as well."

In other words, there was a risk that the front line, which was supposed to be supported by the main force of the Soviet army, would be breached by the BETA. And the Soviet side is aware of this - the more they urge us to evacuate, the more their frontline forces are being depleted.

We could only gasp at the reality that confronted us.

Teploye Air Base was also enveloped in a blizzard and darkness. However, as one would expect from a rear base in Russian territory, the runways were kept clean, and many F-4Rs (Phantom) were repeatedly taking off in the bad weather.

A formation of F-4Rs sortied from a TSF base near the front lines. That alone was an intriguing sight for us, but the real shock came afterwards.

We were ushered into a command center located in the basement of the base. Apparently, the Soviets had decided to keep us in the dark.

The moment we were allowed to enter the room by our guide, our eyes were glued to the large monitor on the wall and the many smaller monitors on the sides of the wall.

On the large monitor, the war situation in western Kazakhstan was shown in the form of military symbols. As I had feared earlier, the BETA had broken through the front line and were rushing toward Uralsk. The troops on the front line have been decimated and are running away, while reinforcements, including TSF units, are rushing from the rear to spearhead the BETA — those tank soldiers may have been part of the defeated troops.

And on the small monitor, the image that seemed to have been transmitted from that tactical fighter unit was flowing directly into the screen.

I read the information on the small monitor and steeled myself. If things continue as they were, the tactical machine unit would be in contact with the spearhead of the BETA in a few minutes.

When I came back to my senses, I could hear the conversation Strachwitz was having with the base commander. It was in Russian.

"Properly speaking, You all are not supposed to be allowed to go this far."

The base commander seemed to be in a foul mood.

"But if it's an order from the top, I don't have a choice... at least try to stay out of our way."

"Thank you for your consideration."

Strachwitz replied politely. Well, if I were in the same position as the base commander, I would have behaved in the same way. This is a place where lives are exchanged... I don't think I'd want to let a bunch of people from who knows where into a place like that.

I looked at the monitor again, which showed the battle situation. The TSF units are heading towards the vanguard of the BETA. Although the maneuverability of tactical fighter units is remarkable, The speed of the BETA's march seems to be incomparable to that of tanks, even though there is nothing blocking their

way. A creature that can demonstrate such speed even in this bad weather - it's beyond the bounds of common sense.

"Tactical fighter units, we're about to make contact with the BETA swarm!"

The operator shouted, and the image captured by the tactical fighter's sensors was displayed on the monitor - and I finally saw it.

A huge monster that looked like a mixture of a crustacean and a caterpillar - dozens or hundreds of them swarmed together, approaching at breakneck speed.

The length of the monster is probably about the same as a tactical fighter. The armored shell, or what can only be described as an armored shell, has a distorted, speckled pattern that makes it all the more eerie.

This is the BETA... I'm going to be fighting a monster like that?

I wasn't the only one who was in a panic. All the Germans in the room were literally speechless.

Without pausing, the TSF unit engaged the BETA. Landing on the snowfield, they retreated while maintaining a certain distance from the BETA, then opened fire in rapid succession.

The impassioned screams of the pilots echoed through the air.

"—You alien-origin species! Die, Die, Dieeeeeeeeeee!"

"—Don't come any closer, don't come any closer!"

"—Get the hell out of our mother earth!"

"—Avenge our comrades in arms!"

This was enough to make me realize that the TSF pilots on the front lines were losing their mental essence. Whether the cause was pure fear of BETA or not, the commander of the TSF unit did not try to admonish his men for their cries.

"That's the Destroyer class."

The base commander told us in an emotionally restrained voice.

"It's one of the larger BETA species, and often serves as the vanguard during an attack. They use their armored shells to attack with their impulse angle - a physical attack. It's a simple and primitive means of attack, but that armored shell cannot be penetrated by a tank's main gun or an assault gun's fire at normal artillery range. If you're going to target it, you'd better aim for the back or the raw parts of the sides."

True to the base commander's words, the tactical fighter units deployed to flank the Destroyer class, concentrating on the areas where artillery fire could pass through.

The Destroyer class fell from the sides, spraying reddish-black bodily fluids.

However, after killing a few of them, the group of Destroyer-classes changed direction. They were once again facing each other, and their artillery fire was flicked off by the armored shells one after another. In order to flank them again, they had to jump into the middle of the enemy.

"The slow-footed tanks are no match" — Yauch's muttering sounded awfully loud.

"Other large species include the even more massive Fort class and the Grappler class, which excels in close combat. The smaller types are the tank class and the warrior class."

The base commander continued amidst the sounds of TSF combat and gunfire.

"They often appear after the vanguard Destroyer-class groups, and further behind, in the BETA group, is the dreaded laser class."

An entity that took the skies away from mankind and caused the human front to collapse in one fell swoop — that is the laser class.

The base commander indicated the war situation map with his chin. We turned to look at him and swallowed another breath.

Just as the base commander had said, behind the Destroyer class group was a series of icons that appeared to be the mainstay of the BETA ladder. The number was not 100 or 200. It was estimated at five thousand — an enormous number.

And at the end of the line, an icon that seemed to indicate the laser class. The exact number is unknown.

"The laser class has a range of 44 kilometers for a target at an altitude of 150 meters. Normal air attacks and artillery fire will undoubtedly be intercepted by the laser class. If we concentrate enough firepower to overwhelm the number of laser-classes, we can saturate their ability to deal with us, but such a tactic is impossible with proper means. The battle line is too wide to concentrate artillery, and if we concentrate poorly and they overtake the defense line, we will be routed."

The base commander continued bitterly.

"AL (anti-laser) rounds, which produce a heavy metal cloud that diminishes the power of lasers, are also used in some cases. However, they are too few in number and can only be used when the situation calls for it. In past battles, our treasured OMG (Operation Maneuver Group) ⁽²⁶⁾ plunged into the laser class with the protection of the heavy metal clouds, but the result was annihilation."

The Operation Maneuver Group (OMG) was one of the main corps formed by the Soviet Union during the Cold War, based on the deep-vertical attack doctrine that the Soviet Union had been studying for many years. It basically consisted of two tank divisions and three motorized sniper divisions, and had enough logistics to fight on its own for a long period of time.

The mission was to penetrate deep into the enemy lines and overrun cities and important bases in order to contain a nuclear attack from NATO in the event of an emergency in East or West Germany. The goal is to reach the Rhine River, which forms the border between West Germany and France. In this way, NATO would be forced to hesitate in using tactical nuclear weapons that would cause collateral damage to civilians and friendly forces.

In other words, even the most elite of the Soviet military - the Operations Maneuver Group (OMG), a group of commanders with the best understanding of breakthrough combat and an irreplaceable trump card — could not destroy the laser class, and the unit was annihilated.

The heavy metal cloud, by its very nature, causes severe radio interference. If used carelessly, it will only hamper the operations of ground troops. It is also toxic to the human body.

The commander added that even if the heavy metal cloud could be deployed, it would not be effective in this weather.

The Destroyer-class group was being reduced to a trickle by the retreating fire of the tactical fighter units, but the main force in the rear was charging forward without slowing down.

From the rear of the tactical fighter units, tanks and motorized sniper divisions are approaching the enemy's main force, but there are only six or seven divisions in total. It is unlikely that they will be able to completely stop the enemy's main force, which even the maneuvering groups could not manage. The ammunition and fuel for the tactical fighter units battling the Destroyer class are also rapidly depleting.

I felt a sense of dread run down my spine as I thought. Who's going to hold off that enemy force, and how will they do it? If this continues, not only Uralsk, but this base as well, will be in danger.

"..... Couldn't you have sent a tactical fighter unit in from the flank of the main force to eliminate the laser class?"

I asked subconsciously, trying to escape my fear. I knew as soon as I closed my mouth that I was being rude, but since I had spoken, I had no choice but to continue.

"As far as I can see, the tactical surface fighter units are being used for mobile defense against the Destroyer class. If you think about the speed at which the Destroyer class is advancing, I would say it's a natural response, but before that, if you destroy the Laser class, you can annihilate the Destroyer class, along with the main force, with an air attack."

"Such a thing, do you think we haven't considered it?"

The base commander glared at me and replied in a throwaway manner.

"Of course, there were a number of pilots who argued that this was the best course of action, that the mobility of the tactical fighters would allow them to penetrate the BETA swarms and reach the laser class. A number of pilots made a plea that was accepted by the top and put into action. Two battalions of more than 70 F-4Rs (Phantoms), which had just arrived from the U.S. mainland, were deployed. Using all

the AL (anti-laser) ammunition they had left, and with transport and attack helicopters loaded with ammunition for TSFs in support, ...!"

The base commander's voice was trembling. He stared at the monitor instead of at us, as if trying to contain his passion.

"The result was a failure. Zero returning TSFs! The two battalions had succeeded in raiding the BETA group, but the heavy metal cloud had cut off their communications, so we had no way to monitor what had happened. Probably the battalions that entered were unable to communicate with each other, and each plane was forced into close combat and destroyed individually while being blinded by information. After the battle, The BETA expanded their territory, so it was not possible to recover the black boxes or even to verify the battle. The only thing that remains is the battle lesson that attacking the laser class with TSFs is a reckless attack that produces no results at all!"

I clenched my teeth. With the performance of the F-4R (Phantom), close combat was extremely difficult - I had learned that in training.

And there's no way that the pilots aboard the F-4R weren't aware of this risk - probably because they were determined to destroy the laser class and break the deadlock, even if it meant taking heavy losses.

"That's why I've entrusted the tactical fighter units with a mobile defensive role. Once they break through the front line, the Destroyer class group is the second most fearsome enemy after the Laser class. If the Destroyer class stands out from the rest of the BETA, we can fight them while maintaining our advantage."

"But then, the ground troops in the rear..."

The moment I asked that, the phone on the side of the base commander's desk rang. The base commander picked it up, exchanged a few words, said, "Understood" and put down the receiver.

Then, with a tightly twisted expression on his face as if he was enduring something, he stood up towering.

"We have been notified by the Operations Directorate of the Central Military Council of the Soviet Union. The situation is as follows. Please take care of it."

"Roger!"

The operator replied, and began to verbally convey the message to the pilots.

In the meantime, the ground troops came into contact with the enemy's main force and began to engage them.

In the blink of an eye, they were swallowed up in the murky waters of the BETA, and contact was lost. Perhaps the tank troops were destroying the BETA by firing their main guns, but... But in the face of the overwhelming numbers of BETA, they were unable to stop the overall momentum. This was exactly the

type of battle that the Soviet Union should have forced NATO to fight — to saturate their ability to deal with the enemy through sheer mass.

However, the BETA's momentum weakened slightly, perhaps due to the ground troops' efforts. The laser class in the rear also stopped moving.

"On the occasion of an Echelon [\(27\)](#) enemy assault, we conduct frequent bombardment deliberately to invite the irradiation of the laser class and try to locate it. If they fire the laser, we can find out where the heat source is. In this blizzard, it will be even more obvious."

The base commander announced in a sarcastic tone. Yauch asked in confusion.

"But, as Lieutenant Bernhard was about to say earlier, if we continue like this, ..."

"Our work is already done. It's up to the Air Force and Army artillery to do the rest."

"But the laser class is still"

"A short while ago I told you, An honest way of fighting can't win, so we will have to do the opposite. If you've graduated from the Air Force Academy, you know what I'm talking about. There is only one way to defeat the absolute air defenses of the laser class."

A moment of silence fell, and Strachwitz looked up at the ceiling as if he understood everything. I, too, understood what the base commander was trying to say, and my face went pale.

It was Yauch, who understood everything a moment later than I did, who spoke for all of us. His voice was close to a scream.

"No way ...Such a thing! There are still soldiers and refugees on the battlefield. Clearly, Uralsk is going to be a city of death!"

Vikman and Katzen came to the same understanding, and their complexions lost color.

"If we had enough strength, we wouldn't adopt such tactics.! But now, ...! We have no choice but to do this.....!"

"Supersaturated attack by simultaneous launch of many long-range missiles with nuclear warheads.....! Sure, that might be able to destroy the laser class, but"

Yauch snapped at the commander. It's no use, Yauch. I thought of this, but the words won't come out of my throat.

"Do you know how long the Laser class is? It's only three meters long...! If it gets lost in a crowd of Grapplers and Destroyers, it would be a difficult target even for tactical fighters. Moreover, they can fire lasers with precision and intercept anything in their path. However, if we release hundreds of anti-ship missiles containing nuclear warheads at once, the excessive nuclear warheads would go beyond our reach

and into the swarm of laser-classes... We have no choice but to do this in order to protect the Soviet Union and humanity!"

Yes - that's the right tactic. Because if this place is overtaken, It won't be only Uralsk that gets destroyed. However, Yauch continued his protest to the commander.

"But! Commander, the land that was burned by the nuke is!"

"You're German! You're not from this country!"

With that sharp rebuke, Yauch was rendered speechless.

"The ground troops and the tactical fighter troops are only means to stop the laser class from moving."

I recalled The horrific scenes of Uralsk, people moaning for life amidst the masses of frozen corpses, and the faces of young tank soldiers fighting to protect the city

We were too helpless and inept to overcome this situation.

The possibilities and limitations of tactical fighters - a vast battlefield and too few troops. The denied longitudinal deep-strike doctrine, the fearsome volume and air control capabilities of the BETA — in the face of such a harsh reality, what other means did the Soviet military have?

I wondered if the soldiers on the front lines knew that there was a possibility that their superiors would make this decision... The moment I thought that, I realized that it was a foolish question.

Of course they knew. This is not the first time that the Soviet Union's military has defeated the laser class with a barrage of missiles combined with tactical nuclear weapons. So why are they able to fight without a mutiny happening?

The tankers who waved at us earlier, the pilots fighting behind the monitors, and the operators here.

Is this really a war?

It's something else, isn't it?

"All bombing regiments in the air! Approaching at low altitude... 60 seconds to the ejection point!"

According to the battle chart, over 200 Soviet air force bombers are closing in on the BETA group. They were approaching at a very low altitude. Perhaps if they didn't, they would be shot down by the laser class. Each aeroplane seemed to be carrying about 10 anti-ship and anti-surface missiles each, meaning that the number of missiles fired simultaneously was calculated to be over 1000.

The approaching zero hour - we stared at the monitor, unable to move a muscle.

"Each bombing regiment is moving into the final phase of the attack. Begin countdown. 10, 9, 8....."

The operator reported in a tasteless voice. But even so, I could tell that they were trying desperately to kill their emotions.

I heard the base commander muttering to himself.

"But this absurd fight is almost over. If the motherland switches to an attitude of total war, ... it doesn't matter if you are a woman, a man, a child, an old man, a Russian, a Chechen, an Ingush, an Orthodox, a Muslim, or a Buddhist. Anyway, if all the people stood up to BETA, this kind of fight would be!"

The base commander's insane muttering scared the hell out of me.

"3"

The bombers were shot down one by one. Every time a single dot of light on the monitor disappeared, some lives were lost as well.

"2"

The ground troops stalling the BETA echelons are still struggling at the planned landing sites.

"1"

They remained to protect the people, with a strong conviction.

"..... launch"

A few moments later, the impact of a series of huge explosions shook the underground command center to its very core.

Silence reigned in the passenger car. The only sound was the rattling of the wheels over the rail joints, repeated incessantly. Perhaps the Soviets had taken the precaution of allowing only people on the inspection tour to use these vehicles. However, no one was happy about the lack of surveillance.

Next to me sat Yauch, and across the aisle from me sat Katzen and Vikman in silence.

In the seat in front of me was Major General Strachwitz and his adjutant. Strachwitz turned his eyes out the window and gazed at the endless snowfield and the drifting trees of the forest.

The fury of the BETA. The saturation - and final - attack, using their allies as shields. I don't know how many nukes were in that attack, but at least it succeeded in stopping the BETA invasion. But if a similar battle had taken place in East Germany...

"Major General."

Strachwitz turned his gaze to me.

"I was wondering if you could share with us your thoughts on the operation of the tactical fighter unit following this inspection."

Yauch and the others looked at me and Strachwitz. Even if they were listening devices installed, now was not a time to waste.

"We'll coordinate with ground forces to create a more robust impact force. This will be the only way."

He sounded a bit discouraged.

"As you have seen, the Soviet Union operates ground forces and TSF forces separately. It may be unavoidable considering the difference in mobility between the two sides, but conversely, it can be said that the lack of firepower in tactical fighters and the lack of mobility in tanks cannot be compensated for."

Strachwitz replied while staring at a point in the car, as if collecting his thoughts.

"Tactical Surface Fighters will engage the BETA in close combat, while tanks and other armored forces will support them from a medium range. We will create several of these combined armed units to flank the BETA echelon."

"Wouldn't that be a repeat of the Soviet Union's failed operation maneuver group (OMG)?"

Yauch inquired. Strachwitz shook his head.

"Perhaps the OMG had to be sent in without time to train against BETA. No matter how elite they are, this war is not so easy that they can fight without preparation or strategy."

Considering the fact that the threat of the laser class had to be eliminated as soon as possible, it was most likely. It would probably be the most appropriate solution if you want to increase your combat capabilities at the present situation. I understand that, but — although I tried to keep my expression as deadpan as possible - Strachwitz didn't miss the slightest hesitation.

"So, Lieutenant Bernhard, what's your opinion?"

After a few more seconds of hesitation, I looked at Strachwitz with determination.

"If this continues, we will be wiped out."

I concluded in a strong manner — Now that I've got the ball rolling, I want to make sure I stay true to myself until the end.

"It's no longer a matter of Tactical Surface Fighters, it's a matter of East German military doctrine. No, the East German nation itself needs to be revolutionized. If the war goes on like this, the Soviet Union will eventually lose Moscow and then Europe and Russia, and we may end up fighting BETA in a state that is separated from the Soviet Union. If that happens in our current state, ... everything will be over. Even if we mobilize the entire nation without thinking about the future, we will run out of strength within six months in the face of BETA's overwhelming amounts - the rest will just be overrun."

National mobilization - I shuddered at the words I had said.

In the face of the BETA, men and women are irrelevant. If that's the case, it's only natural that the East German army would expand the scope of the draft to include women. If that happens, Irisdina and Beatrix will be sent to that battlefield.

That's why I have to keep speaking - to avoid the worst possible future.

"It would be possible to minimize the damage by deploying tactical nuclear weapons, as the Soviet Union did, but in that case, the devastation of the land would be expected. The nuclear winter would be even worse, and the ashes of death would rain down on the mainland. Western European countries would be affected in the same way - at worst, they would be at war with us. However, this could happen either if the Soviet Union transfers tactical nuclear weapons to East Germany, or if the Soviet Union uses East Germany as a base for fighting."

East Germany, where two atomic bombs were dropped in World War II, has a large anti-nuclear sentiment among the general public. But with the BETA invasion approaching, there is no telling how the scales will tip.

"There are other problems, too, such as the huge number of refugees that will be pouring in from the Soviet Union and the pollution from the heavy metal cloud. Both of these problems are certain to befall East Germany in the not-too-distant future, regardless of the use of nuclear weapons."

Strachwitz never took his gaze off me. A challenging gaze — suddenly, I thought this was who he was.

"If those who know the reality of the war against BETA do not act, the situation will not change. If we don't, East Germany will become a hell, just like Kazakhstan."

Strachwitz stared into my eyes, then nodded slightly and said...

"I understand what you're saying. But if you talk too much about the big picture, you'll miss the important stuff... What do you need to do in light of that?"

"You mean, about how the formation of TSF units should be carried out?"

"Yes. We, the T Committee, were sent to the Soviet Union for that purpose."

I kept my mouth shut. It's not that I don't have a plan, It's just that I can't make up my mind whether to say it or not. If the tactical fighter units in East Germany were to make a mistake, they would lose their ability to fight the BETA.

I looked into Strachwitz's eyes. I had a feeling that I had seen his face a long time ago. It was nostalgic and very similar to the face of a man I trusted more than anything.

"It seems to me that we should try again to penetrate the laser class with our tactical fighter."

"Even though there is a precedent for this causing extensive damage?"

I nodded. The words of my Russian instructor came back to me.

"The Soviet Union's tactical fighter forces are highly regarded as general-purpose weapons, Especially when it comes to maneuverability. There is no other weapon that can match it."

The sight of unilaterally defeating the Destroyer by retreating fire — only tactical fighters can combine maneuverability and striking power.

Attack helicopters, with their superior mobility, lacked firepower by far, while tanks would be surrounded in the blink of an eye.

"Perhaps the same strategy can be applied to the battle against the enemy's mainstay, the Grappler class. As long as the laser class doesn't appear, we can unilaterally hit them with artillery fire - and as long as there is safe land behind them, we can gradually reduce them while retreating. As the Major General said, if we move in coordination with the ground troops, we will be even more effective."

TSFs fight BETA groups at close range, while tanks support them. This is a coordination that utilizes the strengths of both sides.

"However, ... this tactic is not expected to be effective enough to hold back the BETA from expanding their area of control. In the case of the Major General's proposal, we can certainly expect a significant increase in impact force, but the damage to the ground troops will also be enormous. Even if we are able to stop them several times, our human resources will be depleted in the blink of an eye, and we will ultimately be defeated."

No one interrupted me when I cut off my words.

"The only way to solve all the problems is to use laser-class pinpoint attacks by tactical fighter units - this is the only way. Unless we can create a situation where we can deploy our air power with minimal damage, we will be crushed by the sheer volume of BETA."

"I know that, and I heard the same story in the Soviet Union. But what exactly are you going to do about it?"

Strachwitz urged me to go on. The question is natural. How are you going to succeed in a tactic that even the Soviet military has declared impossible?

"First of all, it is absolutely necessary to introduce the MiG-21 (Balalaika), the latest state-of-the-art TSF currently under development in the Soviet Union. The maneuverability of the F-4R (Phantom) is not enough to withstand close combat with BETA, and if we are aiming to break through, handling close-quarters fighting is a must."

"....."

"Perhaps we need at least 10 battalions to hit every single laser class lurking in the depths of the BETA echelon. We need that many. It is also absolutely necessary to have a well-equipped production base in order to maintain the force."

"..... sounds like a pipe dream."

Strachwitz laughed as if he had heard a joke.

"To use a Cold War analogy, your argument is tantamount to saying that the East German Air Force should install an entire production plant with four hundred of the most advanced jet fighters being developed by the Soviet Union, or else the Fatherland will be destroyed. The Luftwaffe currently has about 400 aircrafts, I believe? If you think about it, are you suggesting that we create another air force within the army?"

"You're right, sir."

I didn't deny it. It's a dream. If I had heard it from someone else, I would have laughed it off. However, if I am going to make this claim...

"And one more thing."

I continued.

"It is an absolute requirement that TSF be able to communicate with each other under heavy metal clouds. This can be done by enhancing the communication capabilities of individual tactical fighters, or by incorporating specialized communication TSF, such as the early warning aircraft (AWACS) ⁽²⁸⁾ possessed by the Soviet Air Force.

An image of a F-4R (Phantom) with a huge radar dome on its back comes to mind. Even if you built such a TSF, you wouldn't expect it to have any combat capability at all - but if it could maintain communications under a heavy metal cloud, it would be acceptable.

"The introduction and domestic production of the MiG-21 (Balalaika), the strengthening of communication capabilities, and the training of TSF pilots skilled in penetration breakthrough tactics. I believe that these three pillars should be the foundation for the creation of a TSF unit in the East German army."

"What about the ground troops?"

"We will reduce our forces to a minimum. If we bet everything on penetrating the laser class, there will be no need for ground troops to enter the BETA. To put it another way, if the laser class can be eliminated by penetration, the results of aerial bombardment will be obvious."

"You want me to deny the East Germans everything they've ever done, and devote all our resources to tactical fighters, to a branch of the military that operates a new weapon that belongs neither to the sea or the mountains."

Strachwitz asked in an insecure voice. In a way, it was a natural reaction - but I must not be intimidated here, I reminded myself.

"That is correct."

I concluded.

"Unless fundamental reforms are undertaken, East Germany will follow the same path as the Soviet Union."

A grim silence fell.

Most of the T-Committee staff looked at me critically. Yauch and the others remained silent - I had no words to say next.

After a few tens of seconds, Strachwitz muttered as if to push me out.

"Do you really think it's possible?"

A sharp look. I felt a chill run down my spine.

Is it really possible? In other words, are you ready to do it against all odds? That's what Strachwitz is asking.

Reforming East Germany's military and economy means that East Germany's politics must also be deeply involved. In East Germany, a socialist country, politics determines everything. At all times and in all places.

And it's not just East Germany. Political maneuvering will be necessary on the Soviet side as well.

There are forces that oppose even the deployment of TSF in East Germany. I said that we had to jump over that and allow TSF production in East Germany.

Suddenly, the faces of Beatrix and her father, Abel, crossed my mind.

Abel Brehme. He was involved in the drafting of East Germany's planned economy, and also had ties to the Ministry of State Security (Stasi), which controlled the country behind the scenes.

If I can move him, I feel that my wild story will be tinged with a sense of reality, even if only slightly.

Of course, if I just brought it up, I would be rejected. Even though I was involved in the creation of the TSF unit, I was only a second lieutenant.

But still, if it's to protect my precious family and lover...

"It's possible."

I answered. They were words from the heart.

"If we want to save East Germany, we have to pursue that possibility."

"..... I see."

Strachwitz answered in a stifled voice, then he took a deep breath and spoke calmly.

"It still sounds like a pipe dream — to me"

11

Two months later, the study abroad team was disbanded in the Berlin train station.

After Strachwitz's speech, the participants dispersed one by one.

Everyone was silent. They were exhausted from their days in the Soviet Union and Kazakhstan.

But there was something that I - and I alone - had to do.

I turned down Katzen's offer to come home with him, and headed for a place.

Now that I couldn't get Strachwitz's consent on the way back from Kazakhstan, there was someone I had to see.

I had to see Abel Brehme and convince him.

I started walking along the drizzling streets of Berlin.

第2章 テーブルの上の戦争



Chapter 2: The War on the Table

1

Let's go back in time a bit.

It was when the train departed from Moscow, passing through colorful towns reminiscent of medieval Europe, and reached the suburbs overflowing with nature, that I started the conversation.

"Let's do it."

These words alone should have been enough for the three people sitting next to and in front of me - Yauch, Katzen and Vikman - to understand.

The three of them all looked at each other. Yauch let out a sigh, Katzen smiled bitterly, and Vikman returned her gaze to the book at hand as if nothing had happened.

"You guys....."

In a sense, the reaction was as expected, and I let out a frustrated sigh.

"I knew you'd have something to say by now."

Yauuch looked dismayed

"Jürgen has always been like this....."

Katzen shrugged his shoulders.

"Just to make sure, what are you going to do?"

Vikman looked away slightly from the book she had been reading - Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" - and muttered quietly. Though she had started reading Russian literature as a conversion starter, she might have become addicted to it while studying abroad in Moscow.

I understand, but I am not going to flatter you. That's a good response. It's good to have at least one person among the team who is like this, a dyed-in-the-wool.

I weaved my thoughts for a few seconds and then told the three of them.

"We are to set up a new doctrine. The main axis will be penetration of the laser class by TSF units. This will be followed by aerial bombardment."

"Hasn't Major General Strachwitz already rejected this talk on the way back from Kazakhstan?"

After our inspection of the front lines, the exchange students team and I continued our education at Kubinka Base. Although information was restricted, we could sense from the rumors leaking out that the future of humanity was shrouded in darkness.

— The defense line in West Kazakhstan collapsed, and the Soviet troops began to retreat toward the Volga River.

— The offensive in northwest Kazakhstan has intensified, and Uralsk seems to have become BETA-controlled territory.

— If this continues, BETA will move northward along the Ural Mountains, and the Soviet Union will be divided into East and West.

— The relocation of Moscow to the capital is a given, and the transfer of factory equipment and skilled workers has already begun.

I don't know how much of these rumors are true. However, looking at the horrific situation that I had glimpsed in Kazakhstan, I felt that I was not far off the mark. There was no doubt that the Soviet Union, our eastern ally, was on the brink of annihilation, simply because its main battlefield had spread throughout Kazakhstan.

If the Soviet Union is divided into East and West, as is rumored, Siberia will be overrun if Europe and Russia are defended to the death, and Europe and Russia will be overrun if the opposite is the case. And if it tried to defend both, the Soviet Union would not have the strength to do so. It was clear that the Soviet Union was no longer a suzerain nation ⁽²⁹⁾ for East Germany to rely on.

This is why East Germany needs a new approach to confront these monsters with their overwhelming amount of material resources.

"I told you, You have always been like this. Even if I tried to point out faults, I'm sure you will try to force me to agree by all possible means."

Katzen said, looking up at the heavens.

"Well, yeah, and he needs our cooperation"

I was trying to change the basic strategy of the nation. It's not a matter of my own strength alone. It would require power on a national scale. To do this, I needed an organization that would recognize my value. That's why I asked the three of them for help.

I hate to sound like I'm grading my friends, but in terms of political credibility, the three of them deserve a lot of credit.

Yauch is a Russophobe with a strong sense of justice, and probably disgusted by East Germany's fascist tendencies. Not to mention Vikman, whose Olympic career was ruined by party officials. Katzen - having dealt with him for many years, I can tell you that he is not a fan of snitching and scheming.

"What is the specific outline?"

Vikman raised her gaze completely from the book and calmly asked. She seemed to be more interested in it than in Russian literature.

"The first thing we need to do is to get some tangible results. We will probably be assigned to a test squadron equipped with F-4Rs (Phantom) — Major General Strachwitz said it might be a platoon at worst. This test squadron was to be trained up and made to understand the fact that TSF would play a leading role in the war against BETA. If possible, I would like to introduce the MiG-21 (Balalaika)."

"Will you make it in time?"

Vikman asks a perfectly reasonable question.

"I don't have definite proof. Depending on what happens in the Soviet Union, we may have a few years left at most. If things go badly, we may have less than a year left."

I was honest with her.

"We have a lot of work to do to establish a new doctrine and reorganize the East German military, and we also have to deny the existing system. Our half-hearted achievements will not even be discussed at the top."

If we were not looking for victory, but only to prolong the duration of the nation's survival, Major General Strachwitz's idea is definitely the right one. I didn't say it out loud, but that's what I was thinking. Strachwitz's idea was the most realistic.

"But there is no other way to beat them, so I need your help."

After a few seconds of silence, Vikman looked me in the eye and said.

"If we don't have enough time, A strong medicine will be needed"

In order to change the East German army in a short period of time, we need not only a track record but also a big impact - Vikman said, taking in what I was saying.

"You need a track record that's been built up correctly to give you a foundation to pitch it."

"I am sure I will"

"Specifically?"

"I have an idea, but we'll have to wait until we get back to East Germany to see what happens. There's a big chance I'll fail, though."

It was an honest answer. In fact, I can only say that it was.

"..... I understand. Are you both okay with that?"

Vikman asked Yauch and Katzen. They nodded silently.

I inwardly patted my chest and leaned my weight on the backrest.

From this point on, we were unmistakably "comrades".

The only thing left to do was to act.

The beautiful girl who opened the gate of the mansion, Beatrix Brehme, rolled her eyes and muttered when she saw me.

"Jür gen?"

Beatrix was in her casual clothes. Today was the end of March - it was spring break, and she was probably spending it at home.

It had only been half a year since I had seen her, but she seemed to have matured. I felt a surge of love for her — but I put it aside for now.

"Hey. Long time no see."

I raised one hand in response. Beatrix still couldn't seem to hide her surprise. She muttered in disbelief.

"When did you come back?"

I remembered that I had told her that I would be studying abroad for six months, but I hadn't told her the exact date of my return.

"Oh, I'm sorry. I arrived at Friedrichstrasse station just a few minutes ago and came here on foot. Hey, take a look at this."

I pointed to the carry-on cart at my feet.

"So, the first thing you do after returning to the country is visiting my home.....?"

"Hmm? Yeah, I guess so."

"Without even going to see Irisdina first.....?"

"Yeah, I guess so."

I thought that I would go home only after he had finished my business at the Brehme house. No promises were made, but I assumed that there was a good chance that he would be home at this time.

For some reason, Beatrix's eyes were moistened, and she looked as if she was trembling with emotion.

When I gave her a puzzled look, Beatrix smiled like a child receiving a Christmas present and took my hand.

"Okay. First of all, I would have to question you about not telling me the date of your return, and depending on your answer, I'd have to punish you severely, but in consideration for you visiting me first, I will write it off. wait for me in the living room. Just yesterday, a friend of my mother's gave me a cup of coffee from South America, so..."

"Yeah, that'd be great, but later, please."

Beatrix gave me a puzzled look. I cleared my throat and asked her.

"Mr. Abel, is your father at home?"

"So you're saying..."

In his study, which I've visited many times since our dinner party to report on the recent situation - it's very similar to my father's study in that it contains a huge number of documents - Abel asked me in a somewhat insecure voice.

He's sitting on a desk chair for work, and I was sitting on the reception sofa. It was a good opportunity that he was home at the right time. He didn't show any sign of displeasure at my sudden visit.

After Beatrix heard what I just said, she stared at me with the most stern expression I've ever seen. After that, she led me to the study where Abel was, but the way she closed the door with a fury in her shoulders was far from ladylike — Yeah, there will be a raging storm later.

Well, putting that aside. I have to talk to Abel right now, that's the reason I put off seeing my beloved sister Irisdina and visited the Brehme family house.

Abel once again made an affirming glance while looking me in the eye.

"You want me to help you with your plan to reform the East German military?"

I shook my head.

"No, I just wanted to tell you what I saw in the Soviet Union, that's all."

"I thought you foreign students were subject to strict confidentiality rules."

"If it doesn't leak, it won't be a problem."

To make it clear to the other party that they are making a choice. The words that imply that are Abel's way of talking. That's what I have learned. If you are frightened by this level of restriction, you will not be able to have a discussion with Abel.

As I have said, My intention was to tell Abel everything I had seen while studying abroad in Moscow. Of course, what we had seen in Kazakhstan and what would happen in the Soviet Union and East Germany if the war situation continued to deteriorate were based on my personal military knowledge.

However, Abel's expression did not change at all while I was talking to him. Was this something he could have expected — or had he already heard a similar story from another source?

"Hmmm..."

In response to my answer, Abel muttered something that could have been taken in any way, crossed his arms gently, and closed his mouth.

For the time being, I interpreted this as a signal that it was okay to continue talking.

To tell the truth, I'd like to ask for his help, but I'm sure I'll be rebuffed if I say anything without offering a price. I'll present the information I have to Abel, and let him judge its value, and then I would get something in return for that information... That's the kind of relationship we've been having for the past two years.

"Anyway, there is no future for East Germany if things continue as they are... that's what I feel."

I stare at the world map on the wall of the study. A world devastated by nuclear weapons appears in my mind.

"The Volga River will probably be breached this year, and the Soviet Union will lose heavy industrial cities like Stalingrad and Astrakhan, as well as its connection to the Baku oil fields. Both of these are the center of gravity of the Soviet economy — the damage is incalculable. Moreover, if the BETA continued to move northward in the western Urals and reached the coast of the Barents Sea at the northern tip of the Soviet Union, the Soviet Union itself would be divided into east and west. If that happens, ..."

"Worst of all, the Soviet Union will cut off Europe and Russia. As a result, BETA will sweep through Belarus, Ukraine, and other Eastern European countries like an uninhabited wilderness, eventually closing in on East Germany."

Abel took over. I nodded quietly.

"That is the worst possibility. Well, perhaps it won't be that bad, because the Soviets can't politically abandon Europe, Russia and Eastern Europe - but the result will be the same anyway. No, it could be worse - if factories and workers are lost in the process of BETA's westward expansion, it will be difficult to recover."

"That's why East Germany needs to be ready to defend itself while the Soviet Union is still alive and well."

"Yes. It is also absolutely necessary to reform the East German army. We need to stop the BETA invasion with ground troops, send TSFs into the BETA swarm, sweep the laser class with penetration breakthrough tactics, After that, we can blow them all up with air strikes... Any other strategy would be inefficient, and considering the population of East Germany, would lead to bankruptcy in a short time. With a population of only 30 million in East Germany, the BETA could not be held at bay, even with a full mobilization, the population would be less than that of the Soviet Union."

"....."

"The military is working to strengthen the link between ground troops and TSFs, but that is only a stopgap measure. If we really want to save East Germany, we need a drastic reform of the military. I will

be aiming for the full-scale deployment of tactical fighters from now on, but my power will be limited to that category."

This is the limit of me as a soldier — I let out a big breath.

"That's all from me."

Abel remained silent. He was staring at the map on the wall, just as I had done earlier. After a few tens of seconds, Abel opened his mouth.

"You've just said that the East German military doctrine and equipment needs to be radically reformed."

He continued to probe.

"Have you ever thought of an economic solution to this problem?"

I was at a loss for an answer — I have been trying to read as many different genres of books as possible since I started talking to Abel, but this point was not my forte.

"You told me that East Germany needed to reform its military and establish a military industry to defend itself, but you can imagine how difficult that would be. Both require huge amounts of money, and East Germany's economy is not doing so well now — the nuclear winter has taken its toll on agriculture and infrastructure, and the decline in Soviet resources has drastically reduced its production capacity."

I had anticipated that fact.

With the Soviet economy on the brink of collapse, there was no way that East Germany, its satellite country, would not be affected. Common sense tells us that the country is probably trying to maintain its civilian life by consuming its reserves and borrowing money. It is gratifying to see that they are adhering to the ideology of socialism, but it will not last forever. In other words, East Germany is still on the verge of bankruptcy.

"On top of that, we need to build up our military, which is a money-grubber. To be honest, the idea of building another air force within the army is beyond absurd and has reached the realm of delusion. If you're not careful, your idea could lead to the collapse of East Germany before BETA does."

It was a clear reprimand. As an economic bureaucrat in East Germany, this may have been a natural reaction. But I could not be intimidated here. Without this recklessness, East Germany would not be able to survive.

"I don't think so."

Swarms of refugees, destroyed cities, evaporating bombers — those who witnessed the devastation are obligated to do everything in their power to avoid it.

"I have been thinking about this since I first visited this room, and now I feel that I have found the answer to how to maintain the economy of East Germany in a future where the provision of resources from the Soviet Union will surely decrease."

I continued to talk while feeling thirsty.

"I think we have no choice but to nurture the military industry, export weapons, and use the foreign currency we gain from that to fund the national treasury."

We live in an age when weapons can be sold in large quantities - the Soviet Union's introduction of TSFs from the United States, beyond the framework of the Cold War, proves this fact loudly.

"The Soviet Union's actions are still unclear, but if the Volga River is breached, it is certain that it will evacuate the factories in the heavy industrial cities along the Volga River. Wherever the factories are evacuated to, they will stop operating for the time being, and their production capacity will surely decline. Exports to other countries will also decline."

"And while this is happening, will East Germany take its share of the Soviet market and establish itself as the 'Merchant of Death'?" [\(30\)](#)

That's how industrialized countries in the rear improve their national strength during a major war. This was the case with the United States during World War II.

"Yes, we will use the war against BETA to our advantage, but if we continue to follow the Soviet Union's lead, we will remain in a state of uncertainty. If things go smoothly East Germany could replace the Soviet Union as the ally of the Eastern European countries."

"In the East Germany of today, there is no proper military industry, and the production technology of the past has been severed due to defeat in the war. And our economy is deeply connected with the Soviet Union, so if it were to bend its umbilical cord, we would certainly be severely affected."

I understand that reality all too well. But...

"Sooner or later, our economic cooperation with the Soviet Union will decay substantially. If the Soviet Union were to break up, the situation would become difficult in a physical sense."

Abel didn't answer. So I continued to speak.

"Our country is said to be the most economically successful socialist country in Europe. Besides, ..."

I dared to say it with a pretense of evil expression on my face.

"There is no reason why the Russians can't do it and we Germans can't. West Germany is one of the most industrialized countries in the world."

A few seconds of silence. Come to think of it, my request was a bit insulting. It's as if I am asking him to change the system of this country that he's spent his whole life managing.

"..... I see, I understand your point of view."

Abel nodded without changing his expression.

"This is an interesting point of view, but it will be more difficult to accomplish than building up the military. First of all, relying on arms exports to sustain the national economy is too much of a capitalist idea. It is nothing less than the suicide of socialism."

"Yes."

I won't deny it.

"But it is necessary."

Abel fell silent again. Now and in the past, I haven't been able to read his thoughts from his expressions, as one that has been trained as a bureaucrat.

I stood up. I've said all I need to say, so I guess it's time to go. The only thing left to do was to hope that Abel would make a decision.

"Thank you very much for listening to me. I will continue to work hard."

As I salute him to leave, I think about Beatrix. My sixth sense is telling me that I should apologize to her.

"—Hold on"

Abel stopped me, stood up and walked over to the liquor cabinet in the corner of the study. He looked at the various decorated glass bottles on the shelf and grabbed one of them.

"I didn't congratulate you on your graduation from military school. This is a gift to celebrate. Keep it."

It was a brand of whiskey that I had never heard of. It seemed to have been imported from overseas.

"Thank you very much, Sir. But is it okay?"

I figured that since this guy had it in his room, it must not be cheap. But Abel didn't reply, and asked me to leave the room.

When I left the study and returned to the living room, I found Beatrix waiting for me, looking even more unhappy than before.

"What were you talking to my father about?"

Beatrix asked me first. Her tone was quiet, but as if she was trying to contain the magma just before it erupted. I don't know why she's so angry, but my conversation with Abel was quite inappropriate, so I can't just answer her as it is."

"Nothing much, ...It's just small talk. Soviet affairs and such."

Beatrix's face became even angrier — she had seen through the lie in an instant.

"..... Oh, you mean you can't talk to me, but you can talk to my father?"

"Well, that's how it works."

"Is that the first thing you thought you should do when you came back from the Soviet Union?"

"I guess so....."

After all, we are talking about the future of East Germany. This is not a matter of personal convenience.

"I see, ... Then"

Beatrix pointed to the living room door.

"You should go home."

"Ha?"

"Go home. I don't want to see your face for a while."

She pushed me out of the living room and slammed the door shut. I could do nothing but stare at it, dumbfounded.

3

"Niisan, I really misjudged you. It's only natural for Beatrix to get angry."

"Yeah, ..."

Two hours later, I was sitting in the living room of my house, having dinner with Iris.

As is customary for a "Kaltes Essen" the menu for dinner consisted of bread, cheese, salad, onion soup, and several kinds of sausage. I hadn't told Iris when I was coming back home, but as expected of my well-behaved sister, she had stocked up on food so that she wouldn't have to worry about when I would return.

Iris, although not quite as angry as Beatrix, spoke to me indignantly.

As for me, I would have liked to have a friendly conversation with my beloved sister, who is a bit more mature than I am, but the atmosphere is not conducive to allowing that.

"Niisan don't understand what a maiden's heart is! Beatrix is a girl with a strong core, ... but she is still a girl! You need to treasure her more!"

"I'm sorry. I understand your point, but first, you need to tell me why Beatrix was so angry."

Iris puffed out her cheeks. It's so cute. It makes me want to poke her.

"You seriously don't get it?"

"..... Well, I have a pretty good idea, but just in case."

But I'm not going to admit it outright, so I'm asking. Please understand, My Sister.

Iris exhaled in exasperation and muttered to herself as she turned over.

"Beatrix couldn't forgive..... Niisan for visiting her home for Mr. Abel instead of her."

Little by little, the sound of her voice darkened.

"For the past two years, we have been indebted to the Brehme family, and that's all through Beatrix's blessing, but the relationship between Beatrix and Mr. Abel has not changed much since then."

After that, Iris closed her mouth and I had no words to follow up.

The relationship between Abel Brehme, head of the Brehme family, and his only daughter, Beatrix.

Abel Brehme wants Beatrix to take up a key position in East Germany's party affairs, especially in the Ministry of State Security (Stasi), but Beatrix cannot tolerate her father deciding her future and rebels against him, leading to a long cold war between the two.

For me, Abel was a benefactor who helped me protect Iris during the two years I was away from home after I entered the Air Force Academy, and I would like to continue my cooperation with him if possible, now and in the future as well. That's why I wanted to meet Abel first.

However, If her own boyfriend had made it a priority to meet Abel for a political discussion — She might have thought that Jürgen Bernhard's meeting with Beatrix Brehme was a side matter.

"You've been in Moscow for the last six months, and Beatrix and I have been lonely. Even I was like that, so how did Beatrix, your girlfriend, feel waiting for your return... So, isn't it cruel to treat her like that?"

"..... Yes, I'm sorry."

I apologized sincerely. Iris's argument was absolutely sound that I was lost for words. Just like she said, I should probably reflect on my lack of concern.

Nevertheless, I was a little happy. Even though I ended up pissing off Beatrix, I didn't realize that she was that much in love with me. As I thought, Beatrix is a good woman. My feelings seemed to show on my face. Iris glared at me and asked.

"Niisan, are you taking this seriously?"

"I'm listening."

"Huh Anyway, I'll apologize to Beatrix as well, so please make a chance for an apology and a follow up before long. I don't think Beatrix really dislikes Niisan either."

I agreed. I will invite Beatrix on a date when the time comes. It's boring when she is not here. Iris and I had been alone for a long time, but before I knew it, she had become a necessary character in our family.

"So, ..., how was your stay in Moscow?"

Iris asked again in a calm voice.

"Well, ..."

I stalled for a moment, trying to gather my thoughts.

To tell the truth, I didn't want to hide anything from Iris. She was an important part of my family, but this time, the content was the content [\(31\)](#). I didn't want to cause Iris any unnecessary anxiety.

"I can't even tell you the details..... because they're classified."

I was aware that I was being disingenuous, so I continued.

"At least I think I've learned something that will benefit the people of this country."

"Is this about piloting the new weapon?"

I had told her that I was transferring from the Air Force to the Army to become a pilot of a new weapon - a pilot cadet - and that I was going to study in Moscow to establish a unit.

"Well, that's about it. yeah."

."..... And related to the war with the alien species?"

"Of course. But I can't talk about it."

Iris sighs.

"..... What on earth are they doing on this planet and why are they killing human beings? There are a lot of rumors flying around the school."

"Rumors?"

"Some say that BETA is a space monster sent by aliens to invade the Earth, or that it is an immune antibody sent by the entire galaxy to judge humanity like a harmful bacteria. Others claim that the BETA invasion is a test given to mankind by God."

"..... I see."

That's all I could say. For soldiers like us, the BETA is a threat right in front of our eyes, and we are not interested in its identity or purpose. However, in East Germany, which is still at peace... I guess that's the way it is.

"If the BETA were to continue westward and reach East Germany, ... The apprehension is hard to let go of"

"Did you read about that in the newspaper?"

I asked her to be sure. The war in the Soviet Union and Central Asia is supposed to be under press control. There is no way for the East German public to know that the Soviet army is outnumbered.

An expression appeared on her face as she realized she had made an unnecessary statement - Iris replied apologetically.

"I found out about it on West Germany's national news. Beatrix showed me"

"I see."

The privileges of the "red aristocracy" (Nomenklatura) of the Breheme family — a condensed version of the contradictions of East Germany - made it unlikely that the Ministry of State Security (Stasi) would take notice.

However, as an older brother, it is not a welcome situation that my own sister is obtaining information outside the country by half - or even completely - illegal means.

Iris is basically a gentle and calm person, but she is also stubborn and has a strong sense of justice, and once she decides to do something, she will not waver. I could only hope that this would not lead to negative consequences in real life.

"I understand your concerns, but don't worry, we're going to fight to prevent East Germany from becoming like that."

I shook Iris's hand, which was on the desk, but Iris remained silent.

"..... Oh, yeah. I forgot to tell you. I think I'll be working in Berlin for the time being."

"Really?"

Iris's expression brightened.

"Yeah. I'm going to be involved in setting up a test unit for a new weapon supplied by the Soviet Union. I've heard that it's going to be based in a base near Berlin, so that's probably it."

"So we'll be living together again!"

"Ah. Well, I'm sure I'll still be busy, so I'll be home late."

Iris shook her head.

"Even that much is enough to make me happy. Having Niisan by my side is a joy."

What a pleasant thing to say.

"By the way, did you tell Beatrix about that?"

"Oh"

A dumb voice came out — well, I hadn't told Beatrix about it at all.

"Huh. Nissan is still the same. I can't tell how happy Beatrix will be when she hears what you just said."

"I am sorry, Please tell her tomorrow."

"You should have told her this in person ... but I understand. I also want the two of you to make up as soon as possible."

Iris smiled and stood up, clearing away the dishes that had somehow become empty. This is where the talk ends for now... No, I forgot to ask something important.

"Hey, Iris."

"Yes, Niisan"

"Do you have any idea what you're going to do after you graduate from the integration school?"

"I'm thinking of pursuing higher education. Just like Niisan."

Iris answered without hesitation.

Does the same thing as me mean it's a two-year high school — suddenly I have suspicions.

"Didn't you ever think of going to a school specializing in physical education?"

In the past two years, Iris and Beatrix have grown to become the aces of the swim team, both in name and reality, and have made their names known throughout the country. Now, Iris is the head of the club and Beatrix is the vice head. It's hard to imagine Iris as the head of the department, but according to Beatrix, it had come to that.

"I was offered a recommendation from there, but I declined In this day and age, even if you go into the physical education field, you can't"

It is true that in recent years, the Olympic Games have been suspended, and the number of international and domestic swimming competitions has decreased dramatically. The trend will probably accelerate in the future, and until the BETA is completely eradicated, it will be impossible to hold the Olympics.

I think we should cherish such a culture in times like these, but it is also true that we can no longer afford to do so.

"I understand. Then, the problem is the entrance exam. How are your studies going?"

"Beatrix and I often have study sessions together."

"Wait a minute, is Beatrix on the same course?"

"Yes, she seems to want to follow the same path as me. Her parents don't seem to reproach her."

That's unexpected. I thought it was natural for Abel to interject into her future course, or does he intend to let Beatrix go until she graduates from college?

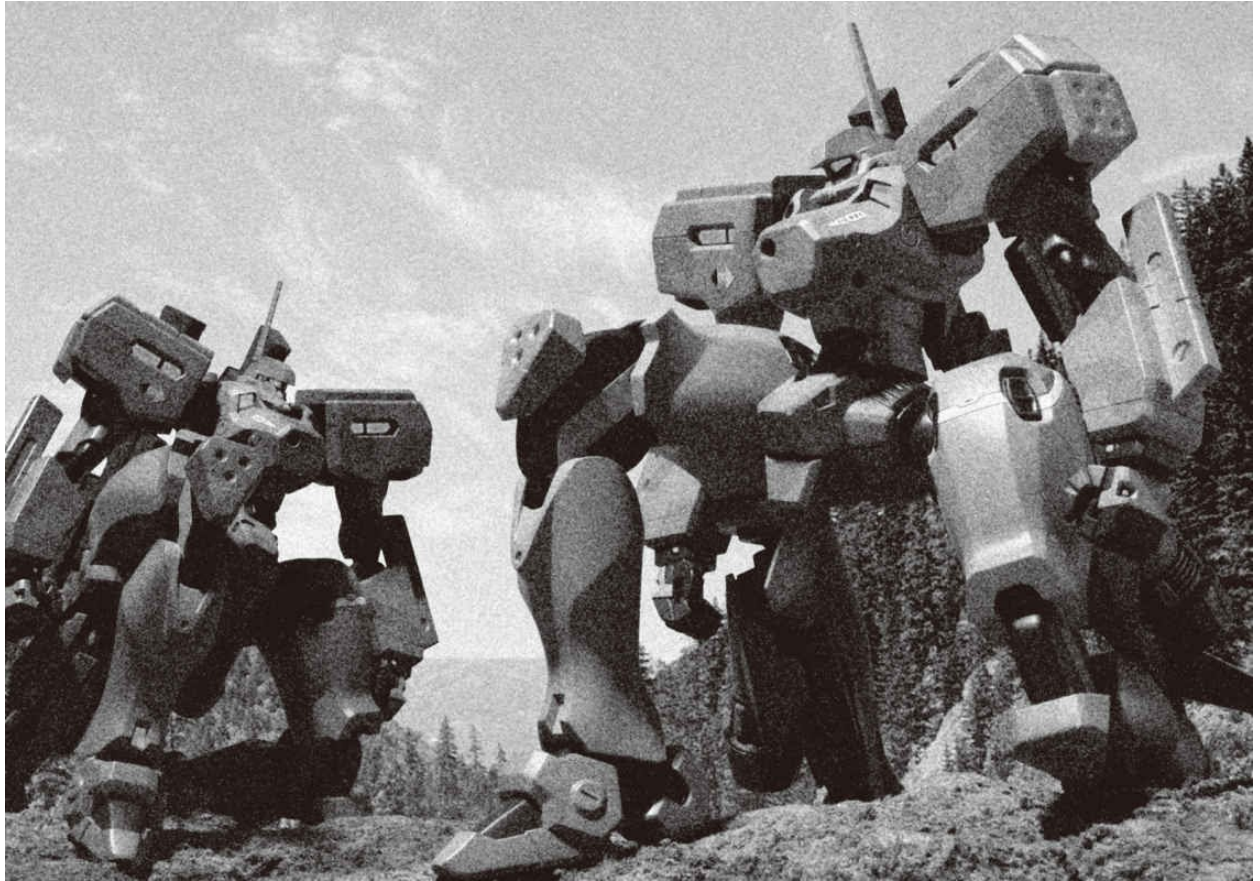
"If you don't understand anything, don't hesitate to ask me. I'm a graduate of your school and a senior."

"Yes, thank you very much."

Iris smiled cheerfully. I naturally felt my mouth smile, too.

If both Iris and Beatrix are considering a straightforward course of action, there's nothing more I could wish for. I can throw myself into my mission without hesitation, taking up the cause of protecting their daily lives.

I felt like I was finally getting back to my normal life.



To the southeast of East Berlin is a vast forest area. It is called Spreewald, and as the name suggests, it is fed by the Spree River. It is one of the most famous tourist attractions in East Germany, with its beautiful forests and lakes, and is known as the home of the Sorbs, ⁽³²⁾ an East German ethnic minority.

On the other hand, Spreewald was also famous as a Mecca ⁽³³⁾ for the East German Air Force and the Soviet Air Force in Germany. The reason for this is simple - there are a number of military airfields scattered throughout the forest.

This may be difficult for non-Europeans to understand, but it was a huge counterintelligence advantage. Even if you knew there was a base there, it would be extremely difficult to penetrate the hundreds of square kilometers of forest to check the status of the base. In addition, Spreewald is located in the eastern part of East Germany, making it a less likely target for a preemptive air attack by the West in the event of an emergency with the West.

It was for this reason that we were assigned to Grünheide ⁽³⁴⁾ Air Base, northeast of Spreewald, after returning from Moscow.

On the runway of the airfield, which was covered on all sides by forests, two F-4R (Phantom) jumping units made a high-pitched exhaust sound and took off at a brisk pace.

After that, the two F-4Rs (Phantoms) continued their flight, and before I knew it, they had become a dot in the sky and disappeared from sight. However, since the flight area was limited to the airspace over Spreewald for security reasons, they would be back over the base within a few minutes.

"Even though it's a used machine, it's in great shape."

In a corner of the TSF parking apron ⁽³⁵⁾ at the Grünheide base, Yauch called out to me as I was holding up my binoculars and watching the movement of the TSFs.

"I don't think it's a used TSF that the Soviets reluctantly supplied to us."

I replied.

"The Soviet Union probably doesn't want to displease us now that Europe and Russia are in a precarious situation. It could have been engineered by a faction that wants to strengthen the forces of the Eastern European countries."

"It's a good story, I guess."

"I hope so."

I said, and then started walking. Up in the sky, the two planes that had just taken off from the runway reappeared, and are now in the position for landing. Touch and go ⁽³⁶⁾ - one of the basic training maneuvers of repeated takeoffs and glidings.

As Yauch mentioned, these two TSFs were the first batch of used F-4Rs (Phantom) that the Soviet Union had given to East Germany around the time we returned to our country, "For research into the creation of TSF units." — This was the first Vanguard.

At the same time, our position had changed from that of foreign students attached to the T Committee of the Ministry of Defense to that of officers of the 40th TSF Experimental Group under the direct control of the Army General Staff.

The 40th Tactical Surface Fighter Experimental Group, as the name implies, was a unit that experimented with TSF operations, and was in fact the first TSF unit in East German history. However, as announced by Strachwitz, 12 TSFs were scheduled to be deployed, so in effect it could be called a TSF squadron. The name "40th TSF Experimental Group" was merely a name to prepare for future expansion of the unit or to make it look better.

I, Yauch, Katzen, and Vikman were assigned to the 40th TSF Experimental Group's staff team.

I was the chief staff officer, and the other three were the staff officers who worked under me. Normally, we would have been given titles such as "Chief of Staff for War Operations" or "Chief of Staff for Training," but perhaps because we were an experimental unit operating a weapon that is incompatible with the sea or the mountains, such titles were to be decided in due course.

Our current tasks were to accept the F-4Rs (Phantom) that were being provided by the Soviet Union, to test them to see if they would really work, to create a training plan for the future, and to organize a maintenance unit.

The vessel for the 40th TSF Experimental Group had been created, but it would be meaningless if the contents were not filled. In particular, the formation of a maintenance unit was an urgent and vexing problem. Even if we had a full complement of pilots and TSFs, we would not be able to maintain our war potential if we did not have the mechanics to maintain them.

At the same time that we went to Moscow to study, about 100 mechanics went to the Soviet Union to study, received training, and then returned home to form a maintenance platoon for the experimental group.

The Air Force is reluctant to donate personnel to the General Staff, despite requests for more. I understand that they don't want to lose talented people. A murmured "Cut it out! Son of a bitch!" escapes me.

Today was the day of the first flight test of the two F-4Rs that had arrived from the Soviet Union, and I and Yauch were standing over here, leaving Katzen and Vikman to negotiate with the Air Force for more personnel.

The F-4Rs (Phantom) were being piloted by two TSF pilots who, like us, had studied in Moscow and were assigned to the 40th TSF Experimental Group. When the experimental group has a quorum of twelve TSFs, these two will be appointed as platoon leaders.

As we were walking along the apron, Yauch asked,

"Are you going back to the control center? You're here to get a visual on the TSF's movement, right?"

"Yes. But before I do that, I'm going to have a discussion with Major Weigl once again about securing maintenance personnel to participate in the Soviet study abroad program. We'll have to negotiate with the General Staff Headquarters in order to support Katzen and Vikman."

"It's a long shot, that one."

Yauch replied in a tone that was not favorable, to say the least.

The commander of the 40th TSF Experimental Group, Major Jupp Weigl, is from the Army Air Corps and was originally an attack helicopter pilot. Therefore, although he understands TSFs, which have similar operational concepts, he is not the type to work vigorously on missions, and has left the operation of the experimental group to us.

In other words, the command of the experimental group is effectively entrusted to us, the staff team - and while I'm grateful for that, it's also a bit of a hassle. From the perspective of the serious Yauch, Major Weigl's attitude toward his work must be irritating.

"Well, I will cross that bridge when I get to it, And while I'm at it, I'll listen to his reminiscent talks about the helicopter pilots days. Take care of those two TSFs.."

I raised one hand to Yauch behind me.

"I felt like I was utterly helpless"

At eight o'clock that night, Katzen's voice echoed with a hint of resignation in a bar in Grünheide, the closest town to the base. We'd been having a meeting here for about half an hour.

All of us had already had some alcohol in our systems. I had already told Iris that I would be coming home late today, so I didn't mind having a few more drinks.

Katzen complained while shrugging his shoulders in an exaggerated manner similar to an American.

"Harry Coon's headmaster was totally looking at us like we were the enemy. He said he would never let us have anyone but the number of people notified by the Air Force General Headquarters."

"Harry Coon" was the name of the Air Force Technical School, one of the educational institutions of the East German Air Force located in the suburbs of Leipzig.

"If we want maintenance personnel for tactical TSF, we have to prove that tactical fighters are decent weapons by winning battles. I'm asking you because it's difficult to do that without a maintenance team!"

Katzen was unable to clear away his ill feelings of resentment. Well, I expected they can't afford to give away their trained personnel to another organization considering their small budget. With that in mind, I threw a glance at Vikman, who was accompanying Katzen. Vikman bowed her head to assent quietly.

"Well, except for the notification from the Air Force General Headquarters, I think it's conscientious. The Army Air Corps has told us that they can't hand over even one more person. At this rate, it seems difficult to secure 200 maintenance personnel."

It's practically impossible to run 12 TSFs with 100 maintenance personnel. That's exactly what would cause so many accidents. Then Katzen slurped down a mug of beer and pointed the water ⁽³⁷⁾ at me and Yauch.

"And How did the tests go on the fighter from the Soviet Union? It's just another used second-hand crashed TSF, right?"

"The test itself went well. Apparently, they gave us a good quality TSF.."

Yauch replied.

"Next week we'll receive the second two TSFs. We can finally form a platoon with them. The third group of four TSFswill arrive the week after that."

"By the way, ..."

I responded with a sigh.

"I just got a call from the General Staff. The arrival of the fourth group will be delayed considerably. Apparently, there are rumors that within the Soviet Union, there is a strong opposition to the transfer of TSFs to satellite countries."

".....nonsensical. It's not rational to accept foreign students and not send them equipment."

"I guess that means they're confused, too."

Everyone's eyes were drawn to Yauch's words, perhaps because of his Volga-German ancestry, Yauch is fluent in Russian and is actively gathering information on the war situation in the Soviet Union. He also seems to be in close contact with his relatives who are still in the Soviet Union.

"It's just a rumor I've heard, but it seems that a major BETA offensive has begun in western Kazakhstan. At this rate, the BETA will undoubtedly reach the Volga River, and Astrakhan, Saratov, and Stalingrad will become battlefields."

The silence falls - if the rumors are true, then the BETA has finally started its invasion of the Volga River.

"If the BETA reaches the Volga River, the heavy oil supply from the Baku oil fields will be cut off, which will have a catastrophic effect on the power supply throughout Europe and Russia."

"We can only hope that the Soviet army can hold out on the Volga."

"Yeah. But if that happens, the capital will certainly be moved. Just as Jürgen predicted."

It was a correct answer that I was not too happy about.

"It seems that the BETA offensive is intensifying west of the Urals. The Soviets have no way to establish a front in this mountainous terrain."

"The Soviet Union will undoubtedly be divided into East and West. This was in Jürgen's predictions, too."

The silence fell again. I put my hand on my chin and let my brain run at full speed.

Unfortunately, everything is going as expected, and the East German army has failed to come up with any countermeasures.

"The biggest problem is that the chain of command of the National People's Army (NVA) is still embedded with that of the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO) forces, i.e., the Soviet forces."

The National People's Army (NVA) under the jurisdiction of the Warsaw Pact Organization (WTO) is hardly allowed to act voluntarily. On the contrary, if the National People's Army (NVA) makes any improper moves, the Soviet troops stationed in Germany (GSSD) are expected to move immediately.

This is the sorrow of a nation with a collar... Our fatherland, which fought the Soviet Union in the last war, has yet to gain the full trust as a friendly nation. I licked the remaining beer from my cup and savoured the bitter taste in my mouth.

And the fact that the Soviet military is not releasing information about the war situation is adding to this delay. This is evidenced by the fact that the Soviet Union has not even allowed for the expansion of the maintenance units needed to form the experimental units for the tactical machines that are said to be the trump card in the war against BETA.

I felt a growing sense of frustration that I might not make it in time. But at the same time, I felt that this might be an opportunity.

As I told Abel, if the Soviet Union loses heavy industrial cities such as Stalingrad and Saratov, its weapons production will be hindered, but it is not only the Eastern European countries that will lose their share of the market. The Soviet Union itself, with its huge military strength, would also lose access to weapons. If Soviet factories could be relocated to East Germany and used as a source of weapons supply to the Soviet Union, and if East German capital factories could be acquired with the proceeds, it could be predicted that it would not be impossible to acquire a military industry of its own.

The same is true for the military chain of command. If the Soviet Union asks for help from the Eastern European countries, the Soviet Union will have no choice but to allow the Eastern European countries to expand their authority.

In the first place, the existence of a "strong Soviet army stationed in Germany (GSSD)" under such circumstances does not make sense. Common sense dictates that the Soviet Union should pull its troops out of Eastern Europe and throw them at BETA. I'd like to see them do that immediately, but with the large NATO force deployed in West Germany, it's not going to happen.

"With the little time we have, I think we'd better prioritize what we need to accomplish."

Perhaps driven by the same thought as me, Yauch looked around at the faces of everyone and said.

"We are aiming to introduce the MiG-21 (Balalaika), establish tactics to penetrate and break through the laser class, including improving the communication capabilities of TSFs, and reform the East German military doctrine based on these two. That's far enough, right?"

The last words were a question to me - I nodded.

"So, which of these three goals should we prioritize? Depending on that, what we should do will be different."

"Establishing penetration breakthrough tactics would be possible if we had the equipment and time."

Katzen replied.

"It can be done with an experimental group. The enhancement of communication capabilities will be coordinated with a range of refurbishable TSF. The rest of us just need to work hard to improve our skills in training, and then we can make a difference in exercises or actual combat. As for the shortage of maintenance personnel, ... well, that depends on the results."

"It would be suicide to suddenly insist on reforming the doctrine. If we're not careful, the experimental group itself could be destroyed as a disturbing element. In other words, our first target should be the introduction of the MiG-21 (Balalaika)."

Vikman took over, and I nodded.

"Has there been an update on the MiG-21 (Balalaika)?"

Katzen asked, and Yauch shook his head.

"There is no significant information. It's the Soviet Union's newest TSF so it's as classified as the identity of the BETA and the status of the war."

"..... What if the MiG-21 (Balalaika) is a failure?"

In the event that the MiG-21 (Balalaika) is a failure, what then? I chuckled as I remembered all the terrible weapons that had been produced in the last war.

If the latest machine is a failure, then we're out of time. It's as if the destruction of East Germany has been decided.

As I said this, I tried to simulate the possibility of importing the TSF from the U.S. — the only word that came to mind was "impossible".

"Nonetheless, What should be done..."

The first priority is to obtain the MiG-21 (Balalaika), but for now we have our hands full taking care of the experimental group.

It would take some time for the effects of my "powerful medicine" of talking directly to Abel to become apparent, and there was no guarantee that it was really working.

In that case, I'd like to say that I'm going to use a second "strong medicine," but I don't have that many cards in my hand.

"I guess we'll have to wait for"

Vikman said, looking around at everyone.

"The Soviet Union is in a critical situation, and I think many people have the same fears that we do. If the Soviet Union is pushed further into a corner, the situation will change."

"Are you saying we should wait for the state of affairs to get worse? The more deaths and refugees, the better off we'll be, is what you are implying?"

Yauch cut her off. The tone of his voice was unusually sarcastic.

"If the members of the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO) are destroyed, the next battlefield will be the West."

Vikman's tone was inchoate.

"There's no way they won't move."

"I see. So we can expect a lot of movement in the West, not just from the decent folks in East Germany and the Soviet Union."

Katzen laughed.

"It's true that they will be the first to suffer if we are destroyed. They'll want to keep us fighting as long as possible to keep their country safe."

"When it comes to the West, both East Germany and the Soviet Union react with their faces bright red."

I couldn't help but chuckle. The East is conspicuously allergic to the West, and there are times when they act in ways that don't seem to have any logic to them.

Yauch bit his lips discontentedly and exhaled as if to admit defeat.

"Certainly... but I don't like the situation where I have no choice but to expect help from others..."

"Hey, you guys..."

A rude voice was thrown at me from behind.

When I turned around, I saw a few fully dressed people looking at me in a not-so-favorable way. They were wearing Raindrop camouflage [\(38\)](#) field operations uniforms. The rank on their shoulder patch is second lieutenant, and they all were stitched with the colors of the tank department.

I knew it would happen. There is an East German army training area near the Grünheide base, and the tactical planes fly over it, so I was expecting something like this to happen at some point. I tensed my back a little. Then the man who seemed to be the leader of the group asked me threateningly.

"You're the pilots of the flying giant robots I've heard so much about, aren't you?"

I almost blew up at the childish expression, "flying giant robots," but managed to hold it in. If I didn't know what a TSF was, I could only describe it as such.

Perhaps this feeling showed on my face, as the leader of the group continued in a harsher tone.

"You guys have a lot of nerves flying over our heads without permission. Don't you think you've forgotten that it's the ground troops who are really protecting East Germany, huh?"

Yauch was about half risen from his seat when I held him back with one hand gesture. If the overly serious Yauch responds, It will just add fuel to the fire. If we trigger a dispute here, It would only lead to troubles in the future.

At the same time, I checked on Vikman — she was slurping down vodka like she didn't care. To be honest, I'm glad she did - if Vikman moves, this place is going to be piled high with people covered in vomit.

I let out a big sigh inwardly and smiled fondly at him.

"Oh no, ..., I'm sorry for the trouble I've caused you, ..."

I analyzed him, thinking that he is someone who can't think about the difference in rank. He's probably thinking that if he fights against us, he'll be praised but not punished.

"Aa!? Don't think behaving modestly will get you out of this easily."

"No way! I really believe that ground troops are the mainstay of the BETA warfare! We could have joined the army, but we were relegated for reasons beyond our control."

The drunkard's expression stopped lightly when I stimulated his camaraderie.

"The flying giant robots, or the tactical fighters, however you call them. I believe that they can only be active if the ground troops are active!"

He hasn't told a lie. While the ground forces are battling the BETA, our TSF forces will destroy the laser class. That is the ideal war I envision.

"First of all, you can tell by looking at it that a TSF is no match for the firepower of a tank. The armament it has is a short-barreled 120mm assault gun with less power than a tank gun!"

The explanation was a bit sketchy, but it couldn't be helped because this is also a fact. I just smiled fondly and continued. I wanted to give the impression that I was a new soldier who had been forcibly assigned to the new weapons department and that I was being driven into a corner.

"The T-55 carries about 50 rounds, right? I am jealous!"

"Our regiment is equipped with T-72s! You should properly know....."

"That's state-of-the-art! That's amazing! I admire that kind of firepower! That's what I thought when I saw T-72s battling BETA in Kazakhstan with my own eyes!"

The blushing faces of the people who had been involved with me suddenly paled.

I have anticipated this. These guys have definitely never been on the front lines and have never seen a BETA before. The only people who know about them are the military brass and study abroad students like us. The effect of this statement was tremendous: the people who had seen the BETA with their own eyes were the ones who had information about the enemy they would be risking their lives to fight. Any decent soldier would not poorly treat a man who could give him some benefit. This is a common rule in any country, no matter what rank you belong to.

"So, you guys witnessed the Soviet army's battle"

He became remarkably obedient. In the Soviet Union, T-72s were being destroyed one after another. I resisted the urge to add more. Now I just need to give them something to talk about.

"It hasn't been removed from intelligence control yet. Still military secrets"

I will make them aware in word and deed that the people in front of them are the so-called elite. If they are not aware of the class difference after listening to this story, they will have to deal with violence.

"Yeah, well, ... You guys are in a lot of trouble too."

The leader of the group spat that out with an embarrassed expression, and the group quickly left the area. After a few seconds of indescribable silence, I heard Katzen muttering in disgust.

"I've been thinking since my school days that Jürgen reall ~ ~ ~ y has a great personality."

"Really? Well, it's how I've been living all these years."

I guess I owe it to my diplomat father. I'm not going to be defeated in sophistry.

"But now I have been convinced."

"Of what?"

"From the perspective of tank soldiers and tank riders, tactical fighters look like a threat that could eat up their market share. What happens when tanks and TSFs fight? It's obvious. "

"There is no way that a slow and heavy tank can defeat a TSF with superior mobility."

In fact, not only tanks, but many land vehicles are used as ducks for attack helicopters.

"That's what I mean. I'm sure they don't want to be seen as useless, and that's why they've built up so much resentment."

"And that means?"

Each one's gaze was turned to me in a different way. Katzen who looked like he wanted to say something, Yauch who felt sully and displeased, and Vikman who had a cool look on her face as usual. I twisted my mouth.

"Maybe we can change the situation. We can make everyone in the National People's Army (NVA) aware of the value of our tactical machines."

5

The air in Friedrichstraße, the main street of East Berlin, was still chilly in late May. Needless to say, it was the effect of the "Nuclear Winter".

However, the snow had disappeared from the road surface, and the sky was blue with gentle sunlight. Perhaps sensing the belated signs of spring, the main street, which had been deserted, came to life and people were coming and going.

"What fine weather! It's the perfect day for a date!"

Silence.

"Oh, I've never seen that café before. Shall we go in later?"

Silence.

"Come to think of it, When I was studying in Moscow, I learned for the first time that Russians love ice cream. They eat it in the summer and even in the winter with the heating on. The Soviet government tried to make ice cream popular as part of their affluent lifestyle."

Silence.

"Um, Beatrix?"

I asked in a very pathetic voice.

"Could you please put yourself in a better mood?"

Beatrix, who has been walking half a step ahead of me with a scowl on her face ever since we met at Friedrichstraße station, continued.

"I am reflecting. Iris was also intensely angry with me. I will never do a similar thing ever again. So please...."

No response.

I sigh inwardly. I am not like Katzen from the other day, but I feel similar helplessness.

On this day, about a month and a half after returning to Germany, I managed to arrange a date with Beatrix through Irisdina's mediation, and the two of us were walking along Friedrichstrasse.

As for me, I was relieved when she agreed to go out with me. I thought that if she was angry about what happened, she would have refused the date.

But it seems I was an optimist after all. Beatrix was still in a bad mood — and I was still trying my best to talk to her.

It seems that the only reason she accepted the invitation to go on a date was to fulfill her duty to Iris.

The fact that Beatrix is so angry is, on the other hand, proof that she has opened her heart to me to such an extent, and it is definitely my fault for not understanding her maidenly heart. A "Bed of Needles" [\(39\)](#) is a perfectly fitting phrase for this situation.

"Well, then, do you know this story?

In desperation, I decided to tell her a story I had learned while studying in Moscow.

"This conversation happens in a restaurant. 『Waiter, bring something to your liking.』 『Thank you sir, Will you bring me something to drink as well?』 "

Russian jokes — the so-called anecdotes [\(40\)](#). When I was studying in Moscow, I got to know a Russian mechanic who loved them, and he taught me dozens of them. However, Beatrix's expression didn't move a millimeter.

Damn it! But I still have a lot of material on hand!

"A conversation during the Sino-Soviet conflict. 『Ivanov, have you heard that a million Chinese troops are advancing on Moscow?』 『No, I've never heard of them. They're all barefoot.』 "

"....."

That's not good enough! Then let's get a little political!

" 『What is the difference between the two major Soviet newspapers, Pravda (truth) and Izvestia (Reporting)? 』 『Pravda has no press (Izvestia) and Izvestia has no truth (Pravda).』 "

"....."

"What the hell?! That was my best story! Even though It was quite a risk to tell in Friedrichstraße!"

Beatrix finally opened her mouth with a frown on her face, as if she was thinking about my despair-tainted expression.

"I know a little bit about that kind of anecdote."

Beatrix said with a triumphant expression - in a way, as if she was looking down on me.

"The Secretary-General of East Germany visited West Germany. After returning to his country, when asked by reporters what he thought of the visit, he replied: 『There was nothing different from our country. You can buy anything with West Deutsche Mark.』 [\(41\)](#)"

"Oh, come on!"

It's true that with West Deutschmarks you can buy Western goods that you can't find in East Germany from inner stores, But how can you, a "Nomenklatura", say that? Moreover, on the main street of East Berlin ...!?

What if the Stasi heard you!? There are a lot of collaborators out there!

"There was another one. A cow wandered over the Berlin Wall, stepped on a landmine, and was blown up. The first East German soldier thought, 『What a waste of mines!』 The Second thought, 『I feel sorry for the cow.』 the Third thought 『it's a pity that I am not here alone.』 "

"Hey, hey, hey, hey!"

In case you're wondering, the fact that the mine exploded means that there is safe passage to the end of the minefield, which means that the third person is Oh my god, don't even get me started! [\(42\)](#) In addition, the Friedrichstraße and the Berlin Wall we're walking along are right within a stone's throw!

"After that..."

"Stop it! I beg you! I'll do anything, Beatrix-Sama!"

My mental health can't take much more of this!

Perhaps that remark had finally made her feel better, but Beatrix smiled at me with her usual sense of superiority.

"Ara, I reserved something special to reveal for the end. What a shame."

"Give me a break, really."

"I am not particularly afraid. There is no way to place the fault on me."

"Well, for you I guess"

I don't think anyone would dare go against Abel Brehme, but you should be worried about me, a simple civilian. You and I are in a relationship, you know.

"But you were thrilled, weren't you?"

"So much so that it almost broke my heart!"

Good Grief ... I knew this girl was a sadist to the core.

"The next time you do that I am not going to forgive you. You got that?"

"Yes, Yes....."

"I couldn't hear you."

".....! Yes!"

"Good."

Beatrix's smile grew even wider and she finally began to walk alongside me.

Oh well, I guess it's all settled now. I don't think this is the kind of thrill that comes with love.

Beatrix, sensing my relief, said as if to put a stop to it.

"From now on, when you find a funny anecdote, tell me about it. Yes, ..., especially if it involves East Germany, and preferably one that satirizes politics."

"Heyyyyyyyyy!"

We ended up having a thrilling conversation in a thrilling place, but after that we wandered around Friedrichstraße, crossed the Spree Canal, and headed for the Friedrichshain People's Park a few hundred meters away.

The Friedrichshain People's Park is the most popular and oldest nature park in East Berlin, and a place for people to relax. Not only are there historic gardens and sports stadiums, but there is also the Flak Tower, a huge concrete structure over 50 meters high that was built during World War II and survived the war. Rumor has it that after the war, the Soviets tried to destroy it with explosives, but after destroying other anti-aircraft towers, they found out that they needed too much explosives, so they gave up and just left it there. It is strange that it has now become a famous tourist attraction.

Ever since Beatrix and I started dating, this park has been one of our favorite places, and we used to drop by on dates. You can see the historical monuments up close,....., and you can have a relaxed conversation in one corner of the large park.

By the way, I asked Iris to accompany me this time, but my sister refused curtly, saying that it was a problem that should be solved by her brother. No way, My Sister.

"All things considered, I can't believe you were in such a hurry to meet my father, and not me..."

Beatrix said as she sat down on the park bench with me. Of course, she pronounced the "not me" part clearly and mixed it with her sarcasm towards me.

"Can I ask what happened in the Soviet Union?"

"No, I don't want you to, and I can't answer your questions if you do."

I shook my head. The conversation with Abel is one of the most dangerous in military secrecy - I don't want to get Beatrix involved.

"I didn't mean to disparage you. I'm sorry."

"I know"

Beatrix replied curtly. It seems that he has no intention of pursuing it. It may seem unsympathetic, but for me right now, it's better.

"And you.... are you still in the Cold War with Mr. Abel?"

"Yes, because I'm not going to follow his wishes, and I'm not going to listen to him."

Beatrix said, as if it were a belief.

"So, like Irisdina, you're going to University?"

Beatrix raised one eyebrow — somehow, she smiled reassuringly.

"That's right."

"How did you get permission?"

"That's the art of negotiation, you know. My mother acted as an intermediary."

It must have been hard for you, Zabine.

"You've got something to say."

"No, I don't."

"Anyway, you don't have to worry about my career path."

Beatrix had a strong will in her eyes.

"I will carve my own path, I promise. Perhaps it will lead to happiness for you, Irisdina, and everyone."

I didn't know what exactly Beatrix was trying to say, but I was still glad that she was thinking positively about her career path.

Suddenly, Beatrix stood up.

"What's wrong?"

"I'm thirsty. I'll go buy something. I'll be right back."

Beatrix said that and started walking quickly without waiting for my reply. There were a few stores by the Anti-Aircraft Flak Towers [\(43\)](#), so she must be going there.

After seeing Beatrix's back, I let out a big sigh and looked up at the sky.

The sky was as blue as ever, and my ears were filled with the joyful voices of people enjoying a moment of relaxation in the park. It's hard to believe that the tragic battle with BETA is still going on under this same sky.

The formation of the experimental group is still delayed. The Soviet Union has yet to provide the ninth F-4R (Phantom) and beyond, and there is no telling when they will arrive. There is also no prospect of increasing the number of maintenance personnel.

On the other hand, the war situation in the Soviet Union - according to Yauch's information - is still deteriorating. As the BETA reached the Volga River, the cities of Stalingrad, Astrakhan, and Saratov were turned into battlefields. The Soviets are deploying their main forces in the country to set up a defensive line, and no further retreat will be allowed as the BETA's breach of the Volga will lead to losses in Moscow.

At the same time, the inevitable result is that millions of refugees will be forced to flee the country, and the Soviet Union is in a state of panic.

However, for the majority of East Germans, the war situation is currently a stranger to them.

The Soviet side does not disclose the details of the war situation, and the East German mass media follows suit, so the information is never conveyed correctly. Even if the information were conveyed correctly, there was nothing that could be done.

Even if they tried to escape outside the country, East Germans could only go to the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries, and it was impossible to escape to the West beyond the Iron Curtain [\(44\)](#).

The timing was crucial to make the move I had in mind, and now was not the time. But as time goes by, the war situation is getting worse and worse at an accelerated rate.

When I saw Beatrix returning to the bench with a drink in her hand, I stood up.

"What's wrong?"

"No, ..."

I answered in a slurred tone and tried to collect my thoughts.

"Why don't we go to the zoo once in a while?"

Gorillas are cool.

"Th... The zoo?"

As expected, Beatrix seemed to be taken aback. The zoo I was referring to was the Berlin Zoological Garden in the Friedrichsfelde district of East Berlin. This is the only zoo in East Berlin, and it is also a place for the citizens to relax. Incidentally, there is also the Berlin Zoo in West Berlin, which is known as one of the world's largest zoos, and is said to be very popular as well. Unfortunately, and of course, we citizens of East Berlin are not allowed to set foot in that zoo.

"I was thinking about relaxing there and passing the time until evening."

"hmm...,,,"

Beatrix pondered for a bit — and soon after, she smiled her usual winning smile.

"Okay. Maybe it's not so bad every now and then. For Jürgen, who is so good at belittling girls' feelings. you've made a clever suggestion."

Leave me alone.

"Don't you want to invite Iris? I could have Durk pick her up now."

Mr. Durk, Beatrix's escort, is the same as ever, just like how it was 2 years ago. At this moment, somewhere in the park, he or his subordinates must be ensuring our safety.

To be honest, I don't think it's a good idea to flirt like this in front of Mr. Durk, who is devoting himself to his daily duties in order to protect the daughter of a party leader. To tell you the truth, I once pointed this out to Beatrix, but she said that she didn't care.

"Durk is obliged to report my daily life regularly to my father. Including, of course, my dates with you. Isn't it fun to imagine what happens at these times?"

I have a feeling that I'll be able to have a good drink with Mr. Durk someday.

"Iris and I will go on another date together."

"That's not the kind of delicacy you'd expect from a man with a girlfriend."

"I don't care. As far as I am concerned, You are you and Iris is Iris. Both of you are my treasures."

"What extravagance."

"It's what you desired too, probably."

"I won't deny it. It's more fun that way."

Then Beatrix, with a fearless smile on her face, twined her own arm around mine without hesitation.

..... Well, after two years, you'd think I'd be used to being pampered like this, but I'm still a little embarrassed and nervous.

Beatrix, however, seemed to have something else in mind entirely.

"We might as well enjoy ourselves while we can."

A smiling expression showed on her face, while her eyes lit sagaciously.

"It's not as if I haven't heard about the war with the BETA."

So it leaked. Beatrix nodded as if to answer my thought, and pressed her body even closer to me.

"But, I will take your sentiments with appreciation."

"There are a few stories that are hard to tell if they're bad news or good news."

One day in early June, I told the three of them gathered in the briefing room assigned to the 40th TSF Experimental Group.

"It seems that part of the Volga River defense line has been breached and the monsters have avalanched into the Caucasus ⁽⁴⁵⁾ region. Ulyanovsk and Kazan are said to have become battlefields."

And then, to make matters worse, we heard that a structure that appeared to be a hive had been built in Uralsk, the city of death that we had witnessed on our way to Kazakhstan.

The last piece of information, in particular, was confirmed by the Western press, so we could say it was almost certain. Of course, the Soviet authorities did not show any reaction, and East Germany followed suit — but that attitude is what shows where the truth lies.

Anyway, the birth of the new BETA base, which would be called the Uralsk Hive, seemed like a dagger in Moscow, the heart of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union would abandon Moscow in the near future. If we continue to sit on our hands, the BETA will continue to increase their bases one after another, and the rate at which humanity is being exterminated will increase at an accelerated rate.

"The source of the information is the instructor?"

The instructor that Vikman was referring to was Evgeni Gertzen, the instructor who had trained us in Moscow. I nodded to Vikman. He had a sharp nasty tongue, but he was very supportive of us because he believed that the war situation could not be improved without the propagation of TSF operations to satellite countries.

"What's the other thing?"

I straightened my posture.

"The General Staff has just informed me that Major Weigl, commander of the 40th TSF Experimental Group, and I, the Chief of Staff, will be called before the Central Council of Defense. There will be a public hearing on TSF operations."

The three of them were nervous — understandably so. The Central Council of Defense in East Germany is a parliament of powerful people who make decisions about the defense of East Germany. It is attended by the Deputy Minister of Defence, who also serves as the Supreme Commander of the Army, and other military leaders, as well as heavyweights including the Secretary General of the party. The people who actually run this country want to hear our opinions.

"You mean the higher-ups have recognized the value of tactical fighters? If so, this will pave the way for!"

An excited Katzen stood up. Purely speaking, we should be happy that the opportunity we've been waiting for has finally arrived, but the world is not an easy place. I silently asked Katzen to take a seat and let out an exaggerated sigh.

"I would have been happy with just that....."

"..... What do you mean?"

"To continue — The General Staff is planning to form a separate TSF test unit from us."

"Haaa? What the hell is that!"

Katzen's hips began to buckle in rage. I controlled his movement with my gaze, but I couldn't help but understand how he felt.

Even our newly established unit hadn't gotten off the ground, and now they were proposing to set up similar units elsewhere. I think he's trying to make us look like fools, but I continued to explain as calmly as I could.

"In response to the Soviet Union's request for deployment, the General Staff is currently in the process of organizing a tank corps, with the 9th Tank Division as its main force. The corps will undergo equipment modification and training for anti-BETA warfare this summer and winter, and then head to the Soviet Union in the coming year. Other Warsaw Pact (WTO) troops will head to the Soviet Union in the same manner. And then..."

I look around at the three faces.

"The commander of the corps will be Major General Alfred Strachwitz. Now that I've told you all this, you know what that means, don't you?"

The room suddenly became quiet as if it was hit by water ⁽⁴⁶⁾. The one who opened his mouth was Yauch, his brow wrinkled.

"Major General Strachwitz is the former division commander of the 9th Tank Division and the current Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, and he sees the possibility of eliminating the laser class through cooperation between TSF and ground troops, rather than through penetration of the laser class by TSF as we claim. If I had to guess, I would say that the new test unit being planned is to study anti-BETA tactics based on the premise of cooperation with tank divisions. In other words, it can be said that Major General Strahawitz is trying to eliminate our advocacy of laser class penetration breakthrough tactics."

Yauch's perception is almost identical to my prediction. Probably not too far off.

"Did Major General Strachwitz have a hand in this? Is that why he's trying to destroy the 40th TSF Experimental Group with which he disagrees?"

Katzen's expression was dark and somber, so I replied in the most cheerful voice I could muster.

"It doesn't mean we're going to be crushed yet, or maybe it's a prelude to deploying TSFs to all tank divisions. Furthermore, the research results we have accumulated will naturally be feedbacked."

"That's understandable, but losing control is the problem. If someone as influential as the Major General makes a move, what will happen to us without his backing? I don't want to see our plans go bankrupt here."

How awful. Yauch's question was not one that could be answered lightly.

"In conclusion, I must have been careless. I judged optimistically that no one likes to draw the short straw of creating a TSF unit, and I thought I knew enough to know the horrors of not having a backer in an organization, but I was so busy that I didn't try to prepare a proper supervisor. It was no wonder that Strachwitz led us around by the nose."

"But how are they going to secure that many tactical planes? Even though we are having a hard time."

"It must have come from the Soviet Union. There were signs that the Major General had his own connections."

Yauch replied to Katzen's question.

"But it's a sour development..... If the Major General achieves military success in the Soviet Union, his ideas could be adopted as doctrine."

Yauch looked at me as if inquiring. I nodded.

"Yeah. A story like this seems to be circulating around the General Staff Headquarters. Either way, It seems that the Cold War-style doctrine cannot cope with the situation."

Information should be conveyed openly. I don't think there's any point in hiding information. More importantly, It is better to share the problem and work together to find a solution, which will save time.

"What are we supposed to do, ...? We can't go on like this....."

"There is still a possibility that Major General Strachwitz's dispatch will not produce results. Under the Major General's approach, the tactical planes will have to match the speed of the tanks in order to take advantage of their firepower. That would be like putting shackles on the capabilities of the tactical machines. It's not going to work."

"That's what you are hoping for!? That we won't have to do anything!?"

The conversation between Katzen and Yauch seemed to go off the deep end. Vikman, on the other hand, remained silent.

When I silently prompted Vikman to speak, her eyes shone dimly, then she raised her hand and stood up.

"Jürgen is trying to say something more."

..What, Hey! You are dumping on me here! Still a tricky woman as ever.....!

Nevertheless, Yauch and Katzen had stopped their discussion. There was no way around this.

"The concept of Strachwitz is to get into the BETA war with as little modification to the current organization as possible. This is a concept that is very easy for ordinary people to accept. Bureaucracies do not like to have their vested interests violated. The same is true of the military, which does not like change. This is the main reason why our reforms are not going well at the moment.

The seemingly frustrated Yauch began to chew at me.

"I understand what you're saying, but what we need now is not conceptualism, but a way to change reality."

"I know. I want to go through it step-by-step, so I need you to stay silent and listen for a short while."

I understand your impatience, but I don't think you would be convinced by my sudden conclusion.

"First of all, let me say that there is no conflict of tactical opinion between me and Yauch. Strachwitz is an Army man, but we are from the Air Force. The Air Force has its own way of looking at things.

As I said this, I understood once again. Our immediate enemy is not BETA, but the domestic regime.

"I'm curious to see how much damage a tank division escorted by TSFs can do in an assault, but I can assure you that a pinpoint attack by TSFs is absolutely effective in eliminating the laser class while avoiding the loss of military strength. This is the basis of our doctrine."

We've talked about this many times in our group. There is no disagreement among us.

"For that, we have work to do. We need to master low altitude entry techniques and establish a means of communication under heavy metal clouds."

This is an essential element of infiltration tactics, according to Yauch.

"We will be required to use more advanced technology than the pilots who protect the armoured division and Major General Strachwitz seems to think that it is impossible for us to do so, that it's impossible for TSFs to breakthrough."

Silence - I could feel my companions regaining their composure.

"I see that Strachwitz is also struggling to get the right number of TSFs, and I suppose the public hearing is a result of that. I think he's trying to use his influence to absorb us."

"Then..."

"— That's right. This hearing will turn the tables. I will prove how meaningless and stupid what Strachwitz is trying to do."

Silence — I didn't miss the fire that began to light up in the eyes of the three.

"But the Major General knows what we're thinking, doesn't he? I'm sure he's wary of your quibbles disrupting the hearing."

Yauch inquired.

"Yes, you're right. As a matter of fact, it's already been nailed."

"What do you mean?"

"They want us to prepare a statement in advance and speak it. The text will be sent to the General Staff Headquarters in advance to check its contents."

"We can't win with that. It will only be used as a means to reorganize the army according to Major General Strachwitz's wishes."

"Well, that's true."

"..... What do you have in mind?"

How can I corner General Strachwitz — I haven't come up with anything yet.

The old man who loves the daughter may seem to have a few gaps at first glance, but in fact, he is very adroit. He has a good track record and a large number of supporters. It's a shame, but maybe I'm no match for him now. If it were just me, I would be prepared to blow myself up, but what I'm carrying now is not something to be taken lightly. No matter who the opponent is, I can't afford to lose.

I closed my eyelids for a moment and weaved my thoughts, and then answered.

"There is no knowing what will happen if I talk freely and smash the honor of the General Staff. It's possible that the 40th TSF Experimental Group itself will be disbanded due to the complaint. That scenario is definitely possible, so I want to avoid that."

"..... However, you are taking this predicament as an opportunity."

It seems that Yauch was the one who muttered.

"This is a great opportunity for us to achieve our goal of reforming the National People's Army (NVA). If we can move the top guys, the situation will change dramatically."

What should I do to achieve this? I ruffled my hair and shut my eyes. My father used to do this to clear his head.

"It would be bad if Major General Strachwitz's troops have achieved some success and there are dead people. We would be talking about denying the generals who died in the war. If that happens, we'll never get our point across."

I see a deadline for this issue. We need to decide the game before Strachwitz goes on the battlefield.

"How do we play this?"

My brain reacts to the input from Katzen — The game is at the hearing. There is no problem if you win. But if you lose, everything becomes like bubbles on the surface of water. It cannot be recovered.

So what about talking to Strachwitz before the hearing? Is it possible to set up such an opportunity? If we do, will I be able to convince him? If not, then what? In that case, I'd be exposing my hand before the hearing.

Well, if I were him, I would just listen to what is said and withhold my response, and then I would take the option of vicious beating in the public hearing.

"Speaking of which, when is the hearing?"

Vikman asked.

The council will meet in two weeks at the Palace of the Republic.

The Palace of the Republic was a place that had just been completed in Berlin a few years ago. It houses the seat of the People's Assembly, a concert hall, a museum, and other buildings that show the prestige of East Germany. I had visited the building before, but I didn't want to get too close to it because of its strong design and politically choking tone.

"..... Oh, then there's still time."

Vikman stood up.

"Let's call it a day."

"We don't have time for this.!"

Vikman held Katzen's protesting voice with a slightly moved gaze.

"..... The person most at risk in this case is Jürgen."

Vikman's tone was unusually damp.

"If so, then it's our job to assist Jürgen in his decision and make his vision a reality. If Jürgen hasn't come up with a plan yet, it's better to wait for him to do so. Jürgen is the Chief of Staff of the 40th TSF Test Group."

And Vikman, staring into my eyes, asked for confirmation.

"So, are we clear?"

The red Wartburg parked in front of my house was polished to a shine, showing the depth of the owner's attachment to the car.

It was hard to believe that the car was produced in the 1950s. The black-painted Jill that Mr. Durk uses to take Beatrix to and from school is also a beautiful, high-class vehicle, but this one has a richness of flavor that the newer models lack.

"I'd say five minutes before the appointment."

Mr. Boltz, sitting in the driver's seat, said in a pretentious tone. I replied with a faint smile.

"Right. Military habits die hard, it seems"

"That's the way. Come now, hop on."

After asking for permission from Mr. Boltz's wife, who was sitting in the passenger seat, I opened the back seat door and called Iris in.

Iris politely bowed and got into the car, while saying "Thank you for your care". As soon as I closed the backseat door, the car started moving. The engine sound was in good shape.

"I'm sorry you had to take out your car."

"Don't worry about it. This dinner is at the invitation of your siblings."

"Well cared for as always, this car."

Mr. Boltz replied to my words in a good mood.

"I'm a Sunday auto repairman, not a Sunday carpenter. It's a way to enjoy your old age. A car can last for decades if you maintain it."

The words were not a lie. This Wartburg, Mr. Boltz's favorite car, proves.

In East Germany, it takes five to ten years from the time a car or refrigerator is ordered to the time it arrives at the customer's doorstep, and there is no hope of replacing it. For this reason, many fathers spend their holidays servicing their cars in order to make them last as long as possible.

One option is to order regular maintenance from a repair shop, but as Mr. Boltz once told me, many East German craftsmen are closed-minded, and if you don't have the right connections, the work you do will be very different. In other words, in order to receive good quality maintenance, you need to have "something under your sleeve", so it is not recommended. When I hear stories like this, I wonder what socialism is all about.

"Though, perhaps it's because of the harsh winters we've been experiencing lately that we've been having so many mechanical breakdowns, including cars."

Mr. Boltz continued with a sigh.

"The electric heater has broken down three times this winter. I am just relieved that spring has finally come."

It reminded me of a scene I witnessed in Kazakhstan — the effect of the nuclear winter on ordinary citizens, but I won't dwell on that.

"That must have been tough."

"Yeah, I had no choice but to bring the wood stove from the back of the warehouse for the first time in ten years. It worked great. If we continue to have harsh winters, we might as well renovate our house and add a traditional fireplace and chimney."

"It's nice and old-fashioned. By the way, I once went to a café in Moscow that was converted from a private house, and it had a pechka ⁽⁴⁷⁾, which is a kind of fireplace and oven."

While we were chatting about random things, Mr. Boltz's Wartburg was moving toward the center of Berlin with the sound of its engine running at a brisk pace.

The reason why Iris and I had invited Mr. Boltz to dinner that day was to show our gratitude to him.

About a year ago, when I decided to go to Moscow to study, one of the problems was taking care of my father, who had been hospitalized in the psychiatric department of a local hospital.

Up until now, I had been able to get by — even though I was living in the Air Force Academy dormitory, I was able to visit the hospital several times a month when I returned to my hometown. I can't leave Iris in charge — my father, who was broken down by the betrayal of my mother, or in other words, his own wife, would lash out when he saw Iris, who resembled his wife when she was younger. So I have no choice but to take care of him.

However, when it comes to studying abroad in Moscow, that is no longer the case, and If I become a professional military personnel after returning from my studies, I may be transferred to a place where I cannot return to Berlin as often as before. There is also the option of hiring a contractor, but in the case of a state-run company, there is no telling how they might cut corners.

Shortly before I left for Moscow, Mr. Boltz came to my rescue when I was struggling with this issue.

He promised to take care of my father for at least six months until I returned from my studies in Moscow. He also said that he couldn't make any promises about what would happen after that, but that he could introduce me to a reliable specialist if the need arose.

I was reluctant to leave my father's care in the hands of a stranger, but I agreed to Mr. Boltz's proposal. Once my income was stable, I could ask for help from a contractor.

That's why Mr. Boltz has been taking care of my father, even after I came back from Moscow. He's been helping me in any way he can. As for me and Iris, we can never thank him enough.

I wanted to give form to these feelings, so I invited them to dinner, and Mr. and Mrs. Boltz gladly accepted.

The place was Lutter Wegner, a high-class restaurant on Charlottenstraße in the Mitte district of East Berlin, close to the Berlin Wall, which Beatrix had introduced to me earlier.

It's a long-established restaurant that opened in 1811, and is said to be frequented by "red aristocrats" (nomenklatura) like Beatrix. Normally, we would never enter such a place, even with Beatrix in tow, but as far as special occasions go, there was no better place. Fortunately, my salary from my time in Moscow was almost untouched, so I had plenty of money in my pocket.

As one of the staff members of the embassy, Mr. Boltz had traveled around the world with my father, and his stories were fresh and full of new information that I had never heard before.

He told me about the visits to bars under the guise of researching the realities of the people of various countries. The story of a man who went to the movie theaters under the pretext of studying capitalist culture, and the story of the infiltration of a large amusement park in the U.S. to understand the international propaganda tactics of the West. I was overjoyed to hear that my father's early days were vivid and lively.

Iris and I, as well as Mr. Boltz's wife, were laughing out loud, thanks to Mr. Boltz's good storytelling.

By the way, I remembered that my father had a projector and a collection of foreign films in his study, although I didn't know where he got them. I don't feel like cleaning out my father's belongings, but I think I'll take a look at them when I have time.

"By the way, have you decided on your career path, Iris-chan?" Mrs. Boltz asked Iris.

Mrs. Boltz had known Iris since she was a baby, so Iris was used to being called "chan".

"I've decided to pursue higher education, just like Niisan."

Iris answered in a more polite tone than usual.

"I want to help Niisan as much as I can."

"I see. How lovely, isn't it, Jürgen."

"Yes. Her friend seems to be on the same path as her, so I'm not too worried about it."

I answered with a satisfied look. It was an honest answer. At least, I want Iris to lead a peaceful life.

There was a faint flicker in Mrs. Boltz's eyes.

"By friend, you mean the eldest daughter of the Brehme family?"

"Yes."

I have told Mr. Boltz about my relationship with the Brehme family, including Beatrix, without concealment. I thought that even if I hid it, it would soon be discovered anyway, and that it would be against my debt of gratitude to Mr. Boltz.

"When I heard that you had established a relationship with the Brehme family, I thought that you had crossed a dangerous bridge, but it seems that you are doing quite well."

"It's thanks to you. There are some difficulties, though."

The fact that I kept the top of my class at the Air Force Academy is definitely appreciated, or to be more precise, it has earned the evaluation of Abel Brehme. Well, Beatrix also has a personality that doesn't operate on sentiment alone, so If I don't do this much, I may not be able to compete with her.

Come to think of it, it's already been three years since I got to know Beatrix. In another three months, it'll be three years since we started dating. Once again, I realize how fast time goes.

"But now that you're an independent career soldier, and you've been with the Brehme family for a long time, it's time to think about it."

"Think about what?"

I straightened my back and prepared myself for the political trouble that was to come. Mr. Boltz's warning was worth heeding, whether it was unfounded or not.

"I'm saying it a little early, but you might want to think about settling down."

"What?"

Settling down?

Eh.....What's the interpretation in a case like this?

.....

Wai.....eeeeeeeeee?!

"Boltz-San!"

I stood up involuntarily. Mr. Boltz hurried to restrain me.

"Calm down. It's just that some people think that way."

"But that's too much of a leap!"

The leap was as surprising as the F-4R (Phantom)'s jumping ability.

"Settling down Me and my partner are still students, you know!"

"It's fine. It's not that unusual."

It was true. Compared to other countries, East Germany has a culture of early marriage, with the average age of marriage being 23, and it was common for students to marry each other. For this reason, women in their mid-twenties were considered to be "behind the times".

The reason why early marriages are so popular is that the government provides generous support for young people to get married; when a man and a woman in their twenties get married, the government gives them a large amount of money to celebrate, and they can easily move to an apartment complex in an urban area, which is usually difficult to do. Childbirth is also free, and more money is given when a child is born. Day care centers and school child care facilities are also available at each workplace, almost free of charge. It is truly a nation of workers, and the more the merrier.

Well, I know such a trend, and I don't particularly deny it, but that doesn't mean that.....

Boltz's eyes haven't gotten any less sharp.

"Wouldn't such a relationship with the Brehems make the Bernhards' position more secure and your job easier?"

..... How much does he know about me, this guy? I'm sure I didn't tell him anything about my work, However, I couldn't just laugh it off.

It is only a hypothetical situation, but if I and Beatrix were to settle down, my political position will be greatly strengthened. There is no doubt that Abel has a lot of influence in the upper echelons of East Germany.

I would be lying if I said I didn't find it attractive. Considering my political position in the military in the future, I can get points for it, not lose points.

I hadn't been able to make a decision on the matter of calling a meeting of the Council. I've already sent the General Staff a bland report on the results of the experimental group's research, and it's been checked. I'm sure they won't make any major changes, And without being able to make any claims, I would be making the same statement as written in the report to the council.

If this continues, our research will be used to feed the ideals of Major General Strachwitz, but there is nothing we can do about it. It's not that I don't have an idea, but the worst that could happen is that we could lose everything.

It is true that becoming Abel's son-in-law might help me politically, but that doesn't mean that

"Please don't joke about it."

I sipped my coffee as if to smooth over what I just said.

"I am not seeing Beatrix because of political reasons. Besides, I don't think the Brehme family would allow it in the first place."

The moment I said it, I was wondering what would happen if they didn't allow it.

It was no wonder that Abel was thinking so much about Beatrix's future. It's a marriage of convenience.

It would be a shame if Beatrix was snatched away by a person of an undoubtful origin. To be honest, I can't forgive it. It would be in-character of Beatrix to prefer to live with me than try to coexist with her parents.

No! No! No! Calm down! First, I need to get out of that thought loop. However, Beatrix and I are bound to get together and have a child A child ... of me and beatrix.....

"A... anyway! I'm not going to continue this conversation."

I replied resolutely.

"I think you should continue. I'm interested."

Hey, My Sister! Read the mood, mood! Iris smiles with the cheerfulness of a goddess.

"If Niisan and Beatrix can get settled down, I can stay friends with Beatrix forever."

"That may be so, but!"

"Fufu.... I am sorry But I can't talk about this in front of Beatrix either, and I feel a little better now that Boltz-san has brought it up."

Feeling better You have already thought that far ahead. Please abandon that thought.

Iris continued in a voice that was just a little shadowy.

"But I'm a little jealous of Niisan for being able to even think about having that kind of relationship with the person you love."

"Jealous?"

"I just can't seem to get interested in marriage or relationships....."

Perhaps those were the words that Iris must have really meant.

In all seriousness, I've never once seen any sign that Iris is interested in that side of things. Of course, if Iris had a romantic partner, as I said before, I'd have to beat him up at least once to be satisfied, and I'm not afraid to say so. Anyway, there's no talk of romance around Iris.

It's also possible that the fact that there is a siscon in the background makes it harder for other men to get their hands on her Iris herself has never harbored such feelings for anyone, or at least has never shown anything that would make me feel that way, which is rather unnatural for a girl of her age.

Iris knows that when she was a child, her family was cruelly destroyed and that as a result, I had to work hard to raise her. Iris is concerned about the fact that she has the same blood as that woman, that her mother's image overlaps with her own.

I wanted to say something to Iris. But I couldn't find the words. I really feel like a pathetic brother.

"That's why I am hoping I could be of help to Niisan."

"Jürgen, you've got a good sister."

"I believe so too."

I agreed, but also wondered if I was really convinced with that.

"Niisan, you brought a souvenir for Mr. Boltz today, didn't you?"

As if concerned about the conversation becoming too heavy, Iris changed the subject as if she remembered.

"Oh, you are right. Please have it."

I handed Mr. Boltz a paper bag that I had left at his feet. Instantly, Mr. Boltz rolled his eyes.

"This is!"

"It's a bottle of whiskey. It was given to me by Abel Brehme to celebrate my graduation from the Air Force Academy, but I don't know much about the taste of alcohol."

I knew that Mr. Boltz was a whiskey drinker. When I visited Mr. Boltz at his home before, I had seen several bottles of whiskey on the shelf.

"That's why I want to..."

I noticed that Mr. Boltz was looking at me with a serious expression. It was the kind of look that my father used to show me at home when he was a diplomat, trying not to miss all the signs that his negotiating partner was showing.

"..... Jürgen, are you sure you haven't heard anything?"

"What do you mean?"

"..... Maybe you're not cut out for politics after all."

I don't know what he meant by that, but Mr. Boltz took the bottle of whiskey out of the paper bag with a very careful hand, like a tank soldier holding an armor-piercing bullet with a fuse, and showed me the brand name.

"It's a 30-year-old Glenfiddich Jürgen, there's no way I'm taking this."

Mr. Boltz was beyond dismayed, he was angry and pressed me for confirmation.

"How close is your relationship with Abel Brehme?"

"Close relationship, you say...."

I don't swing that way.

I was about to say this with a sarcastic smile, but Mr. Boltz's expression was so grim that I swallowed those words.

My voice, slightly stiffened, echoed through the halls of the Republican Palace, a place truly worthy of the word "Solemn".

" as stated above, The Tactical Surface Fighter will be an integral part of future anti-BETA warfare."

I looked at the members of today's council in front of me: the leading figures of the Socialist Unity Party (SED), the bureaucrats from various ministries, and the military. Among the military officials was Strachwitz. To my annoyance, he seemed to be writing something in my report that I had distributed in advance.

I continued to read out the statement of opinion that had been checked by the General Staff in advance. It seemed silly to go to the trouble of reading out loud since the documents had already been distributed, but I couldn't go against convention. The handout was well received by the General Staff, as it was composed with a lot of visuals, so even the staff members who didn't understand military affairs could get it.

"It is true that on the current front, the Soviet forces are still struggling even with the introduction of TSFs. However, this is due to the overwhelming quantity of BETA, and not the fault of our Soviet comrades. Now that the Soviet Union cannot afford to conduct research on the operation of TSFs, it is important for our country to take its place and support our Soviet comrades."

If anyone close to the Soviet politicians heard these words, they would have looked as if they were biting on a bitter bug, but the General Staff Headquarters appealed for the inclusion of this text. Apparently, someone wanted to show that the East German army was not going to be a faithful dog to the Soviet Union. However, as I was in a position in which words are light enough that if blown on them they would fly away, I was willing to dismiss it if anything happened.

"It has the firepower of a tank and the mobility of a TSF. The combination of TSFs and ground troops with these advantages should dramatically improve the striking power of the National People's Army (NVA). It may even succeed in eliminating the laser class, which the Soviet Union has been unable to do by any means other than the use of tactical nuclear weapons."

The higher-ups who would be attending this meeting had already been given an overview of the BETA. Some of them, like the Secretary General and the Minister of Defense, know more about it than I do.

In other words, these guys are part of the people who have made the human race's situation so much worse... I shook off my thoughts and focused on my statement. I have one more request from the General Staff.

"If we can establish a means of eliminating the laser class, we will have a brighter future in the fight against BETA. A full-scale counterattack may become possible. If this happens, we will be able to capture the Hive. In other words, the new anti-BETA tactics created by East Germany's studies may save the East camp and humanity as a whole."

Now that I've read out such an outrageous opinion, give me the budget and manpower I need. I swallowed up my bitter feelings. I could bear it if I thought it was a performance to secure the budget.

I closed my mouth, straightened my posture, and stared directly into the eyes of the higher-ups. This was the end of the text that had been confirmed in advance.

The assembly facilitator looked in my direction and told me to finish my statement with a brief salute. The military officials also seemed relieved that my statement had gone off without incident.

I took a deep breath as I prepared myself and checked the paper again — praying for one thing and one thing only.

"This concludes the report on the research findings of Lieutenant Jürgen Bernhard, Chief of Staff of the 40th TSF Research Group Command. I would now like to make recommendations for more effective TSF operations."

The facilitator of the assembly had gone pale. Major Weigl, who was standing next to him, opened his mouth. The military personnel seated in front of him were also rolling their eyes.

But this is where my statement comes into play.

— It was an old western movie in my father's film collection that inspired me to come up with this plan.

After the dinner with Mr. Boltz, I couldn't think of an effective way to deal with Major General Strachwitz, so I took the escape route of organizing my father's collection.

After viewing works such as those commemorating the 20th anniversary of the First Russian Revolution, I then reached out to the Western works and bumped into it.

A Boy Scout leader is elected to replace a suddenly deceased senator in Washington, D.C., the center of congressional politics. Although he was swept away by various political circumstances and suffered setbacks, he eventually utilized a certain rule of Congress to achieve his own justice. ⁽⁴⁸⁾

I was looking at it wondering if my father was also interested in American politics, but as I watched the movie, I came to realize that political corruption is not a problem in the East or the West, and I eventually finished the movie with my hands sweating — Then I learned the Dutch word "Filibuster". ⁽⁴⁹⁾ As I looked up the rules, I realized that the same rule is actually used in our country.

No one has the right to stop a speech once it has begun until the speaker returns to his or her seat — a system that has been adopted in our own parliament. This is a basic rule of democracy, or perhaps it is more correct to say that in our country it would be disrespectful of the party leaders to interrupt me when I was speaking in front of the Secretary General.

It's a semi-ceremonial arrangement, but it can't be helped that the East German Party Secretary General is in a position to decide everything in the country — the same position as the King in medieval Europe, or the Emperor or whatever in Asia, so I decided to take advantage of this rule.

If Major General Strachwitz intends to use his influence to bind us up, I will ensnare the senators who don't understand the ABCs of military affairs and silence Strachwitz — that's what I decided.

Whether it's self-destruction or a matter of opinion, it's not easy to prepare a stage where you can make a bold statement to the whole world. I glanced at a corner of the chamber — not at the legislators, but at the bureaucrats. There was my girlfriend's father sitting there.

The contents of the text can be modified in advance, but the inside of the skull cannot be audited. What I said was the same as what I had previously told Strachwitz and Abel, denying all the doctrine submitted by Strachwitz.

Instead of coordinating TSFs and ground troops, it would be more effective to have a well-trained TSF force penetrate the laser class alone, both economically and in terms of reducing the loss of human resources — and thus the decline in population. In order to do this, the MiG-21 (Balalaika), a cutting-edge TSF with higher mobility than the F-4 (Phantom), must be domestically produced for mass deployment, and TSF communication capabilities must be strengthened. In order to maintain the East German system and continue to defend the country, there is no other way.

In order to do this, drastic reforms of the military and the East German economy are necessary, including the reduction of ground forces, expansion of TSF forces, and changes in doctrine.

My statement was not interrupted until the end. As I said before, it was against the courtesy of the higher-ups. If they stopped me from speaking, they would have been regarded as picking a fight with the Republican Assembly.

The meeting that followed was contentious.

Some of the higher-ups seemed to appreciate the fact that I had said everything I had to say. The bureaucrats at the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of the Interior seemed to think that as war approached, there was a high probability that the system would collapse at every turn and be shaken. In other words, the price of human life, the price of depleting the population of East Germany, and maintaining the system while fostering industry seemed to be attractive to them. They were of the opinion that my views were worth considering from a different military perspective.

However, there were those who disagreed with my opinion. Many of those involved in the military said that TSF penetration and penetration breakthrough tactics were impossible, and that the tactics advocated by Strachwitz of linking up with tank divisions were the most feasible tactics.

The debate suddenly turned into an endless argument, where it had become clear that no conclusion could be reached. I turned the water on Strachwitz, who had been, until then, listening intently to the discussion in silence.

Now, how will you play — I stared at Strachwitz.

"— The opinions of Lieutenant Jürgen Bernhard are worth listening to."

Looking composed, Strachwitz gave his affirmation.

"However, it's not a realistic idea. To adopt his proposal would require some technical innovations. Besides, the General Staff has already begun to organize the 1st Tank Corps, the force to be dispatched to the East, in accordance with the Soviet request. Since the decision to dispatch the corps was made, the TSF should be entrusted to the corps, and the model should be the F-4 (Phantom) or F-4R (Phantom) provided by the Soviet Union. If we pursue a far-reaching goal such as the domestic production of the MiG-21 (Balalaika), we will allow BETA to leap over us. What we need is a force that can help us now."

I'm sure that's what it will be—I stared at Strachwitz. However, he didn't care about my gaze and continued to speak in an exuberant manner.

"However, it is a fact that both ideas are only theoretical discussions at present. Therefore, first of all, the 1st Tank Corps would like to demonstrate the power of our TSF and ground troops, and deny the misconception that there is no other means of operation than penetrating the laser class, as Lieutenant Bernhard believes. If you could give us the time to do so, there would be no greater joy."

If we don't kill this old man, there will be no change in this country. It was right after I had thought that. Strachwitz looked at me as if he was entrusting something to me.

"—The young soldier's love for his motherland touched this petty official's heart."

I was caught off guard...and after an instant, I understood his real intention. No, I would like to believe that I have read something.

In other words, I'm still being rolled around in the palm of this person's hand...

After the meeting, I was severely scolded by the General Staff and Major Weigl. Major Weigl, who had lost all face, was completely furious and shouted that he was going to court-martial me. The next day, I was ordered by the General Staff to take a week's rest in the name of mental recuperation.

However, as expected, no further action was taken.

It was only a few days later that the Soviet Union announced its decision to move the capital from Moscow.



A group of freight trains were about to come to a stop at a military station deep in the Spreewald.

A large freight car, pulled by an old-fashioned electric locomotive, was carrying a huge piece of equipment. It was hard to tell what it was, as it was covered with a green plastic sheet.

But we already knew what it was. There were four freight cars and four pieces of equipment on board.

"I didn't expect them to arrive so soon....."

Katzen, who was staring at the scene next to me, muttered something about being deeply moved.

"I've heard that the MiG-21 (Balalaika) is a valuable new TSF for the Soviet Union as well."

"I think it's because of what happened in Moscow."

At Yauch's answer, Katzen asks.

"You're talking about moving the capital of the Soviet Union? Wasn't it Khabarovsk in Siberia? That's a remarkable distance."

The capital has been moved from the west to the east of the Soviet Union, and it is now close to the United States.

"That's true, but didn't you hear a rumor that the U.S. unofficially put pressure on the Soviets shortly after that?"

"Yeah, It is that they should evacuate the European and Russian munitions factories to the Eastern European countries and reorganize them. If they can't do that, they would be pressured to hold talks with the west about their security."

The news of the relocation of the capital city of Moscow, the stronghold of the Eastern camp, has had such a great impact on the world.

The decision to move the capital does not mean that the Soviet Union has decided to abandon Europe and Russia. However, if the BETA offensive continues at this rate, Moscow will soon be devoured by the BETA, and the majesty of that city will be lost as well, unless the human race launches a general counter-offensive. — When I thought about it, a nagging feeling of sadness came over me.

"I know it's unpleasant for the Soviets, but if we ignore the American statement here and make a show of abandoning the Eastern European countries, the West might approach the Eastern European countries for their own negotiations. That's what they must have thought."

It is already nearly impossible for the Soviet Union to protect the Eastern European countries from BETA. If the Soviet Union wants to maintain its influence in Eastern Europe, flexibility in order to keep hold of

the weapons system may be a good strategy. If the Eastern European countries give up on the Soviet Union and run to the West — at the very least, the Soviet leadership will be truly finished.

"The delivery of the four F-4Rs (Phantom), which had been delayed, was completed, and the MiG-21s (Balalaika), starting with these four, will make a total of 12 by autumn. An increase in the number of maintenance personnel was also approved. The permission to provide the MiG-21 (Balalaika) was notified before the US made a statement, so Maybe the U.S. has been putting pressure on the Soviets through unofficial channels for a long time."

The facts will never be revealed. The power relations in the international community are so intricate that it is impossible to read them all.

"If that's the case, why don't they just move the TSF factory to East Germany?"

"I'm sure the Warsaw Pact Organization (WTO) has started a fierce battle to attract factories from Eastern European countries by now, so they might be confused by that. That's why they might have given a platoon of MiG-21s (Balalaika) as a deposit for now. If the Soviet Union gives away its valuable new TSFs to the Eastern European countries without hesitation, it could be a big guarantee for the Eastern European countries to refrain from negotiations with the West. Whatever the case may be, we've definitely taken another step forward toward our goal."

Looking somewhere in the distance, Yauch continued his words.

"In other words, Jürgen's troubles may have not had any meaning. Even if you hadn't done such a foolhardy thing, the course to introduce the MiG-21 (Balalaika) might have already been decided. There may be people who will say you've made a bad impression and corrupt your position."

"Maybe so, but it's not all bad."

It's true that the lifting of the export ban on the MiG-21 (Balalaika) was something I hadn't even heard of. I was surprised to be informed of it during my recuperation period, but I didn't think it had anything to do with the actions I had taken.

If there is a battle going on in the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO) to attract the relocation of Soviet factories, it may be because people who agree with me are working on it.

There must have been people who had the same idea, but didn't have enough reason to move. Since the Secretary General didn't explicitly oppose the move, I'm sure there are many people who "inherited" the idea and moved on.

If those people can get on the diplomatic stage and push for change in East Germany, there is still a chance that it will not be too late. Also, Major General Strachwitz's last words at the hearings - I think there is a deeper meaning to them.

That must have been an expression of his intention to leave the rest to me if his ideas were rejected on the battlefield.

If he was capable enough to clash fiercely with the evil spirits of rivers and mountains, and conquer the devils, ⁽⁵⁰⁾ he must have considered the possibility of the operation's failure as well.

The reason why he didn't say it out in the open was probably because he thought it would inevitably cause an unnecessary backlash if he, who was revered as a hero by the ground troops, said it out loud... Or is he truly believing in his own righteousness, but also hoping for my potential?

The answer to this question will eventually be revealed in the near future.

And the other thing is....

"Jürgen, I've been wondering about this for a while now."

Katzen asked again.

"What's in that paper bag?"

"Whiskey. I got it from an acquaintance."

I took the bottle out of the paper bag. Carefully, of course.....

"Scotch whisky, Glenfiddich, 30 years old."

"Is it good?"

"I haven't tried it yet, but I hear it's good."

"Is it expensive?"

"To death. If you hear the price, your heart will stop beating. When I first heard it, I felt as if time had stopped."

"How did you get it here?"

"I thought we'd have a drink here to celebrate our future together. I asked Vikman to bring the glasses."

Vikman had already started to take out a glass wrapped in newspaper from her bag, when Yauch interrupted her angrily.

"Jürgen! We are on duty! We are not supposed to be drinking!"

"It's okay. Besides, today is supposed to be a day of celebration and It's not like you're not interested in the taste of this fellow."

"That's true, but"

"Then, it's settled."

"But why Scotch whisky? Regardless of price and taste, Jürgen was not a whiskey hobbyist, was he?"

"Do you know what distillery Glenfiddich is?"

I said in a pretentious tone.

"It's a long-established Scottish distillery, the birthplace of single malt whisky, and now one of the world's leading distilleries. But at first it was just one of the many distilleries in Scotland, and the equipment was second-hand."

"Heh, ..., and why is that?"

"Well, in the old days there was Prohibition in America. Many of the American whiskey makers were forced out of business because of it. Glenfiddich took the opportunity to expand their business and increase their sales channels. When Prohibition was repealed and the demand for quality whiskey increased in the United States, the name Glenfiddich quickly spread throughout the United States and the world, establishing a strong position."

I looked at the brand on the bottle.

"It's a western whiskey, so it's rarely available in the east. Even in the West, a 30-year-old is the rarest of the rare - at least that's what the guy who told me about it said."

"I see."

Yauch said, grinning.

"It's just like us, you're saying? Taking advantage of the Soviet Union's perilous footing, we are advancing toward our goal. Like Scotch whisky that has been aged for the last 30 years. So that East Germany, and indeed humanity itself, can survive the next 30 years."

"That's what I am saying."

To tell the truth, I hadn't really thought about the next 30 years, but let's just say that I did. It was thanks to this bottle that I had the courage to act without fear of risk at the Council.

However, he had no intention of thanking the original owner directly. If I bowed to him, he would probably speak ill of me. Gratitude be shown in our future battles.

I uncorked the bottle and poured the contents into the glasses that Vikman had handed out. A clear amber liquid gushes out with a pleasant aroma.

In the background, the MiG-21 (Balalaika) on a freight car was being taken out. The plastic sheeting is removed, revealing a face that is truly Soviet, with eyes that are no less sharp than those of the F-4R (Phantom).

Good eyes....

I glanced behind me, then raised my glass. The other three did the same.

"Prost!" [\(51\)](#)

"I'm home. Hey, Beatrix, Are you here?"

A few days after the arrival of the MiG-21 (Balalaika) at the base, I couldn't help but mutter to myself when I saw the shoes lined up at the entrance of my house. In East Germany, it is common practice to take off one's shoes when entering one's home. Apparently, this is not the case in West Germany, but...

Today, I was exhausted because I had spent the whole day with the operation test of the MiG-21 (Balalaika) that had arrived.

However, the mountain of work was not over yet. By tomorrow, I have to prepare the first proposal for the modification of the MiG-21 (Balalaika). Tonight, I was going to be at my desk until late at night.

Incidentally, Major Weigl, my superior officer, had been ordered to transfer to a new post to take responsibility for the recent incident, and his seat as the commander of the experimental group had become vacant. Major Weigl was transferred to the attack helicopter unit, his old stomping ground, and he left the command center with a smile on his face.

"Welcome back, Niisan."

Irisdina greeted me in her school uniform and apron, another outfit with great destructive power.

"Yes, Beatrix is in the kitchen. Dinner will be ready soon, so please wait a little while."

"Oh, ..."

I sort of nodded. It was not uncommon for Beatrix to visit my home without warning. Besides, I was too tired to think properly.

"Oh, by the way..."

Iris blushed a little and looked up at me.

"Would you like dinner, or a bath, or me?"

"Heeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeyy!"

What do you mean, My Sister! You're not supposed to be that character! Don't ruin your brother's image!

This is definitely Beatrix's suggestion! She's still holding a grudge over the fact that I told her that Iris and I were going to the zoo together.!

How much more are you going to torment me, Beatrix.....!

After dinner - Iris had a cup of tea, while Beatrix and I had coffee.

Perhaps it was because the blood had gone to my stomach, but I was feeling a little foggy. Iris and Beatrix ignored me and chatted as usual.

It's nice, after all. This kind of everyday life. It's wonderful to see the girls getting along with each other. It makes me want to stare at them forever. I think I need a video camera. Next time I get paid, I'll seriously consider buying one. The problem is that it won't be delivered immediately after I order it, but I need to capture this scene.

This is my place to come back to, and these beloved two are the ones I need to protect.

Suddenly, the conversation between Iris and Beatrix stopped. They looked at each other as if to indicate something, and then nodded.

"Niisan"

With a serious expression on her face, Iris started the conversation.

"Me and Beatrix need to talk to Niisan about something."

"What's with the serious turn? Could it be that you failed the senior high school entrance exam?"

I joked reflexively. No way. Iris and Beatrix's grades at the integration school were close to mine when they were in school.

"It's about our career path, but it's not like that."

Iris stammered. Beatrix stood up as if she hadn't seen it coming, and without saying a word, she placed an already opened envelope in front of me.

The document was sent to Iris and Beatrix. It said "Notice of Acceptance".

The sender is "Ernst Thälmann" [\(52\)](#) of the National People's Army (NVA) Military Academy.

My consciousness, which had previously been wrapped in a pleasant slumber, instantly became clear and I felt the blood drain from my body.

I couldn't help but raise my voice.

"Hey, this is!"

"As you can see, Jürgen."

After staring at the envelope, Beatrix locked eyes with Iris, nodded vigorously to each other once more, and declared to me.

"We're also aiming to be Tactical Surface Fighter Pilots, and become your strength."



第3章

バックハンドブロー
後手からの一撃

Chapter 3: A Blow from the Back

1

What was being projected onto my retina was a gray ocean field. The falling snowflakes melted into the sea.

This was the scenery of autumn, or perhaps winter, in the Baltic Sea. ⁽⁵³⁾ This is the first time I've flown over this sea, but it's a very bleak landscape.

"CP (Command Post) to Ohr 1, Ohr 2!"

From the headset comes the voice of Yauch, who is stationed in a rented command post at the East German Naval Command Center in the suburbs of Rostock, a city on the Baltic coast. ⁽⁵⁴⁾

"We're 20 kilometers from the heavy metal cloud deployment airspace. Fix altitude at 50 and enter at combat speed. The heavy metal cloud is being rapidly swept away by the strong westward wind. There are no do-overs."

"Ohr 1, copy."

"Ohr 2, copy."

My reply was followed by a woman's voice - Vikman, who was serving as a Chaser ⁽⁵⁹⁾.

To give you an idea of what I'm talking about, the TSF that Vikman is flying is the regular MiG-21 (Balalaika), and the one I'm flying is the improved MiG-21P (Balalaika).

The MiG-21 (Balalaika) was sent from the Soviet Union about three months ago, and was modified to enable communication under heavy metal clouds - the first experimental model. It is armored in flamingo red. On its shoulders is a red star ⁽⁶⁰⁾. It is loudly claimed to be a Soviet TSF. However, even though it was originally made in the Soviet Union, it was originally modified in East Germany, so in a sense it can be said to be East Germany's first domestically produced TSF.

The difference in appearance between the standard type and the modified type is in the head. While the standard model has a small communication antenna on the back of the head, the modified model has a large communication antenna, commonly known as the "Pickelhaube," ⁽⁵⁵⁾ on the front of the head.

When Katzen first saw the proposed head design of the communication-enhanced prototype, he commented that it looked like a Prussian soldier. However, this was only a prototype, and depending on future development, the design could be changed. Even the name will be changed when it is officially adopted.

In my field of vision, the ocean stretched to the horizon. The ships of the East German Navy, which are cooperating with us in the exercise, are waiting far off in the distance. According to the information we had obtained beforehand, Polish naval vessels were approaching just short of the territorial waters and

conducting surveillance. Since this was not an illegal act under international law, we had no choice but to leave it alone.

In recent years, as the Soviet Union has receded from power in Poland, the democracy movement has been gaining momentum among the citizens - and the conflict with the government, which is trying to suppress it, is intensifying. East Germany is supporting the Polish government's efforts, but I hear that this is causing civilian interaction between the two countries to become tenuous.

Following Yauch's instructions, I fixed the altitude at 50 meters above sea level and continued my flight. In actual combat, we would have to fly at an even lower altitude than this — if we were not careful, we would have to fly at an altitude of 10 meters or less, a NOE [\(56\)](#), but today was a test of communication performance, so there was no need to push ourselves that far.

The flight characteristics of the MiG-21P (Balalaika) have changed from the normal type due to the installation of the large antenna, and the control characteristics have changed considerably. If you're not careful, you could lose your balance and crash into the sea surface.

"Ohr 2 to Ohr 1, 10 seconds to heavy metal cloud deployment airspace."

The countdown began in an emotionless voice. If you look ahead, you'll see that the dark gray airspace is indeed rapidly approaching.

I try not to think about the fact that the Baltic Sea, which is a valuable source of protein for East Germany suffering from the cold damage of the nuclear winter, is being flooded with heavy metals that are harmful to all living things.

In my excuse, I wanted to conduct the exercise in East German territory because of the negative impact it would have on the surrounding environment, but it was rejected because it was not possible to prepare a training ground early enough to deploy a wide area of heavy metal clouds.

In my mind's eye, I can see fish dishes lined up on the dining table at home, and Irisdina and Beatrix eating them in good company.

"Ohr 1, you are gaining altitude. You thought control is in disarray. Don't think about pointless things!. Do you want to crash into the ocean?"

Yauch's reprimand - he was absolutely right, so I shouted, "Copy that!" and dropped my altitude - at the same time, Vikman's countdown was coming to an end.

"Three, two, one, go in."

The MiG-21P (Balalaika) plunged into the dark gray sky below the heavy metal clouds.

The heavy metal cloud that humanity deploys to dampen enemy laser-class radiation has a major flaw. The metallic particles drifting in the atmosphere cause radio waves to be diffusely reflected, thus interfering with radio observation and communication.

Mankind has tried various methods to solve this problem. Pyrotechnic signals [\(57\)](#), Enhanced Parabolic Reflectors [\(58\)](#), light-emitting signals... but none of these have produced satisfactory results. In order to solve this problem, I am working on this MiG-21P (Balalaika).

I have made full use of my connections to strengthen the output for data transmission and reception, and to research new data compression technology - problems that I cannot be directly involved in. Today, the results will be put to the test.

Under the influence of the heavy metal cloud that creates radio interference, the radar's search range is suddenly narrowed... However, the MiG-21P (Balalaika) with its enhanced power output has a wider search range than the normal TSF, and even now it is not below the practical range. And above all....

I stared at the icon that was projected on one corner of my retina that told me the status of my communication with Vikman's MiG-21 (Balalaika).

The icon read "connected". In other words, even under the high concentration of heavy metal clouds, the communication with the colleagues - the data link - is secured.

Vikman is flying in the maximum distance from me that a TSF platoon can fly in a formation, so at least communication is possible for a platoon-sized march. Even though the results were as expected, my mouth dropped open at the thought of getting the test results I wanted.

Meanwhile, communication with the CP (Command Post) was completely cut off. I was not happy, but this was also as expected.

Currently, when a TSF unit enters a heavy metal cloud, communication with the rear is cut off, making it impossible to obtain information on the entire battlefield. In other words, it would be up to the front line commander to decide whether to continue the battle or withdraw.

"Ohr 2, can you hear me? Give me a status report."

"This is Ohr 2. Radio and data links are clear."

Vikman's voice was clear. I involuntarily let out a big breath. This means that the development of the MiG-21P (Balalaika) has taken a big step forward.

Of course, in reality, the communication was only secured on a platoon scale - in the future, this will have to be expanded to a company scale. In addition, it is necessary to verify whether communication can be maintained even during actual maneuvers with BETA — In order to approach the laser class by penetration, the performance of the MiG-21 (Balalaika) must be exploited to the limit. In order to save the heavy metal cloud, we must also calculate the best spray concentration based on the communication capability of the TSF units and the decay rate of the laser class. If possible, we would like to change the location of the exercises from the sea to the land... Even though we are forcing the soil to be contaminated, the idea of contaminating not only the land but also the sea with heavy metals makes me feel bad, as if we are encouraging the destruction of East Germany.

"There's still a lot of work to be done"

I muttered to myself as I set the TSF on a course to leave the heavy metal cloud.

The 40th TSF Experimental Group had twelve F-4Rs (Phantom) and thirteen MiG-21s (Balalaika), of which one had been upgraded to a MiG-21P (Balalaika) and three were in the process of being upgraded. The command center was still located at the Grünheide base, where I was reporting the results of the recent tests.

"The overall test results were good. From now on, we are going to modify the MiGs as planned, with the goal of maintaining their communication capabilities in a high-G environment ⁽⁶¹⁾ and for squadron operations. The three MiG-21Ps (Balalaika) that are currently being upgraded are expected to be delivered from the Eisenhuettentstadt TSF Arsenal this month."

The Eisenhuettentstadt TSF Arsenal was the first TSF repair facility in the country, built by East Germany in the industrial city of Eisenhuettentstadt on the banks of the Oder River. The Soviet Union's Mikoyan Gurevich Design Bureau ⁽⁶²⁾ had a TSF factory in the suburbs of Moscow that was to be evacuated, and the East German government heard about it and, after negotiating with the Soviet government, paid a substantial amount of money to bring the factory to East Germany.

It may sound a little strange that only a repair shop was built first instead of a production base for TSF, but it is not particularly surprising since the National People's Army (NVA) did not have a production plant for tanks and TSFs, but only a repair shop to maintain their equipment.

Incidentally, it seemed that other Eastern European countries such as Poland and Czechoslovakia were also working to attract a TSF production plant, but negotiations were not going well and the construction of the plant was proving to be difficult, or so I heard.

"Once the three TSFs undergoing refurbishment are delivered, the planned quota will be met. After that, we will conduct full-fledged training in anti-laser class penetration tactics using simulators and actual TSFs, and hope to improve the level of training to a level that will allow us to put them into actual combat by the spring of next year. That concludes my report."

I turned my gaze to the high-ranking official in front of me — the commander sitting at the center of the group.

"Until next spring, or"

The commander of the 40th TSFs Experimental Group, Captain Holzer Hannibal, muttered. He was a strong-looking man with a full mustache, but he had an air of intelligence about him.

"Will we make it? It's mid-October, and we only have about three months to train with the full force of the TSFs Test Group. No, it may be even shorter, depending on the war situation. I don't know when the military will send us into battle, but they will want results by next spring when the 1st Tank Corps is dispatched.

Hannibal expressed his skepticism.

"I've heard that it takes six months after receiving the equipment for the Air Force to modify it so that the pilots are ready for combat."

"We'll make it in time."

I concluded. However, there was no sternness in my voice. It was my way of showing respect to Captain Hannibal.

"The most important thing to make our targeted penetration and breakthrough tactics against the laser class possible is, first and foremost, the ability to advance at low altitude. While scrambling through a large number of BETA, we must maintain data links between squadrons and continue advancing toward the laser class. By focusing on this training, we hope to save time."

"Are you saying that medium- and long-range firefighting training is secondary?"

"Yes, sir. If we can't get to the laser class with a cohesive force, this tactic is meaningless."

"Shouldn't the Tank and Grappler classes also be deployed around the laser class?"

"Even if you're a little undertrained, if the target is close enough, you'll hit it. First of all, it is important to reach the target. At present, there are few humans who have been able to cut through the tens of thousands of BETA ladders at close range with a laser. There may have been some cases in the Soviet Union, but we have not received any information about them. How the BETA will behave in the deepest part of the ladder — unfortunately, we won't know until we get there."

"... Even if you accept the possibility of annihilation in the deepest part?"

"The annihilation of two companies of TSFs for the extermination of a laser-class group is worth it."

Hannibal fell silent when I replied. I'm aware that I'm speaking out of turn. But I can't help it, because it's true.

It would definitely be better to lose dozens of TSFs and the same number of pilots than to lose tens of thousands of generals by sending in several tank/automobile sniper divisions to destroy the laser class.

"It's not like we can make peace with them. If we lose, we will all die."

It was not that I like the idea of talking about human life in terms of efficiency, but I didn't want to change my opinion.

"All right. If that's your opinion, then I have nothing to say to you."

Hannibal nodded approvingly.

"The best way to get rid of the laser class is to penetrate them with TSFs. I basically agree with your idea. As long as you guys are willing to do everything in your power to achieve this, that's fine."

"Thank you very much."

This man is a calm and calculating person — I thought as I stared at Hannibal's face.

Captain Holzer Hannibal is the commander of the TSF Experimental Group, replacing Major Jupp Weigl, who was transferred three months ago due to a mishap.

Hannibal was from the Air Force, just like we are, but he was not from the mainstream of the Air Force like us.

He grew up in the Air Force's surface-to-air missile unit — the unit that intercepted enemy aircraft entering East Germany with missiles on the ground.

The East German Air Force's main doctrine was air defense, and it emphasized surface-to-air missile units next to fighter units. Fighters were shot down and that was the end of the story, but surface-to-air missile units could strangle enemy aircraft as long as they did not run out of missiles and as long as their missile sites were not destroyed. According to a paper I read when I was in military school, a properly deployed surface-to-air missile network would be more cost-effective than a fighter force.

Hannibal was an expert on these surface-to-air missiles — which is why he was not well liked by the mainstream Air Force. In the East German Air Force - and this is coming from a man who once aspired to be one - fighter pilots have formed factions and are said to be engaged in a fierce power struggle.

With the advent of the laser class, the value of fighters has dwindled, but that doesn't necessarily mean that the factions are going to lose power easily. I've heard rumors that the factions are colluding to eliminate dissenters because they are failing.

Meanwhile, the surface-to-air missile force was becoming worthless due to the outbreak of the BETA war. Now that the possibility of a contingency with the West was diminishing, surface-to-air missiles were of no use against the BETA, which did not fly. For this reason, the East German Air Force is reportedly planning to reduce its surface-to-air missile force and expand its bomber force.

I haven't heard the details, but I think Hannibal decided to become a TSF pilot to avoid being caught up in such reorganization and having his future as a soldier closed. He went to the Soviet Union to study, qualified as a pilot, and became the commander of the experimental TSF group.

Honestly, Hannibal's arrival was a great blessing for us.

Hannibal was an expert in surface-to-air missiles, and he tended to emphasize cost-effectiveness in actual combat. He understood and was willing to cooperate with our plan to establish TSFs to penetrate the laser class and to reform doctrine based on this.

Hannibal also has a good aptitude as a pilot, and his skills in training were on par with ours. Perhaps the aptitude as a fighter pilot and the aptitude as a tactical surface pilot are not so different... I have a feeling that they are.

For example, if Hannibal could continue to build on his achievements, he would have no problem becoming a pilot even if he did not have the aptitude to pilot an air force plane, and that alone might open the door for more pilot.

"There seems to be no particular change in the war situation in the Soviet Union — at least according to the official announcement."

Yauch, who was becoming a de facto member of the intelligence staff, answered without hesitation.

"They are continuing our fight against BETA on the west bank of the Volga and Don Rivers. They seem to be doing a lot of damage, but they are not allowing them to break through. Well, if anything, this is"

"Because the BETA is taking a break?"

"Yes. From what I heard in the Soviet Union, BETA's behavior is really capricious, and you can never tell when they will start their offensive. The basic pattern of behavior seems to be that once a certain number of BETA are in the area of control, they will move to acquire a new area of control. But since that fixed number is unknown, it is difficult even for the Soviet military to predict."

Yauch shrugged his shoulders.

"The major cities of Stalingrad, Saratov, and Astrakhan have all fallen — their names no longer appear in any official Soviet press reports. Instead, the names of cities in Rostov, Kalmyk, and Voronezh Oblast began to appear frequently. This area is probably the front line of the Soviet army."

"The last Central Asia left to mankind....."

"I'm not sure if the Caucasus is part of Asia, though."

Yauch was smiling at him. Perhaps it was because there were so many differences between him and his predecessor, but Yauch was also very fond of Hannibal.

"The number of displaced people seems to be on the rise, ... and according to Red Cross activity reports, most of them are making their way to Ukraine on foot. It seems that the Soviet army can no longer afford to protect the refugees. The relocation of the capital functions to Khabarovsk has begun, and the Soviet Union's upper management is far from doing so."

"What's the civilian casualty count?"

"It's not known. We really don't know - it's probably in the tens of millions. Winter has already started in the Soviet Union. The number of victims will increase further."

It may sound cruel, but that is the only way to describe it. The Soviets have imposed press controls, and the West, perhaps out of consideration for the Soviets, has avoided pinpoint reporting. We can only hope that the hell we saw in Kazakhstan has not been magnified and reproduced.

According to Western reports, the offensive in the western Urals has intensified and the BETA has entered the Kirov region. If the offensive continues at this pace, the Soviet Union will be divided into East and West by the end of this year.

"Does this mean that the Trans-Siberian Railway has been cut off?"

"Yes. There are no proper roads or railroads north of the Kirov region, so in terms of logistics, it would not be wrong to say that the Soviet Union has already been divided into East and West."

Yauch continued without changing the tone of his voice. Even though I had expected this, it made me feel cold.

"The 1st Tank Corps, which is in the process of formation, is expected to be dispatched to the battlefields of the Volga and Don Rivers. The same will be true for other Warsaw Pact countries' corps."

East Germany was not the only country to be approached by the Soviet Union with a request for dispatch - a de facto request for relief, but the Soviet Union would never use such a term. Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and most of the members of the Warsaw Pact Organization (WTO) have been asked by the Soviet Union to send troops.

It is unclear at this point what kind of troops each country will send. If this is the case, the Soviet Union's armed forces will organize the armies of each country, as they did during the political upheaval in Czechoslovakia in the late 1960s.

"What about the 1st Tank Corps?"

"The order of battle has just been officially notified. Major General Strachwitz has been appointed as the corps commander, and the formation process is underway."

Yauch rolled up the documents.

"It will be formed from the Ninth Tank Division of the Fifth Military District and the Fourth, Ninth and Tenth Motorized Sniper Divisions."

"One-third of the East German Army"

"This will be the largest deployment of troops to our country since its founding."

Yauch was right. What would happen to East Germany in the unlikely event that all the soldiers sent were wiped out — I don't want to imagine.

"The 9th Tank Division will be accompanied by a newly formed TSF battalion. The model is the F-4R (Phantom), both of which were provided by the Soviet Union. Our data should have been used for the training, but the details are unknown."

"Perhaps they are using the Soviet training grounds for their training."

Hannibal interjected. He was already aware of the delicate relationship between the TSF Experimental Group and the First Tank corps.

"Information on the movements of the 1st Tank Corps is being controlled more thoroughly than ever before — probably to prevent information from leaking to the West. The coordination between TSFs and ground troops advocated by Major General Strachwitz is compatible with the deep vertical attack doctrine that we have been studying with the Soviet military. It can also be applied to contingencies with the West."

"As planned, the 1st Tank Corps is scheduled to head to the Soviet Union at the beginning of the year. Depending on changes in the war situation, the dispatch may be accelerated."

Yauch summarized.

"That's it for the general situation... Captain?"

All eyes turned to Hannibal. Hannibal glanced at me. I pretended not to notice.

"As you all know, thanks to the public hearings held in June this year, the need for reform in the military has been widely recognized. In particular, the introduction of TSFs has become an absolute requirement for the military. However, the doctrine for their operation is still undecided — whether to emphasize cooperation between TSFs and ground troops, or to emphasize penetration of the laser class by TSF alone. Also, the question of whether or not the MiG-21 (Balalaika) should be domestically produced has yet to be decided."

According to rumors, the Soviet Union has already started a large increase in the production of the MiG-21 (Balalaika), but due to the confusion caused by the relocation of the capital and the evacuation of factories, it is difficult to say that the situation is going well. Some of the squadrons received MiG-21s (Balalaika) but lost all of them due to breakdowns during training, and some were destroyed before they could fight the BETA.

Under such circumstances, our goal is to domesticate the MiG-21 (Balalaika) and mass produce it. If the basic doctrine is to break through the penetration of the laser class, the mass deployment of the MiG-21 (Balalaika) is an absolute requirement. In order to do this, we need funds, and in order to extract them from the nation, we need a proven track record.

My plan doesn't end there - I want to create a situation where the MiG-21 (Balalaika) produced in East Germany will be put to use on the battlefield, and then exported to the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries based on the results.

If this happens, East Germany will be able to obtain foreign currency as a "merchant of death" — and increase its economic viability. Well, this is not my area of expertise. I leave it to the experts.

"This is why the East German army is paying attention to your movements. The war situation in the Soviet Union is getting tighter by the day, so let's make sure we get the results we need, but quickly."

"Finally, that's it."

After the meeting, we went to the cafeteria for lunch, Yauch said.

"To begin with, I'm not sure what's going on with the 1st Tank Corps, but at least the experimental TSF group is on track. The formation is almost complete, the communication-enhanced TSFs have been rolled out, and all we have to do is make adjustments to the Pickelhaube as we refine the troops.

"It's still too early to let our guard down."

Katzen gave Yauch a shove — This is a very unusual pattern.

"We don't know yet if the Pickelhaube will guarantee communication during the operation until we try it Besides, you never know where the political trouble will come from."

Perhaps it was because of his simple mindedness, but Katzen seemed to have a hard time thinking about political issues. Well, I can't help but feel that I and Yauch are being too abrasive about this.

"I won't deny it. But as Captain Hannibal has said earlier, the atmosphere in the East German army completely changed after the hearing. Since then, it has become easier to comply with our requests. Even though it is, also true that this is the critical moment. We must finish the adjustment of the TSF by the end of the year and establish tactics to penetrate and break through to the laser class."

Yauch looked somewhat pleased.

"..... Speaking of which, Jürgen..."

Suddenly, Katzen turned the water on me.

"During the tests in the Baltic Sea, just before we plunged under the heavy metal cloud, you showed some signs of losing concentration. That's an unusual mistake for you, what happened?"

At the time of the test, Katzen and Yauch were also monitoring my condition at the Rostock CP (Command Post).

"Hmm? Oh, nothing. I just got a little itchy in my butt."

I thought I had responded casually, but there was no way Yauch would have missed this.

"Jürgen, you've been slacking a little lately! You made the same mistake in another exam!"

I didn't say anything and turned my gaze somewhere else — it's true, I can't deny it. But I don't want to affirm it either.

For some reason, Yauch looked at me with a serious expression on his face — or, to borrow another expression, a flirtatious one — and brought his face close to mine.

"If our chief strategist is like that, it's going to interfere with our future plans. If you have any problems, please solve them as soon as possible. Or is it something you can't solve on your own? Then consult with us. Just like before, the four of us will work together to solve it. Come on!"

I glared at Yauch silently — He didn't change his expression. Yauch is worried about me in his own way. It's so annoying.

"Stop it."

A cold voice next to me. Vikman interjected, while eating her soup and taking a break.

"It's not uncommon for a problem that can't be successfully solved by an individual to be a problem that needs to be solved by an individual."

"Well, ... that's true, but"

"Jürgen has more roles to play than we do. I think you should forgive him for being a little fatigued."

Yauch backed down easily. He was probably surprised that Vikman had voiced her opinion, which was unusual for her.

In fact, I was more than a little relieved.

"But it's also true that there is a problem as it is."

Vikman looked at me sharply.

"If you can solve the problem, do it quickly. I'd hate to see you make the same mistake on the battlefield."

After that, Vikman looked away from me and resumed eating.

"It's a family matter, isn't it? I can't think of any other reason for you to be troubled."

..... I was perfectly exposed. No, should I say that this is the sharpness of a woman's intuition...

"Just get it over with. You'll regret it for the rest of your life if you don't solve those problems at the right time."

Because it was a reasonable line, I nodded obediently.

Nonetheless....

"Even if I come back here..."

I muttered to myself as I stood at the gate of my house.

Today was the second Saturday of October, and I had come home for the first time in three months, taking advantage of the two consecutive holidays that started today. Incidentally, East Germany was one of the first countries in the world to implement a two-day weekly holiday as a system.

It was already winter and the entire Pankow area was covered in snow. Needless to say, this is the result of the "nuclear winter"...but it seems to be a little less cold than last year. I wondered if the dust that had risen into the stratosphere had settled down... I stared at my snow-covered house once again, thinking about the futility of it all.

There was no one in the house - no sign of anyone living there. Of course not. There is no one living in this house right now, including me.

My beloved younger sister and my troublesome girlfriend are both students at the East German military academy, Ernst Thälmann, and should be spending their time in rigorous training right now. In order to become a TSF pilot just like me...

"....."

Well, now that I'm home, I should at least check to see if my house has been burglarized. I let out a sigh and tried to open the gate of my house without feeling refreshed.

"Niisan, ...?"

A familiar voice came from behind me, and I turned around and gulped, feeling nervous.

"I see you are back ..."

There were my sister and my girlfriend, Iris and Beatrix, standing there in their East German army winter coats, looking just as surprised as I was.

I'll give you an explanation. I hadn't seen Iris and Beatrix since the day three months ago when they announced their intention to go to the military academy. I hadn't even been back to this house. The reason for this is simple - I had a huge fight with them right there.

It is not necessary to think about the cause. It was because they - the two people who meant more to me than life itself - had unexpectedly decided to join the military. Moreover, they took the entrance exam to the military academy without consulting me, and passed it.

I didn't understand. I mean, can you blame me!? I've been doing my best to help Iris live in peace, and I'm going to continue working hard to the utmost degree to keep her from getting entangled in the war with the BETA.

And yet, she wants to be a TSF pilot like me? gimme a break!....., and right after I heard the story, I lashed out at both of them.

This is also natural considering their character, but Iris and Beatrix fiercely refuted it.

"I'm well aware of your thoughts."

Beatrix seemed to see my anger as a predictable reaction.

"But this is a decision based on our own free will. I apologize for going ahead with it silently, but you didn't agree with me when I told you, did you?"

"Of course not! No one will tolerate this kind of talk!"

I shouted with emotion - in hindsight, I think I was unusually distraught, but at the time I couldn't help myself.

With everything else, I could handle it calmly. But with Iris - with my beloved sister, I couldn't do that.

I glared not at Beatrix, but at Iris. It's been a long time since Iris has had a head-on anger attack from me. It's not like she hasn't done it in the past, so she keeps a thoughtful expression on her face and stares at the desk in silence.

"Do you have any idea what's going to happen to this country? If it were you, I wouldn't have any idea"

I should have told Iris about my experience in Kazakhstan and what a horrible monster the BETA was, to the point of trauma.

"The Soviet Union can no longer be counted on! The battlefield is shifting to Eastern Europe! which means that East German soldiers will have to fight from now on!"

Hundreds of thousands, maybe millions, may die. Even the Strachwitz 1st Tank Corps will suffer the same fate as the Soviet Operational Maneuver Group (OMG) that was annihilated by BETA in Kazakhstan. I wasn't going to include my sisters in that.

"That's why you're conducting operational research on TSFs, aren't you? That's why we want to help you..."

Beatrix's words made me angry.

"Be quiet! This is a family matter between me and Iris!"

It's about me and Iris - the brother and sister who have been living together since our mother left us and our father broke down.

"No, the problem with you and Iris is also my problem.- Am I wrong?"

Beatrix was looking at me as if she was challenging me. Why can't you be that persistent with your own parents? My thoughts were distracted by frustration.

"..... In any case, the current peace will not last long."

Her eyes had a deep melancholy - and something cold-hearted about them. They resembled those of her father, Abel Brehme.

"..... Sooner or later, people like us who are old enough to be drafted will be thrown into wars without a second thought. You're not the one who doesn't understand that, are you?"

You are a Nomenklatura and you say that..... I wanted to argue that, but her opinion was right, so I had to shut up.

"When that happens, if we're just students, civil servants, or employees of the People's Government, we'll be treated as expendable goods. I may be protected by the power of the Brehme family, but there is no guarantee that Iris will be protected as well."

"That's why, in order to prevent that from happening, College is"

"If the war situation is tight, students from elite universities or whatever will be thrown into the war. That's how it was in the past."

"But that doesn't mean"

"If I'm going to be involved in a war, I want to fight for my loved ones. What's wrong with thinking that? I know that you are crossing a politically dangerous bridge in your research on the operation of TSF."

"Did you hear that from Mr. Abel.....?"

"No, but I can find out that much on my own."

I wonder if she ordered Mr. Durk to investigate... I believe he was from the 40th Parachute-Hunting Battalion. I found out after I joined the army that the 40th Parachute Hunting Battalion was a special unit under the direct control of the National People's Army (NVA) headquarters, and in the event of an emergency, they were rumored to be given the task of destroying U.S. nuclear missiles by descending secretly into West Germany. So, it was no wonder that Mr. Durk was informed of the movements of the military center via the battalion.

"I don't know the casualty rate of TSF pilots on the battlefield, but as long as they fight with large weapons, the casualty rate should be lower than other departments. As a new branch of the military, they

get promoted faster and are more likely to be placed in the rear with more power — in other words, they are more likely to survive."

It was true... A greenhorn like me, less than a year out of military academy, was promoted to lieutenant and chief of staff for the TSF testing group, you can guess all sorts of things from that.

Strictly speaking, East Germany still does not have a TSF department, but we belong instead to the Army Aviation Department, the same as the attack helicopter unit. Of course, the establishment of a TSF department is a given in the future, and that will be our job.

"And one more thing."

Beatrix said calmly - and as if to put an end to it.

"The eldest daughter of the Brehme family wants to become a tactical pilot, which is a big political boost for you, don't you think?"

I didn't have to think too hard about the rightness or wrongness of Beatrix's words. From now on, anyone who opposes our goal of reforming the East German military will have to look even more closely at the Brehme family. For us, without a military tycoon like Strachwitz behind us, the political benefits were immeasurable.

I had a flash of inspiration.

Could it be that this is the reason why Abel left Beatrix free to choose her own path?

Although he hasn't said it directly, he has been cooperating with me lately. It's hard to believe that someone as astute as Abel would have allowed Beatrix to choose this course of action just to give me political support, but it's easy to imagine that he anticipated the effect.

Even Beatrix, who has no intention of following her father's wishes, would gladly become a political tool for the sake of her precious friend (Iris) and her precious lover (me). I have a feeling he's thinking about that.

"..... I want you to understand."

Iris, who had been silent until then, said pleadingly, without making eye contact with me.

"I know that your Niisan is taking on a difficult task That's why I want to help you. I don't know the details....., but I have a feeling that the new weapon that Niisan is handling, the tactical machine, is going to be the trump card in this war West German television and radio are reporting that TSFs are in use....."

Oh, by the way, this runt is watching TV and radio from the west at Beatrix's house.

"I've only ever been protected by my brother.... So now I want to help him."

"I want a world where you can live in peace"

My own words are empty. The world is not so easy that it can be changed by my own thoughts.

"Wherever you are in East Germany, you will not be able to escape the effects of the war."

Iris shook her head - resolutely.

"So, I want to repay my brother by helping him. The TSF that you raised will protect the peace of East Germany, and then a peaceful life will return... That's the kind of future I want.. "

There is a part of me that can't dismiss it as a pipe dream. There is no doubt in my mind that this war has the potential to destroy the human race. Iris looked up and stared straight into my eyes.

"So, please forgive us for our selfishness."

.. .. These guys anticipated my reaction, and firmly solidified the ideological armament.

I twisted my face. I really wanted to praise her , but I was just too angry. But I don't like to let my emotions get the better of me. If the other party is attacking me with logic, I have to respond with logic.

And Above all, a part of my mind recognizes the rationality of Iris and Beatrix's decision.

If we continue to achieve results and take the initiative in the overall operation of TSFs, it should be possible to exert influence on the personnel affairs of the pilots. It's better than sending them to high school or college and then having them drafted for national reasons to a place out of my reach.

No,No,Wait,Wait. Is that really so? Is that really the right decision for me?

If Iris, my adorable little sister who I love so much, joins the army and becomes a pilot, ... if she's not careful, she'll be fighting that fucking freaky BETA!

My sister and my girlfriend will be dragged into the war, and political gains are expected as well. Literally, they will be political tools. I don't want to become the worst kind of human who can acknowledge this.

What should I say to Mr. Boltz, who has supported us all these years? and to our father, who had not abandoned us in any way? It would be as if our mother's warning had come true.

I couldn't understand what was going on. Unusually for me, my thoughts were overflowing. I exhaled to let out all my emotions, and muttered in an indignant voice.

"I'm going back to base."

"Niisan!"

Iris tried to stop me from leaving my seat. Beatrix remained motionless, staring at me.

"I understand where you're coming from. I understand some of it."

I said as I grabbed my coat that was hanging on the wall.

"Even so, It doesn't mean it's an easy thing to accept. I've worked really hard for the sake of your happiness."

I stared at the envelope from the military academy that was still on my desk - and then I stared at Beatrix.

"Beatrix. You too. You can't keep quiet just because you expect me to react. If you had told me properly, I might have been able to deal with you properly..... But after what you did to me, how can I trust you from now on?"

"I think we both know that's not true."

Beatrix's response was cold - she hates it when people impose opinions that differ from her own beliefs.

"You didn't tell me everything about your work, either."

"It's military service, of course."

"We were just anticipating your reaction and made the obvious decision. If we can't tell each other the truth because we are family or lovers, then we have no choice."

"What the hell!"

"Niisan! And Beatrix, please stop!"

Iris hurriedly intervened. Of course, that didn't change my mood, and I continued to stare at Beatrix.

Beatrix let out a small sigh.

"..... There is no margin for excuses about deceiving you halfway."

"....."

"I hope we can avoid that in the future, ... for both of us."

I put on my coat and picked up my bag that I had left on the floor.

"Niisan.....!"

"I understand you're going to the Military Academy."

To tell the truth, I was not convinced. However, I felt that there was no way to overturn their will even if we discussed it further. If I pressured them from behind the scenes and forced them to stop the procedure, it would mean that I would really have to break up with them. That's why I said these words as a compromise.

"But I don't want to see your faces for a while. If you need my signature, send the documents to base."

"Niisan...."

"That's all,"

Having said that, I went out from the corridor to the entrance and opened the door of my house. Neither Iris nor Beatrix tried to reach out to me anymore.

This was the cause of the lump that had been in my heart for the past three months.

To be honest, I'm not too happy about it.

However, there were parts of Iris and Beatrix's opinions that made sense to me, and I felt that if I worried about this issue any longer, My spirit would suffer. Even though it was something that I had said myself, it was indeed unbearable to have a cold war going on between my sister and my lover.

This is why I took Vikman's advice to heart and headed home without a clue as to where I was going, thinking about this and that, and then bumped into Iris and Beatrix at the front door.

There was an awkward mood in the living room.

We met again at the front door, and after exchanging a few greetings, I opened the door of my house in silence. They seemed to be in the same mood as me, and followed behind me without saying a word. They had probably come back from the dormitory for the holidays, just like me. There was no particular explanation from the two of them.

"So..."

After tea, coffee and sweets had been served for the three of us, Beatrix spoke up.

"How's work going?"

I didn't know what to say, but I gave my answer for now.

"I think I'll go back to the Soviet Union after the new year."

"..... Is that so?. We're doing well, too. But the military is still so old-fashioned."

"The National People's Army (NVA) was set up by a number of former Wehrmacht ⁽⁶³⁾ officials. The army was their den, so I guess it's no wonder the military academy is like that — isn't military training too hard?"

"Isn't that a foolish question for those of us who were in the position to apply to another school through a special sports scholarship?"

"....right."

"I'm not sure if this is a reflection of the times, but more than a third of the students entering the academy were women. It seems that the instructors were as surprised as we were. Also, studying is tough, but I'm getting by. There's no need for you to worry."

I didn't answer anything. Beatrix also stopped speaking, as if she didn't expect my response.

"Oh, um, Niisan, ...!"

Iris said, trying to muster up all the courage she could.

"Um, we're"

I held up one hand to restrain Iris. I took a deep breath in and out to calm myself down.

Once I say this, there's no way I can back out. But there was no other way - if I didn't, the three of us would be torn apart. I took another breath and opened my mouth.

"After that, I did a lot of thinking. I thought about a lot of things, and worried about a lot of things."

Thanks to them, I suffered a great deal of embarrassment in the Baltic Sea. That's why I was pushed around by those three.

"..... do what you want. If you want to become a pilot and help me, that's fine — I won't refuse you, and I'll be happy to use you."

That was my conclusion. As I said, there seemed to be no other choice, and if I continued to worry about it any longer, my heart would be overwhelmed.

That's why, I have to accept it — their free will, especially Iris'.

Iris's expression brightened.

"So, you recognized us!?"

"Whether I recognize you or not, it doesn't matter. you're already students at the Military Academy."

Iris's expression softened greatly as if she was relieved. Iris must have been thinking about it for a long time.

Beatrix, on the other hand, was calm and collected - I guess that's how she expected it to end. She asked in a sarcastic tone.

"That's quite a late decision for you."

"Shut up, ..., it took me a while to get my mind right. It's not a light matter."

"Is that so Good for you, Irisdina."

"Yes! I was already wondering what was going to happen at one point.!"

Iris smiled at Beatrix.

"....., however! I have a condition."

I forced myself to go back to the topic at hand. What I was about to say is a compromise that I've come up with to allow both of us free will. If they don't accept it, they'll have to change their mind.

"If you want to join the Military Academy and become a TSF pilot, you should aim to be the first and second in your cadet class."

I said, looking at them both.

"If you don't have that kind of credibility, you won't be able to make me your partner in crime in the future. If the first and second in line at the academy all want to become pilots, other students might be

influenced and the number of those who want to become pilots may increase. The higher-ups' understanding of TSF will also increase. It's called the political effect."

It's not my favorite word, but I have to emphasize it now.

"That's the condition. I don't care if it's possible or not, but I want it to be a goal."

Beatrix looked as if she had lost a beat.

"What do you mean by that?"

"Mean in what way?"

"Yes, Here" Beatrix handed me a piece of paper. I read the words on it and peeled my eyes open.

"Hey, this is!"

"The results of the recent midterm exam. Unfortunately, we missed first and second place, but we're in a good position, aren't we?"

There is no mistaking Beatrix's words. Both Iris and Beatrix are in the top ten.

"You're right, Iris and I need to be in a position to compete for the top spot. Otherwise, I don't know if we'll ever get to where you are."

A smile of superiority.

"..... Okay. Then I have nothing more to say to you."

I held up my hands in resignation with a bitter smile.

"I look forward to seeing you two grow into TSF pilots and become my subordinates."

To tell the truth, I had a lot of doubts. I myself had no confidence that this was the right decision. In order to repair the relationship between Iris and Beatrix, I feel like I've chosen this as a compromise.

"Thank you so much, Niisan."

Iris has tears in her eyes, it seems that for Iris, the presence or absence of my consent is such a serious problem.

"I've always been worried that Beatrix and Niisan might not get along because of this one incident."

"Don't worry. Even if that happens, your friendship won't change."

That was a terrible answer for some reason.

"Yes, ...! Oh, I'm so glad I came home today. Maybe it's thanks to God!"

"A bit of a dangerous line, that one"

For some reason, Iris is even more religious regarding Christianity than I am. I wonder if it's because she used to look forward to getting Christmas presents from my father and me when she was a child... I'm a little worried because East Germany doesn't openly recognize religion.

"I am not particularly bothered. It doesn't change the fact that today is a good day."

Iris stood up in a good mood.

"Actually, I was planning to cook dinner with Beatrix today. I've already bought the ingredients. You will eat too, won't you, Niisan?"

"Oh, yeah."

"So, I'll be with you in a moment. Beatrix, can you help me?"

"Okay. Wait here for a minute. I'll get you an apron."

Beatrix stood up, but right after that, she came close to my ear and said in a whisper.

"Even the instructors at the Military Academy were talking about you."

"..... Oh, in what way?"

Beatrix lowered the tone of her voice.

"I've heard that you're an outrageous person who read out a manuscript that wasn't prepared in advance at the Central Council for National Defense and inspired the upper management to do the unthinkable. Thanks to you, the instructors are keeping an eye on Iris, because she is your sister, and she wants to become a pilot."

It's a foregone conclusion. Well, the military academy is the headquarters of the mainstream army, so it's not surprising that they reacted negatively to my idea. If the doctrine of the East German army is greatly altered, it is they who will suffer the most.

"But It's okay. I'll always be by Iris's side. The Brehme family's prestige is something that the instructors have to worry about, and if we continue to improve our performance, no one will be able to complain.

"....."

"And even among the students, there is an opinion that the East German army should be reformed in order to deal with the BETA war. Even the Soviet army has been defeated, and there is no way that the East German army in its current state can win. Even some of the instructors are getting the vibe."

I'm sure she is right. It depends on how you interpret it, but the worsening war situation is a favourable wind for me.

"My father seems to be thinking of reorganizing the economy of East Germany in the same way you talked about six months ago. When I went home last month, the assistant to the Soviet Foreign Ministry in charge of economic affairs came to see my father. Thanks to the relocation of the capital and the loss of the industrial cities, the Soviet economy seems to be in shambles."

This girl — She was straining her ears after all. Is the counterintelligence in the room okay? It's not like Abel to leave gaps in anything.

"Now all that's left is the War. If your squad makes a difference in Ukraine, it's just a matter of time before the tide turns. Make sure you come back alive — and create a future for us."

I stared at Beatrix's face intently. Beatrix remained as calm as she had ever been. That attitude tells me that she's serious about this.

I felt like I could have just nodded my head, but unfortunately I'm not that naive anymore. So I decided to try to resist as best I could.

"..... You better watch out."

"What?"

"You seemed to really enjoy yourself when you were talking about the inner workings of the academy. Actually, I think you're more suited for that."

Beatrix smiled broadly.

"Maybe that's not such a bad thing if it's to protect you and Iris."

"....."

"So, keep up the good work, — and I'll try to gather as much information as I can at the academy."

Beatrix took my hand, lightly touched her lips to the back of it, and walked out of the living room humming a tune.

Soon after, Beatrix appeared in the kitchen in her apron. She joins Iris in her work, chatting with her.

"What can I say?"

I stared at the scene in amazement for a while, and then sighed heavily.

I thought that, perhaps, I had released a terrible person into the fertile soil of the military.

5

Perhaps it was because the relationship with Iris and Beatrix had been restored for the time being, or perhaps it was because the formation of the TSF Experimental Group had begun to get on track, but from that point on, the days passed in a blur.

At the end of October, three MiG-21Ps (Balalaika) were delivered to the TSF Experimental Group, just as the arsenal had informed us. We immediately incorporated the four MiG-21Ps into our formation and began testing the TSF and training the pilots aboard.

In mid-November, negotiations between East Germany and the Soviet Union led to the announcement that the first factories for tanks and armored personnel carriers would be built in East German territory. This was an epoch-making decision for East Germany, which until then had only had facilities for the production of small arms.

In December, the deployment of the 1st Tank Corps to the Soviet Union was announced. At the beginning of the same month, the 1st Tank Corps held a parade in East Berlin to commemorate their departure. We participated in the parade as guests of honor. A TSF battalion attached to the 9th Tank Division also flew over East Berlin, and this was the first time that East German citizens saw TSF. I saw Major General Strachwitz getting into a command vehicle and waving to the citizens with a smile, but I could not tell from his demeanor what he was really thinking.

At the end of December, I spent the end of the year with Iris and Beatrix for the first time in a long time. The two of them had been making good progress. The annual festivities in East Berlin to celebrate the beginning of the new year did not take place due to the blizzard that hit the whole of East Germany.

In early January 1976, the 1st Tank Corps left East Germany. According to the official announcement, the destination was the outskirts of Stalingrad - in fact, it was probably further west, since Stalingrad had already fallen. A few days after the 1st Tank Corps's deployment, other Eastern European corps also headed for the Soviet Union.

In February, the experimental tactical machine group had attained a level of refinement that would allow it to be put into actual combat — a level that would enable it to carry out penetration and breakthrough tactics against the laser class. Although there were concerns about other skills, such as close combat and mobile bombardment, it was decided that no more time for training could be expected.

In the middle of the same month, the name of the 1st Tank Corps began to appear again in the East German press. It was said that they had achieved great results in the battles near the Don and Donets Rivers — we were unable to determine whether this was true or not.

Then, on March 1st, the General Headquarters of the National People's Army (NVA) ordered the TSF Test Group to go to Eastern Ukraine.

No events were held to celebrate their departure.

6

We arrived in Kharkov ⁽⁶⁴⁾, the central city of Eastern Ukraine ⁽⁶⁶⁾, a few dozen kilometers east of the city of Belgorod ⁽⁶⁵⁾, where the hell we had seen one day was recreated on the streets.

In the midst of a blizzard, a huge number of refugees, clad in coats, blankets, and all kinds of warm clothing, were walking westward on both sides of the unpaved road.

On the shoulder of the road, abandoned cars, wagons, and the frozen bodies of exhausted horses and cows stand in a line, like ice statues.

"It's the same here."

We got off at the train station closest to the Belgorod base, where the experimental TSF group was deployed, and our expressions hardened as the scene spread out beyond us.

The station was empty except for the station building, and there were no civilian living quarters around it. The station itself was guarded by Soviet troops, so there were no refugees approaching the station.

"As usual, the Soviet Union is"

"Even if it's the Soviet, It can't be helped."

I replied with resignation to Yauch, who muttered in a hushed voice.

"Stalingrad, Astrakhan and Saratov are all large cities with populations of nearly 10 million. Many of their residents are fleeing westward. When the refugees from Central Asia are added together, the number of displaced people heading for Ukraine may exceed 50 million. The numbers are so enormous that even the Soviet military may have decided it cannot protect them."

"And Kharkov station was terrible."

Katzen muttered as if remembering.

The city of Kharkov, where we stopped to change trains before reaching this station, was also in a terrible state, though not as bad as here. Tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of displaced people were gathered around the Kharkov train station, huddled together in the snowstorm, waiting for the train to transport them.

There were frozen corpses - many of them children and old people - among the group of refugees, but no one paid any attention to them. I guess they were aware that if the train didn't arrive, that would be the case for them as well.

Nevertheless, such a scene in Kharkov might have been better than here. The displaced people in this area cannot rely on train travel, and are forced to head west on their own.

It was scary to even imagine how many of the refugees would be able to reach a safe place and stay alive. Ukraine's agriculture had already been destroyed by the "nuclear winter" — it was unlikely that there would be enough food to feed all the refugees.

Nodding at Katzen's words, I continued to speak.

"The fact that so many refugees remain in this area so close to the front lines suggests that there may not be a proper evacuation outside of the cities."

"It's socialist suicide. How dare they throw the workers we need to rebuild the Soviet Union into this hell?"

"I think they are genuinely short on transportation resources. They have to abandon the refugees and prioritize maintaining our troops on the front line — If they don't, they won't be able to prevent BETA from expanding its territory. Otherwise, the refugees and the army will be killed. Much of the railroad's transportation capacity must be used to supply the military."

Yauch looked at me with a disapproving look. I pretended not to notice it.

"But it's a good thing for us that most of the refugees are being evacuated on foot."

For this deployment to Ukraine, all the TSFs of the TSF Experimental Group will be brought in by rail line. The same goes for weapons, ammunition, and equipment of the maintenance units.

Initially, the idea of boarding a TSFs and flying it to Ukraine was considered, but it was scrapped because it was indeed a long way from East Germany to Ukraine, and it was foreseen that many TSFs would drop out due to malfunctions. Cars and TSFs are no different in that they break down just by being in motion.

It reminded me of the Strachwitz's face that I had seen in Berlin.

The 1st Tank Corps under his command had been fighting in this mess since January. According to reports, they were still fighting hard, but whether that was true or not is not known to us.

"Either way, it's best not to get too overly optimistic."

Vikman's words were of an unanimous understanding among us.

Fortunately, the equipment of the TSFs Experimental Group had arrived safely at Belgorod Base. The Belgorod base was one of the Soviet TSF bases, and the TSF battalion attached to the 1st Tank Corps was to be at a different base than ours.

"The experimental group to be placed under the command of the 1st Tank Corps.?"

At the meeting held at the Belgorod base after completing the procedures for the delivery of the TSF, Yauch raised his voice. The other party was the operations chief of the 1st Tank Corps. Next to him is a political commissar ⁽⁶⁷⁾ attached to the corps headquarters.

"Why don't you tell me what this is all about?"

Hannibal asked, holding back an exasperated Yauch.

"According to our prior briefing, the TSF Test Group was supposed to be a reserve under the direct control of the Ukrainian Army."

The Ukrainian Army was the command center for all Warsaw Pact Organization (WTO) forces deployed in Eastern Ukraine. The command staff was dispatched from the Soviet Union, but half of the troops were dispatched from other Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO) countries. It is what is called a "multinational force".

We didn't have any problem with being placed in a reserve position under the direct control of the Ukrainian military.

The TSF Experimental Group was formed for the purpose of penetrating and assaulting the laser class, and in order to accomplish this, it was necessary to take action after BETA had formed an echelon and launched an offensive. The reason is that before the formation of the echelon, the location of the target laser class is unclear, and the attack may end up in vain. A blow from the rear ... - a so-called **Backhand Blow**- ⁽⁶⁸⁾ must be established.

For this reason, it was only natural that the experimental group was designated as a reserve directly under the control of the higher headquarters, where they could stay behind the lines to avoid being caught up in the BETA offensive and have a clear view of the overall war situation. If they were placed under the command of troops deployed in the front line, they could be thrown into support.

In this sense, the words of the operations chief made us feel quite concerned. We didn't even know the status of the 1st Tank Corps, let alone the situation on the front lines.

"Well, we have an order from the Ukrainian command."

The operations chief said with a clerical tone.

"They thought it would be easier for the East Germans to communicate with each other."

"That's the reason for?"

Yauch muttered in disgust. The political commissar standing next to him grumbled.

"Then I want you to send someone from your command center who can speak all the languages of the Eastern European countries."

"What? There is no such person anywhere on"

"The Ukrainian army is composed of Warsaw Pact troops. but communication between them is quite difficult due to the language barrier. Thanks to that, there is no room for the Ukrainian military command,

which is responsible for organizing these forces. I guess they can't take care of the East German troops any longer."

Yauch said nothing more — I was in a complicated mood. The disadvantages of a multinational force. It is true that it is risky to entrust an experimental group to the Ukrainian military command in the midst of such confusion. However, if that was the only reason, then this was too lax.

"I know you have some concerns, so I'll go ahead and explain."

The operations chief put up a map on the whiteboard and continued his explanation.

"At present, the 1st Tank Corps is deployed here in the suburbs of Belgorod as a reserve directly under the command of the Ukrainian Army."

Therefore, you won't suddenly get caught up in a defensive battle, as you feared — That's what he wanted to say.

"BETA has broken through the Volga and Don rivers and now controls almost the entire Lugansk region of Eastern Ukraine. However, the direction of the offensive is uneven, and the offensive is less vigorous in Donetsk Oblast in Ukraine and Voronezh Oblast in Russia. As a result, the front is forming a jutting section in Kharkov."

The BETA's habits are still a mystery even now, two years after the start of the war on Earth. The direction of their offensive is also capricious, and it is impossible to predict when and where they will launch their offensive. However, there are times when the attack is clearly aimed at urban areas, and this seems to be one of those cases.

"The number of BETA on the front lines is unknown. However, during the last offensive, more than 10,000 BETA participated in the onslaught. We believe there are about fifty of the laser class."

The operations chief stroked the area around the front line on the map with his pointer. In addition to the Soviet Army and the East German Army's 1st Tank Corps, there were also Polish, Czechoslovak, Romanian, Hungarian, Bulgarian, and other troops... Certainly, with such a large number of troops on the front line, it was understandable that the Soviet Army would have a hard time controlling all the troops. Well, I feel like they should have solved that problem before the war.

"In response, our Ukrainian forces are deployed in the Donetsk and Kharkov provinces of Ukraine and are in a defensive position. Since last month's offensive, The BETA have remained silent, but they could resume their offensive at any moment. I would like to ask you all to work together as the 1st Tank Corps to join the counterattack against the BETA. Until then, I would like you to continue to stand by here at the Belgorod base."

The operations chief lowered the tone of his voice.

"If the BETA breakthrough offensive resumes, the Warsaw Pact forces deployed on the front lines will not be able to hold out. They will probably break through early and then run away to avoid being surrounded

and annihilated by the BETA. Since the arrival of the 1st Tank Corps, the BETA has conducted two offensives, both of which have inflicted heavy losses on the Ukrainian forces. East Germany's other dispatched troops have been cut in half across the board, and the morale of the remaining troops has also declined. The Soviet troops have better morale, but with their logistics collapsing, they can't be a serious asset either."

This is a Soviet base, and there may be listening devices in this room as well. I thought about it, but there was an undeniable anger and vindictiveness in the eyes of the operations chief, so I decided to keep quiet.

"Since we can't count on our friends, it's up to us, the 1st Tank Corps, to take out the laser class, and judging by the BETA's movements, it's highly likely that Kharkov will be the target of their next offensive. Millions of refugees are still flocking to Kharkov, waiting to be evacuated by rail. The only mobile reserves in eastern Ukraine are us, who were tasked with attacking the laser class, and a few Soviet troops who were given the task of plugging the holes in the front line that were breached by the BETA offensive. Our defeat would lead to the fall of Kharkov and the annihilation of the refugees. We must stop them at all costs. Do you have any questions?"

The operations chief looked around at everyone, keeping the emotion in his eyes. As soon as I raised my hand, he nudged me to speak.

"Tactical Machinery Experiment Group Chief of Staff — "

"I know you well, Lieutenant Jürgen Bernhard."

The political officer said, even more sullenly than before, as if he was trying to control his mood.

"I also attended the hearings at the Council of National Defense last year. You took a courageous action, even though you had the economic bureaucrats on your side beforehand."

It was probably meant to be sarcastic. I didn't say anything. I couldn't admit publicly that the economic bureaucrats — in short, Abel and his friends - had been colluding with me behind my back. Politically, it was all hushed up, but ostensibly, it was my own decision, motivated by my patriotism. Of course, there was no way that the political officer was unaware of the relationship between me and Mr. Abel, but he stopped speaking and urged me to speak up with his chin.

"Thank you... As everyone is well informed, our fundamental tactic is to breakthrough towards the laser class."

— I'll add a few extra sentences as a courtesy.

"We've been training to achieve that tactic. Putting it the other way around, if we are sent on another mission, you may not be able to demonstrate the skills you have developed during our training, and may suffer from exhaustion at the early stage."

"So, you're saying that you'll never throw yourselves in 'another mission'? We've taken that into consideration. We have no intention of using you up for nothing."

"I wish for a firm assurance."

I put more energy into my voice. If we were sent on a mission other than the penetration towards the laser class and wasted our fighting power, all their efforts so far would be in vain. However, the political officer did not nod his head.

"We will consider your request, but we cannot promise anything. Major General Strachwitz is of the same opinion."

In other words, they're planning to keep a degree of operational freedom so that we can be deployed for other missions if the need arises. Even though it was a predictable development, I couldn't hide my displeasure.

"Okay then, one more thing."

I asked.

"First, Please tell me the battle history of the 1st Tank corps so far. I understand that since the arrival of the 1st Tank corps, there have been two BETA offensives, and that each country's dispatched troops are being torn to shreds In other words, the 1st Tank corps has twice been given the opportunity to conduct the new doctrine advocated by Major General Strachwitz — a coordinated attack on the laser class by ground troops and TSFs, right?"

The political commissar's expression hardened.

"..... How is it being reported in your home country?"

"All I can tell you is that he had a brilliant battle around Stalingrad."

The political commissar fell silent in displeasure - the operations chief appeased him.

"It's something we'll have to talk about sooner or later. Let's talk about it here. That's what the Major General told me to do."

Grudgingly, the political officer opened his heavy mouth.

"We were deployed as a mobile reserve on both occasions against two BETA offensives, and launched counterattacks to the flank of the BETA echelon. With the 9th Tank Division in the forefront, supported by a TSF battalion, and flanked and backed by other motorized sniper divisions."

I waited in silence for an answer.

" The results were all failures. On the first day, we were able to advance more than 10 kilometers while destroying thousands of BETA, but from the next day, however, the BETA counterattacked, making it difficult to advance, and we were forced to retreat right in front of the laser class."

Just like what I thought. A sigh of resignation and conviction escaped us.

Rumor has it that BETA has a habit of gathering in areas where heavy fighting is taking place as part of its behavioral pattern. Perhaps the great battle that the 1st Tank Corps had fought on the first day itself had attracted BETA from other places, making it difficult for them to advance. It is said that BETA can act as a shield for the laser class, so the closer they get to the laser class, the more likely they are to do so.

The political commissar continued as if enduring something.

"As a last resort, we attacked the laser class with an attack helicopter unit. There were no survivors...but a reduction in the number of laser classes was confirmed. We probably achieved something."

"The current strength of the ground forces is....."

"Two-thirds of the dispatch are left."

I couldn't count that as a blessing. The number of dead soldiers was not small.

However, it has twice plunged into the midst of BETA echelons and retreated right in front of the laser class, yet it still retains two-thirds of its strength. I can't help but be surprised, even though the Soviet OMG was annihilated.

"We are organized for a breakthrough battle within the BETA echelon, with emphasis on communication via wire and Morse telegraph. Even under heavy metal clouds, we are able to conduct military operations in the same manner as during normal field operations. The effectiveness of coordination between ground forces and TSF forces has also been proven in the war against BETA. In spite of the wear and tear of equipment and the deteriorating health of the soldiers due to the harsh winter, the actual manpower is probably half of what it was when it was dispatched. However, we have not given up. Even with our current strength, we can strike one more blow. In the next battle, we will definitely capture and destroy the laser class — even if it costs us our lives."

There seemed to be something glittering in the eyes of the operations chief. I've seen this color before — yes, it's the same color as the base commander who told us the reality of the BETA war in Kazakhstan, the color of human eyes consumed by the madness of war.

"Does this mean that command personnel are also participating in the counterattack?"

"That's right. Once we enter the heavy metal cloud, it will be impossible to lead the corps from the rear. In order to maintain communications as much as possible and to raise the morale of the soldiers, the corps commander has to be on the front line."

In other words, Strachwitz is also in charge of the corps in the actual battle — it seems anachronistic, but I don't think there is any other way to do it.

Then, after a few questions and answers, the operations chief said to wrap it up.

"That's all I have to say. I would like to add one last thing. As you may have guessed, the Soviet Union is not currently conducting saturation attacks with anti-ship and anti-surface missiles, including tactical nuclear weapons, as was done in Central Asia. The reason for this is to avoid damage to civilians."

For the Soviet Union, Ukrainians and Russians are citizens, but Kazakhstanis are not — that's terrible discrimination, but it's also terrible that I, as a white person, can understand that logic.

"However! The Soviet military still possesses a small number of tactical nuclear weapons and a large number of strategic nuclear weapons. Some missile sites are still operational, and the Black Sea Fleet has been deployed off the Crimean Peninsula ⁽⁶⁹⁾ to provide ground support. The wise among you will know what this means.

The political officer's words caused everyone to gasp. I moisten my lips, too.

In other words, if the next BETA offensive resulted in the possible loss of Ukrainian forces, the Soviets could throw a nuke right over our heads. And to sum it up in the words of the 1st Tank Corps commander, he wants us to strictly adhere to the chain of command in order to avoid such an outcome.

Sensing that everyone had guessed this, the operations chief said.

"I wish you all the best. Long live the Fatherland."

"..... That's a sour course of events, this one."

Katzen muttered at the top of his lungs after the operations chief and political commissar of the 1st Tank Corps had left the room.

"At this rate, we could be used as pawns in the army, huh?"

Katzen sighs at Yauch's question.

"It could happen. There's a sense that they're being stubborn."

"But, I've heard that Major General Strachwitz is a pragmatic man when it comes to commanding an army?"

Hannibal asked. Yauch cowered.

"Even if the Major General is so, the staff may be different. If the corps is defeated in this battle, the East German army will automatically be forced to rely on the doctrine we advocate, and the ground troops will be forced to give up their position as the main force to the TSF troops. If that happens, they will lose their future in military history, so they will be desperate."

"The BETA has nothing to do with ground troops or TSF units."

"No, I know exactly how they feel."

I interrupted him. They all turned to look at me.

"I want to have a future in the military for the sake of my family back home. Even if there is a possibility that the East German mainland will be overrun by BETA — no, that is why I want to obtain a political position. I don't care if you think it's selfish or not, that's what I want."

"Such an outspoken statement from Jürgen. Protecting your rival as well..."

"There was one thing that bothered me about the briefing earlier."

I only reacted to the second half of Yauch's line.

"If they're really trying to use us as tools, then these two were a bit too talkative."

I crossed my arms.

"They could have used the military TSFs as a shield to shut out the information, so why did they go so far as to disclose the inner workings of the corps?"

"Isn't it to show us the harsh reality of the battlefield?"

"It would have been better if he had just talked about the war situation then, and how the Soviets were going to throw a nuke over our heads at the last minute. A person who hears that and cares about what his military history is would be a real idiot."

The look on Strachwitz's face at the hearing comes to mind. It frustrates me that I can't be certain what that old man is thinking. Yauch asked impatiently.

"You mean?"

I nodded. I wasn't sure, but I felt like I had to answer.

"Maybe it's worth trusting them."

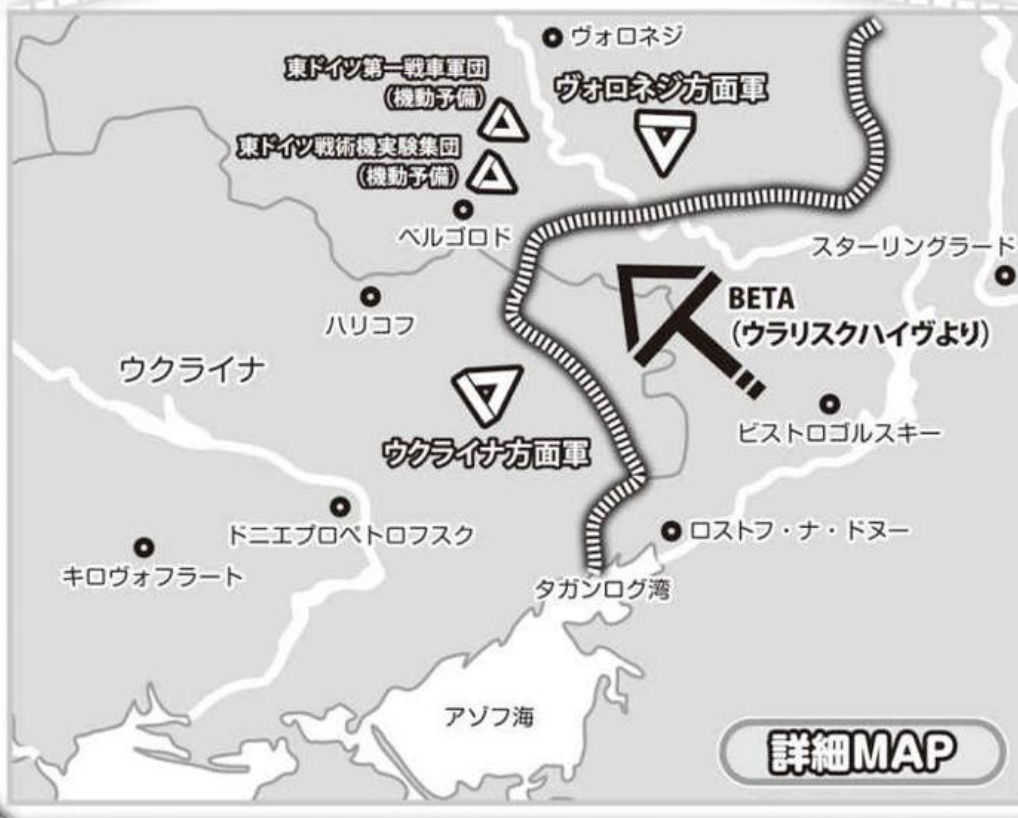
The predictions made at the briefing about the BETA's movements were naive. The BETA offensive began the next day.

1976年3月 ウクライナ東部へのBETAの攻勢

1973年、中華人民共和国の新疆ウイグル自治区カシガル地区に降着したBETAは、中国軍を粉砕しながら西進を続け、1974年末にはソ連領カザフスタンにまで到達していた。ソ連軍は新兵器である戦術機部隊と地上部隊、そして限定的な戦術核の投入により侵攻阻止を目標したが、BETAの物量は圧倒的であり、翌年夏にはヴォルガ川を突破された。

1976年、BETAはウクライナの門前であるドン・ドネツ地方に到達。戦力不足にあえぐソ連軍はウクライナ防衛のためにワルシヤワ条約機構加盟国に派兵を要請、これに応える形で各国から軍が派遣された。このうち東ドイツの国家人民軍第一戦車軍団は光線級への突撃を想定した編制を取っており、各軍の中でも際立った存在だった。また、3月には同じく光線級への浸透突破を主戦術とする第40戦術機実験集団も布陣した。

3月中旬、BETAはハリコフを目標とした攻勢を開始。ここに何度目かの決戦の火ぶたが切って落とされた。



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March 1976: BETA offensive into eastern Ukraine.

In 1973, BETA landed in the Kashgar region of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China, and continued westward while crushing the Chinese army, reaching Soviet Kazakhstan by the end of 1974. The Soviet Union planned to stop the invasion by deploying new weapons such as TSF units, ground troops, and limited tactical nuclear weapons, but the BETA was overwhelmingly massive, and the Volga River was breached the following summer.

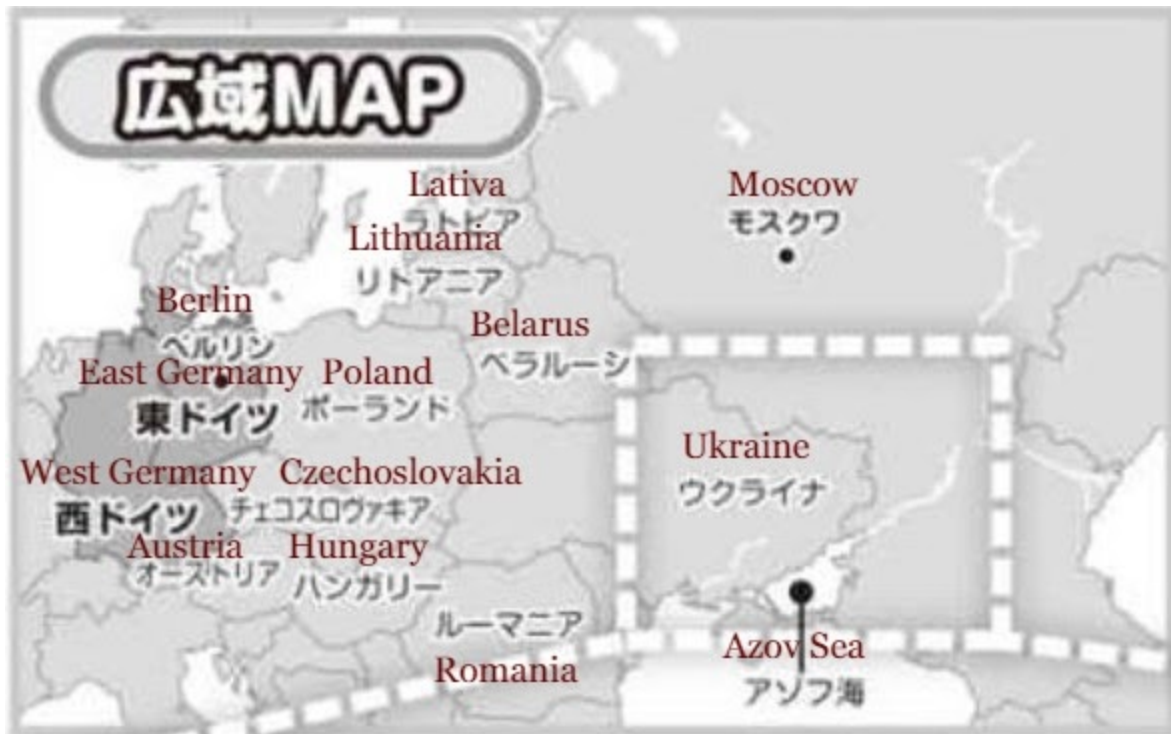
In 1976, BETA reached the Don-Donets region, on the doorstep of Ukraine. The Soviet army, lacking in strength, asked the member countries of the Warsaw Pact to deploy troops to defend Ukraine, and in response, troops were dispatched from various countries. Of these, East Germany's 1st Tank Corps of the National People's Army stood out among the other armies, as it was organized for an assault on the laser class. Also in March, the 40th TSF Experimental Group, whose main strategy was to penetrate and break through the laser class, was also deployed.

In mid-March, BETA launched an offensive against Kharkov. Here, for the first time, a decisive battle was fought.

広域MAP (Regional MAP)

ラトビア、モスクワ、リトアニア、ベルリン、ベラルーシ、東ドイツ、ポーランド、ウクライナ、西ドイツ、チェコスロヴァキア、オーストリア、ハンガリー、ルーマニア、アゾフ海

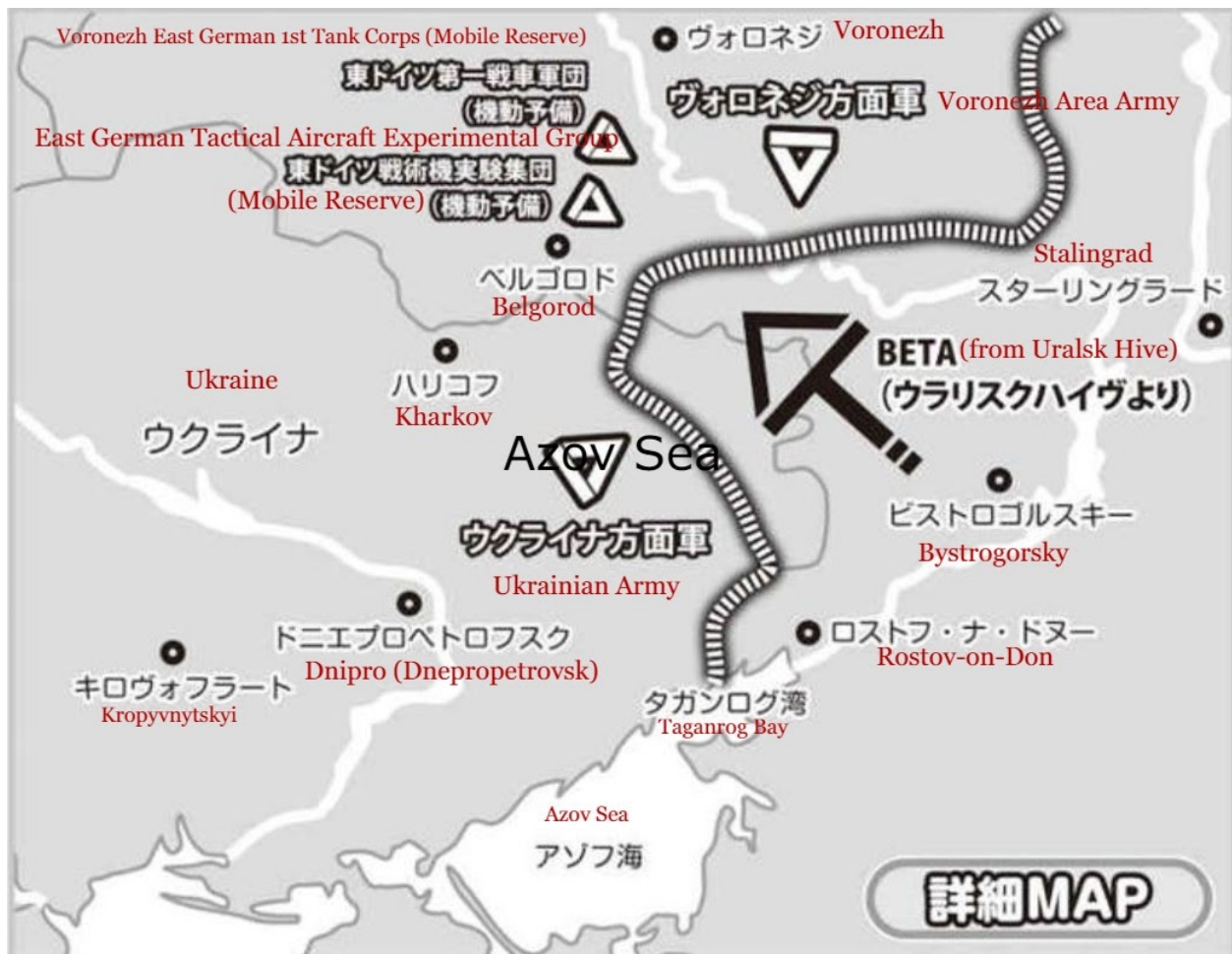
Latvia, Moscow, Lithuania, Berlin, Belarus, East Germany, Poland, Ukraine, West Germany, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, Romania, Azov Sea



詳細MAP (Detailed MAP)

ヴォロネジ、東ドイツ第一戦車軍団 (機動予備)、ヴォロネジ方面軍、東ドイツ戦術機実験集団 (機動予備)、ベルゴロド、スターリングラード、BETA、(ウラリスクハイヴより)、ハリコフ、ウクライナ、ウクライナ方面軍、ビストロゴルスキー、ドニエプロペトロフスク、ロストフ・ナ・ドヌー、キロヴォフラート、タガンログ湾、アゾフ海

Voronezh, East Germany's 1st Tank Corps (Mobile Reserve), Voronezh Area Army, East Germany's TSF Experimental Group (Mobile Reserve), Belgorod, Stalingrad, BETA, (from Uralsk Hive), Kharkov, Ukraine, Ukraine Area Army, Bystrogorsky, Dnipro (Dnepropetrovsk), Rostov-on - Don, Kropyvnytskyi, Taganrog Bay, Azof Sea.



Immediately after the news arrived that the BETA offensive had begun, the Belgorod base was thrown into the midst of chaos. In the snowstorm as usual, the Soviet TSF units deployed at the base sortie one after another.

However, we, the 40th TSF Test Group, were an exception. We were forced to wait in the hangar while boarding the control unit.

"Why haven't we received any information from the 1st Tank Corps Headquarters?"

Katzen muttered in disapproval. What Katzen and I were wearing was the East German version of the enhanced equipment — the costume for the TSF pilots. The U.S. holds the patent for the enhanced equipment, and while the performance and format are mostly the same for each country, each country has its own set of colors. In the case of East Germany, the colors were blue and black. Both men and women's reinforced suits are designed to clearly show their body lines in case of injury. It took me a while to get used to seeing the female pilots (Vikman) in their reinforced gear.

"—The counterattack has already begun, but"

Katzen's frustration was understandable to me. As expected, an hour had passed since the start of the BETA offensive, and the BETA had set their sights on Kharkov. There were more than ten thousand of them.

Directly hit by this offensive was the Polish contingent deployed in front of Kharkov. It consisted of two tank divisions and two motorized sniper divisions, but they were unable to hold it back, having lost half of their strength in the previous defensive battles. The Polish defensive line was breached at various points, and the ground troops were either defeated or under BETA siege.

In response, the Ukrainian command ordered the two Soviet motorized sniper divisions and the East German 1st Tank Corps, which were in mobile reserve, to launch sorties, with the former to support the Polish forces and the latter to attack the laser-class group.

As far as I could see from the projected data on my retina, both battles were proceeding smoothly so far. The Soviet Union's two motorized sniper divisions, which were rebuilt from the divisions that were destroyed in the Battle of Kazakhstan, know the ins and outs of anti-BETA warfare and, in coordination with the TSF units, had been able to achieve a spectacular defense delay.

The same was true for the 1st Tank Corps. Supported by the concentrated fire of artillery units that had been boosted by Soviet forces - the purpose of which was to deploy a heavy metal cloud and locate it by triggering laser-grade radiation - it was able to flank the BETA ladder from the northwest of Kharkov, and in the blink of an eye, they had advanced four or five kilometers. Although the data link had been almost completely disrupted due to the heavy metal cloud, the positions of each regiment were known to the Ukrainian army through signal bombs and other means.

The spearhead of the army was the 9th Tank Division, supported by a TSF battalion equipped with F-4Rs (Phantoms). The battalion had been reduced to two squadrons, but it skillfully coordinated with the tank forces to destroy the BETA groups that stood in its way one after another.

The details were unknown due to the limited information, but it was likely that other than the TSF unit, other units must have been active without a doubt.

According to the documents handed over by the 1st Tank Corps headquarters yesterday, the corps had changed its formation from the Soviet-style formation to a formation for anti-BETA warfare.

For example, each regiment was equipped with a battalion of ZSU-27-4 (Lusaka) anti-aircraft tanks and 2k12 (Kub) [\(70\)](#) self-propelled surface-to-air missiles. The ZSU-27-4 (Lusaka) was used to sweep up small species, while the 2k12 (Kub) was used to attack the Grappler and Destroyer classes at medium and long ranges.

In addition, each division has a battalion equipped with anti-ship missiles as a trump card, ready to attack the fort class or to attack the laser class in case of emergency.

It is said that the tank units equipped with T-72s also use a large number of anti-tank missiles that can be guided from the vehicle side, instead of the usual armor-piercing bombs, to attack the unarmored parts of the Grappler and Destroyer classes. The surface of the T-72 is said to have a number of explosive "Reactive Armor" [\(71\)](#) attached to it to keep out smaller species.

In general, the 1st Tank Corps seemed to be using all the available equipment of the National People's Army (NVA) to increase its survival rate in the battle against BETA.

To be honest, this was an idea that had never occurred to us, who had been focusing only on TSF — it made us realize our own lack of study and Strahawitz's keen eye as a commander. In particular, the use of anti-aircraft vehicles in the fight against BETA seemed to surprise even Hannibal, who had come from the Air Force's air defense missile unit. However, the negative effects of this were becoming clearer and clearer.

"That's not good. The BETA is rapidly gathering in front of the army corps. This could stop the corps at any moment."

Katzen groaned and muttered. As I suspected, or perhaps as I expected, the BETA that had been heading towards Kharkov reacted to the 1st Tank Legion's fierce offensive by changing direction one after another, showing movements that blocked the Corps's advance.

"The distance to the laser class is 5 kilometers remaining"

Yauch grumbled.

"It's either the spearhead of the corps reaches the laser class, or the corps runs out of steam."

"If so, why didn't they contact us?"

"They may be thinking of us as a backup in case of an emergency Like a retreat support role after a failed mission."

"I don't want to be used in that role. I advise you to leave. — Captain, you have to leave now!"

Hannibal remained silent at Katzen's words. Yauch interrupted again.

"Don't be absurd. We've been ordered to stand by. Breaking this order is a violation of military order. Do you want to be punished?"

"Even so.....!"

Katzen's gaze is directed at me. I should speak up.

But I have no answer — I can't answer anything. As Yauch said, as long as there is a clear plan of action, ignoring it entails a considerable amount of risk. It might have been a good idea to mention the results of the battle and leave it at that, but I couldn't do that either, considering what would happen if they failed. I couldn't afford to lose my right to speak. Besides, I had my own speculation.

Eventually, the situation moved - just as Katzen had feared. The 1st Tank Corps approached three kilometers before the laser class, but stopped there. It was probably blocked by the BETAs that had gathered there, led by the sounds of the battlefield, and was on the defensive. The communication from the 1st Tank Corps, which had been continuing intermittently, was completely cut off. The defensive battle was so fierce that they may have even lost that margin.

"—! I told you so!"

Katzen raised his voice.

"Jürgen, we have to leave! If we don't take this chance, ..."

"Everyone, point A34... look south of Borisovka."

Vikman's voice was a little strained.

"— The BETA group, which seems to be a large number of fort-classes, is approaching the territory controlled by the 1st Tank Corps. They might make contact within 10 minutes. "

Katzen and the others catch their breath. It is well known that the fortress class is deployed at the tail end of the BETA group, but I have never heard of a group of fortress class moving alone in the BETA echelon before. I knew that BETA's behavior was uneven, but...

Even the 1st Tank Corps, which is equipped with anti-ship missile vehicles, will not be able to get away with anything if they come into contact with multiple fort classes. In the worst case scenario, there was even the possibility of total annihilation.

Vikman asked Hannibal.

"Captain, has there been any word from the Ukrainian military command?"

Even without instructions from the 1st Tank Corps, the experimental group could go into battle if it received vigorous urging orders from the Ukrainian Area Command, which was its higher headquarters.

But Hannibal shook his head.

"No... I've been calling out to them as well, but they keep telling me to wait for orders from the 1st Tank Corps Command.

Katzen muttered in annoyance.

"Those guys, do they want to lose this battle ...!?"

"They've already failed to penetrate towards the laser class. They probably don't have much hope for us. They may be thinking of us as a backup in case of emergency, after all. Or are they afraid of creating a diplomatic problem by intervening in the East German military chain of command?"

Both were possible. At least in the Ukraine, Soviet troops were no longer the main force. The Soviet Union must not want to cause trouble by offending East Germany and other Warsaw Pact (WTO) forces.

It's about time... I didn't say anything and looked at Hannibal. Hannibal immediately noticed, and we stared at each other for a while.

Hannibal immediately realized what I was trying to say. He exhaled loudly to suppress his mixed emotions, and then spoke the order.

"All hands, the Tactical Machine Test Group will now make a full-scale sortie to rescue the 1st Tank corps. The main force will secure the path of retreat for the 1st Tank Legion, and separate units will provide support."

The pilots rolled their eyes. None of the pilots had any idea what Hannibal meant by the far-fetched phrase "support by separate units".

As chief of staff, I spoke out against it.

"Captain, but doesn't that violate the standby orders issued by Corps Command?"

"I take full responsibility. It would be more treasonous to the Fatherland to sit here and wait for the annihilation of the 1st Tank Corps Command in obedience to its orders, and to lose its generals, especially Major General Strachwitz, the crown jewel of the National People's Army (NVA), and his staff. They are the most experienced anti-BETA fighters in East Germany. We are going into battle to save their lives. I'm sure the top brass will understand."

Hannibal articulated his conclusion — It was a statement that would not have been tolerated if there was a political commissar here who was sensitive to the chain of command. However, perhaps because this was

an experimental unit, there were no political commissars assigned to the TSF Experimental Group, and there was no one here who could override Hannibal's orders.

Hannibal asked, giving me a stern look.

"Isn't that right — Chief of staff?"

"You are totally right, sir."

I looked at Hannibal again, nodded gratefully, and shouted at the top of my lungs.

"All hands, you heard the man... we're going out on the runway!"



"There they are, the BETA swarm!"

While yelling so, I glared at the BETA group that swarmed there on the horizon that was smoked in the blizzard and heavy metal clouds.

After the sortie from Belgorod Air Base, the 40th TSF Experimental Group divided its forces, sending a squadron of F-4Rs (Phantom) to rescue the 1st Tank Corps and a squadron of MiG-21s (Balalaika) and MiG-21Ps (Balalaika) to penetrate and assault the Laser class. According to the original plan, the F-4R (Phantom) squadron was to follow the MiG-21 (Balalaika) squadron in the penetration raid, but this decision was overturned.

Although, I had my concerns regarding how to handle the F-4R (Phantom) squadron, so I can say that it turned out alright in the end.

There are only four MiG-21Ps (Balalaika) with enhanced communication capability in the TSF Experimental Group, and one or two of them must be sent to support the expansion of the communication capabilities of F-4R (Phantom) squadron. However, if this is the case, the MiG-21 (Balalaika) alone cannot form three platoons, and the formation will be unbalanced. The MiG-21P (Balalaika) must adjust to the maneuvering of the F-4R (Phantom), and therefore, MiG-21 (Balalaika) will not be able to demonstrate its true potential.

As such, we were united as a pure MiG-21 (Balalaika) squadron and were rapidly approaching the flank of the BETA echelon.

The four MiG-21Ps (Balalaika) were handed over to Hannibal, the commanding officer, and to the commanders of each platoon. I, Yauch, Katzen, and Vikman formed the headquarters platoon among these, and were in the vanguard of the three platoons deployed in a wedge shape, with only me, the headquarters platoon commander, aboard the MiG-21P (Balalaika).

And yet, Hannibal was in the center of the wedge — according to Air Force tradition, he should be the first in command, but he was the least experienced of the thirteen, moreover, he had to take command of the entire experimental group. He should have let me take the lead and stayed in the safest place.

Thirteen MiG-21s (Balalaika) were flying creepingly close to the ground surface, they were almost touching it. The altitude was less than 10 meters — the result of all the training they had done so far.

"We're still storming in...!"

I shouted, and changed my posture from creeping to surfacing as soon as I entered the BETA group. The purpose of this was to slip through the gaps between the swarming BETA like an ice skater, and to advance while avoiding engagement as much as possible.

The number of BETA within the range of my TSF, the MiG-21P (Balalaika), is in the hundreds. All of them are tank-class and grappler-class. They are swarming at a considerable density.

However, we quickly identify the slightest gap in the swarm and use our individual judgment to avoid the BETA, while maintaining the cohesion of the company as we advance. We don't fire artillery whenever possible — The more BETA we destroy, the more BETA we may attract.

The communication between the squadrons - as expected - is maintained despite the heavy metal cloud due to the communication capability of the MiG-21P (Balalaika). The data link from the rear has been cut off, but this can't be helped.

As time went on, the density of BETA on the ground increased, and our advance became more and more difficult... Even so, the 13 MiG-21s (Balalaika) formed a breakthrough with minimal firepower and continued to advance.

We can't stop - if we do, we'll be caught in close combat with the BETA, and there's a good chance we'll be shot by a laser class. For us right now, mobility is our greatest defense.

The joints of the MiG-21 (Balalaika) scream from the intense continuous maneuvering — our own physical strength is also reduced. I almost puked my guts out because of the way the G's were applied so rapidly. But we can't stop here. If we halt our pace, death awaits us.

"You can go, You can do it.....Jürgen!"

Katzen was expressing his joy in an awkward way.

"We're almost at the laser class!"

"Stay sharp, Katzen!"

Yauch nailed it with his artillery, swept up the tank class in front of him and made a new breakthrough.

"Even though the heavy metal cloud will reduce laser-class irradiation, we could still be shot at at any time! There's the risk of a flanking attack by a Fort or Destroyer class! There is even a possibility that a group of tank-classes could be buried in the snow!"

"I know!"

Though, we were aware that we were still advancing under fairly good conditions. According to preliminary estimates, it would not have been surprising if many more BETA groups were standing in our way.

"It's probably thanks to the 1st Tank Corps."

Yauch muttered.

"— The forcible advance of the 1st Tank Corps attracted a large number of BETAs that would otherwise stand in our way. That is the reason why we have been able to break through the thin density of BETA swarms."

"— Are you saying that Major General Strachwitz saved our lives?"

Hannibal asked. Obviously, he had less room to move than we did, but somehow, he managed to keep up with the entire company.

"That's right. Perhaps this should be incorporated into future war lessons. In order for TSFs to succeed in penetrating the laser class, ground troops should also engage the BETA group as much as possible and draw their attention to them."

"Is there any chance that the BETA will react to our movements and move other BETA into our path?"

"Of course there is. But it will take time. On the other hand, our movement is faster than the BETA's. If we can reach the laser class before the BETA can respond, we will win."

It was not something to be nodded at easily. If the ground troops engaged the BETA, there would be a lot of bloodshed. It would be necessary to find a way to draw the BETA's attention to something else, but it would take some ingenuity.

While we were talking, we were evading the BETAs one by one and getting closer to the laser class. The number of BETA was increasing, but it was a good thing that we were so close — it would give the laser class a reason to hesitate in irradiating us.

Anticipation is growing in my chest — if we keep going like this, If we continue moving forward like this!

In this battle, if the correctness of the penetration breakthrough tactics to the laser class is established and the reform of the East German army progresses, We can also give the future to Iris, Beatrix and the others — even if they become pilots, we can send them into battle with a high survival rate. For heaven's sake, let it end without incident.

"Multiple signal bombs in the sky to our left! F-4R (Phantom) squadrons have joined up with the 1st Tank Legion! Corps command is alive and well, including Major General Strachwitz! However, they are being pushed around from all sides by BETA groups, so they are starting to retreat!"

"Yauch, fire a signal round to acknowledge!"

"Roger!"

Vikman's voice followed — her voice was more hoarse than ever.

"The enemy behind the Laser class, which appears to be a Fort class, is increasing its forward speed! They may be planning to use it as a shield for the laser class!"

"Let them come! We'll clear them out before the fort class approaches!"

This time it was Katzen's rant.

"In front of us is a group of tanks and grapplers! They're approaching from both sides!"

We're too close to the laser-class group to leap through, and they're too dense — should we destroy them with artillery? But that would violate our tactical principle of approaching the laser class while avoiding combat as much as possible — but it seems like a sure way to get the whole squadron home alive. Rather than trying to break through the BETA's close proximity and have some TSFs fail to do so. By daring to attack, you can expect to have the effect of ripping off the BETA around the laser class.

I made a split-second decision and ordered them to do so.

"All units, commence bombardment! Target, BETA group in front of the laser class! Ammunition grenades, commence fire!"

『 『 『"Roger!"』 』 』

The MiG-21 (Balalaika) continues its leap and starts firing at once. The hit rate was poor — not surprising since we had lowered the priority of our training for artillery fire. But even so, the grenades cause damage over a wide area, and many tanks are crushed as they burst with red bodily fluids.

As the sound of gunfire echoes through the air, I take a moment to look at the war situation window — the distance to the laser class is less than three kilometers remaining. If we continue to destroy BETA groups as we go, we will surely get there.

"Good! Continue bombardment! We're gonna push it all the way in!"

I shouted, feeling more elated than ever. If we could only get to the laser class — if we could defeat it, our efforts over the past year would be rewarded. No, it could be three years, or even more than ten. From the time our mother abandoned us, our father left us, and I decided to protect Iris all by myself — all in order to give Iris a future...

"Taste the MiG-21 (balalaika)..."

In the next moment, the BETA swarm that was being crushed in front of me suddenly split into left and right in an instant.

In the back, there were fifty, no, more than a hundred laser-classes — even more than previously reported. And more than half of them were looking at the 13 machines with jet black eyes.

"...!"

Katzen's breath was caught in his throat. The entire company was distracted by the bombardment - an action they were not accustomed to - and were in no condition to react immediately.

I let out a scream.

"Evaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaade!"

It was only a moment later that a thin glow of light extended toward the squadron with a roar that burned the atmosphere.

Friedrichstraße, the main street of East Berlin, was filled with crowds, cheers, and brightly colored East German flags.

The 1st Tank Corps of the East German Army, which fought to the death against BETA in Central Asia and Ukraine, and especially the 21st Tank Regiment of the 9th Tank Division, "Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya" [\(72\)](#), which had achieved great results, had temporarily returned home for reorganization. It was decided that a triumphal return parade would be held. As a side note, the headquarters company of the 1st Tank Corps, a tactical machine battalion belonging to the 9th Tank Division, and a company of each of the tactical machine experimental groups also returned home to participate in the parade.

On both sides of Friedrichstraße, an overflow of people gathered, cheering the T-72s, F-4Rs, MiG-21s and other TSFs marching down the street, and waving flags. The season was May, and even though there was still snow on the road and the air felt cold, the crowd was overflowing with enthusiasm.

I was sitting in the control unit of the MiG-21P (Balalaika) in my reinforced equipment, letting the TSF walk autonomously, and looking at the crowd with a cold feeling.

An inexplicable feeling of discomfort sticks in my mind.

They don't know. What kind of existence the BETA is, What kind of battle is going on in the Soviet Union, and What kind of experience we had in Ukraine.

And yet, when they see our appearance, they cheer. No, I know that some of the citizens are participating in this parade at the request of their workplaces, schools, or party leaders, without any particular feeling for us. Today is Saturday, so many of them are probably participating in this event as a little holiday.

I know that, but...

"Why don't you put on a happy face for a while longer?"

A pretentious voice — at the same time, a general's face appeared on my retina. The command vehicle of the 1st Tank Corps Command is capable of data linking with tactical machines, and can also talk with the pilots.

He is still the same person who acts as if he sees right through us — it makes me angry.

"..... I would like to, but as someone who was in Ukraine until the day before yesterday, I can't suddenly change my attitude."

"I know how you feel... but you'll have to get used to it. Especially for someone like you in the future."

The commander of the 1st Tank Corps, Alfred Strachwitz, said with a very serious face.

"As it stands now, it is ostensibly my army that has achieved great success in Ukraine, but it is really your experimental group that has performed heroic deeds. From now on, the military will be reformed based on

the results you have achieved in Ukraine. Eventually, you will be applauded by the public in these parades. No, as long as it has been decided that the military reform will be centered around the mass deployment of tTSFs and the penetration tactics for the laser class, it will definitely happen."

"....."

"You have been given the fate of becoming a hero, and you will need to be able to act accordingly."

I wanted to say something back, but I couldn't find the words.

"Now that the superiority of the doctrine is clear, I will do my best to support your vision. I'm sure my efforts were not in vain, though."

In silence, I nodded.

There were several questions I wanted to pose to Strachwitz, but I could not open my mouth.

— To what extent did you believe in the rightness of your doctrine? How much of the situation at that time was as you expected?

And you, how did you...?

I let out a big breath, threw my thoughts away, and reminded Strachwitz.

"....., please take the parade a little more seriously. The crowds are here to see you."

"Oh, right. I forgot to mention that my daughter is coming to the parade today. I'll have to give her a big smile!"

Strachwitz smiled at that, and finally, raised one eyebrow at me.

"Oh, by the way, you invited your sister and her friend to watch the parade, didn't you?"

As soon as the door was opened, what I saw was Beatrix with a surprised expression on her face.

"Hey."

I raised my hands in the air, laughing lightly — I wasn't sure if I was laughing well or not, I was too tired.

The day after the parade in Berlin, at Grünheide Air Base, where the TSF test group had returned, I managed to finish up the paperwork that had accumulated while I was in Ukraine, as well as a meeting with the maintenance team about the maintenance of the TSFs, before heading back to the Brehme house in the evening.

Beatrix's appearance seemed more mature than the last time I saw her, three months ago. I wondered if this was evidence of her training at the military academy. Perhaps it was just my imagination, but she also seemed to have become more slender.

"How have you been? You did come to watch the parade, didn't you?"

"Of course. Iris and I went there together."

"I see. I'm sorry I bothered you again today without calling."

"I don't mind. In any case, I was going to go home for the holidays, and I have tomorrow off, too, so... you're going up, right?"

"Yeah."

"My father's not here, by the way. My mother is out too."

A mischievous smile - this guy must take immense pleasure in making fun of me.

"I don't care, I'm here to see you."

Beatrix gave me a surprised look, and her mouth relaxed with a faintly happy expression.

"Is that so..."

I was drinking a cup of South American coffee that Beatrix had made for me, silently trying to collect my thoughts. My thoughts were still confused from my time in Ukraine just a few days ago, and I needed time to think.

Beatrix also sensed something and waited for me in silence. She didn't even sip her own coffee.

"..... Is there any mention of Ukraine at the Military Academy?"

"Yes, I heard that the 1st Tank Corps has achieved great results ... Even in the recent battle, it contributed to the defense of Kharkov and helped millions of refugees to escape."

"....."

"Not many people believe at face value, but ... everyone knows that you are working hard for us."

"Do you want to hear about what really happened?"

"I want to hear it."

"You might be disillusioned. To me, as a person."

"Even so..."

Beatrix stared at me with a sincere look in her eyes.

"The reason you came to see me first and not Iris is because you want to talk about it, right?"

"....."

I thought for a moment about where I should start, and then decided to just say what came to mind. It's about this guy anyway. He knew what we were trying to do with the experimental group a long time ago.

"..... In conclusion, it was me who won. The 40th TSF Experimental Group succeeded in penetrating the laser class. In their first sortie, they destroyed about 100 laser-classes. They regained control of the airspace and made it possible for the air force to operate. The air force then carpet bombed the BETA ladders, destroying most of them. We were victorious, and the city of Kharkov was protected. We didn't need to use nukes or send our ground troops into the BETA swarm, as long as we had TSFs. We proved that even without nukes and without sending ground troops into the BETA swarm, we can crush the BETA offensive with our TSFs."

"That's something to be admired."

Beatrix's voice was low. She might have already guessed what I wanted to say.

In response, I continued, my voice somewhat hoarse.

"Admiration? Don't be silly. We lost half of our MiG-21s (Balalaika) in this one battle, because of the laser radiation we received right in front of that laser class."

I stood up. I was aware that I was blurting out a lot of classified information about the laser class and the MiG-21 (Balalaika), but I couldn't stop myself. I clenched my fist.

"It was only for a moment - only for an instance - that the first platoon deployed on the right flank was shot down, and half of the second platoon was also destroyed by their agitation. The only reason the rest of the TSFs survived was because they happened to be the shields."

"....."

"Most of the TSFs that had been irradiated had instantly exploded, but there was one plane whose pilot had survived. He was one of the students from Moscow, just like me. You know what I thought the moment I saw that?"

"Do you want me to answer?"

Beatrix's eyes were as sincere as ever. I nodded, and Beatrix said it quietly.

"If you only had to sacrifice half of them, then this mission is a success. Abandoning your comrades in arms is militarily and politically acceptable. It can't be blamed."

I hit the desk with my fist. The desk itself was sturdy enough to keep the contents of my coffee cup from spilling out.

I tried to calm my breathing — Beatrix was patiently waiting for me to calm down.

"Yes, that's right! I made a split-second decision and ordered the assault to continue. I didn't have time to wait for Hannibal's orders. We immediately used the other BETA as shields to get in close to the laser class and took them out with grenades."

"..... Victory comes at a cost, doesn't it?"

"Just before we were irradiated, I had ordered all the planes to fire. It was an inevitable order — an unnecessary order if I had believed in the skills of my comrades, or if I hadn't dreamed of succeeding in the mission unscathed. This led to a gap — a gap that could have been avoided if we had focused on penetration."

Beatrix remained silent.

"Half of the company's pilots were lost because of me, but I only thought of it as a number. I'm still convinced that I made the right decision. My comrades in arms did not blame me either."

I put my hardened fist to my chest. I feel like I can't take it anymore.

"But it's What is it? What am I, some kind of bloodless machine? Or a BETA? Is that what I'm going to start thinking about you guys? When I think about it, I can't even contain myself."

Beatrix was patiently waiting for me to finish my story.

"..... After that, we spent about a month in Eastern Ukraine. Somehow the BETA had stopped moving and there was peace on the battlefield. We spent our time intercepting the occasional small BETA attacks... and then we came home."

"....."

"The East German army will probably be reformed as I want it to be. Major General Strachwitz's face will remain unscathed — the 1st Tank Corps has proven that ground troops are still a force to be reckoned with against BETA. This should be the foundation of the East German army — expanding TSF units and strengthening ground forces. I'm happy with the way things turned out, even though I made the mistake of ending the lives of my friends."

I let out a deep breath to calm myself down.

Strachwitz's cheerful smile from yesterday came back to me — I didn't know what to make of his attitude.

Is that his true nature, or is that just a mask?

In the past five months, the death toll of the 1st Tank Corps had numbered in the tens of thousands. He sacrificed so much to prove his doctrine or to make people around him accept the correctness of my doctrine. Of course, it was the BETA that caused it — but that doesn't mean he wasn't responsible for it. No, is he himself not even slightly worried about such things? Is that really the right thing to do as a human being or as a general?

I didn't understand, but I was curious. At the same time, I felt frustrated and ashamed of myself for not being able to come to terms with the reality in front of me.

I stared at Beatrix. Some people might have described it as a plea for salvation.

"What do you think of me, ...?"

"If you want an honest impression"

"It doesn't matter."

"You're a wimp. I thought you'd be a little tougher mentally, but I can't hide my disappointment that you'd become so weak after a death and run to your girlfriend."

"I bet."

I smiled bitterly - I knew that Beatrix would answer that way. Beatrix is a member of the Red Nobility (Nomenklatura). She recognizes the value of noble duty (noblesse oblige).

"But..."

Beatrix approached me and hugged me, nuzzling her face into my chest. I also... reflexively put my hands around her.

"I certainly don't want Iris to hear about this. Thank you for your hard work. For now, I'm going to spoil you for the day."

"....."

"In fact, I don't even know if your judgment is correct. I don't know the reality of the battlefield — I'm still a bird in a cage, even though I want to be a TSF pilot."

Beatrix was muttering in a damp voice.

"But I approve of your decision, because I believe that a certain amount of sacrifice is necessary in order to save humanity. I believe that history has proven that."

"Not to save East Germany or"

"East Germany is a bigger basket for me than the Brehme family. I don't intend to be at my father's beck and call, nor do I intend to be a tool of the East German state. If my father and my country treat me as a

tool, then I will use my father and my country as a tool. I love my country, my family, my friends, and you... but that's not the same thing."

It may have been the first time Beatrix had revealed some of her true feelings to me.

A bird in a cage. The daughter of the Brehme family. That's why Beatrix wants to get out of it and try to see things from a larger perspective. That's her own way of keeping her peace of mind, I guess.

Come to think of it, she didn't express any objection or concern about me going to the battlefield. It might have been the end of my life.

Did you think that possibility is also a sacrifice to save humanity and that you should endure it?

Or is that just bravado and not what you really think?

Like Strachwitz's true intentions, I didn't understand her either, but now I think it's okay.

My girlfriend, Beatrix Brehme, deserves to have that much mystery left in her.

Suddenly,..... Beatrix stared into my eyes and giggled.

"I knew I was right."

"About what?"

"That Iris and I decided to become TSF pilots to help you."

".....?"

"If I hadn't, you wouldn't have been able to rely on me like you did today. You could only have told me all this because I was like you, couldn't you?"

Beatrix asked with a mischievous smile.

I was puzzled, and pondered how I should respond... and then I said the answer.

"Maybe you're right, ..."

Beatrix is probably right. I can't let Iris see me in such a weak state, and Beatrix is the only one I can talk to about deep political and military matters.

When I came to my senses, I felt a lot better. Maybe it was because I was able to let out the things that I had been keeping bottled up in my heart for the past month.

If I can continue to get a moment of healing like this, then Beatrix's words may not be wrong.

That may have been the first time I was able to affirm, without question, Iris and Beatrix's desire to become TSF pilots to help me.

"Then be grateful."

Beatrix smiled lustroously - as if she was truly happy.

"Because you need me and I need you."



Epilogue

1

I visited the control room of Ernst Thälmann Military Academy on a military inspection tour, and was struck by a surprise.

Large MMU maneuvering training in the large swimming pool that was set up in the school's compound last year. In the pool, five large MMUs, presumably made in the Soviet Union, were attempting to walk around. One was the instructor's TSF, and the other four were students in a platoon.

Iris is included among the students. In the control room where the underwater situation is being monitored, we can hear the conversation between the instructor and the students, including Iris. In the same room, Beatrix and other students in the same class as Iris were also observing the training.

"—You see, large MMUs are more delicate than they look! The slightest error in operation can lead to a major accident! It's the same with tactical machines! Step by step, without fail... Start walking!"

"—Copy that!"

The MMUs begin to walk slowly underwater - three of them, including Iris's TSF, are walking smoothly, but one is lagging far behind.

"—Trainee soldier Bernhard! One of the TSFs in your platoon is lagging behind! As a platoon leader, you should lead!"

"—Yes, Instructor"

Iris raised her voice desperately — it's been a long time since I've heard Iris sound like this. I was going to tease her about it later, but the next thing I knew.

"—Trainee soldier Gerlinde, Pause! Breathe!"

..... hmm?

"The other two should also cease movement! Let's keep in step with Gerlinde!"

"Keep in step with ... Male language [\(73\)](#)!? Iris is!? That Irisdina is!?"

"—Trainee Gerlinde, have you calmed down?"

"—Yes! Excuse me, Platoon Leader Bernhard!"

"—All right! Start walking! Don't make any mistakes."

.....

"—All right! At this rate we will keep our pace."

What's this, what's this, what's this—!?

Iris, the dainty maiden, the flower I raised, the sweetest butterfly, my beloved sister, My 'Only One', 'My Sister Iris' . Why has she started to use such rough language? Despite always going above and beyond for the sake of courteousness?

Is it because of your education at the Military Academy? Have you been brainwashed by the Party? Or have you eaten something bad?

I was on the verge of panic, but I kept my composure (the blood probably drained from my face) and turned to Beatrix, who was watching the training with the other students.

It seems that Beatrix had anticipated my change - or rather, my astonishment - as she locked eyes with me and smiled at me with a sense of superiority.

In other words, this is also a setup by Beatrix...

Damn it, Beatrix!

How much more do you want me to sufferrrrrrr!

"Pardon me. I seem to have frightened you, Niisan....."

In the main cafeteria after the morning work. I was having lunch with Iris and Beatrix.

The Iris in front of me had changed from the one I had just seen to the Iris I knew well — a girl who reminded me of a pretty flower.

Thank Goodness. Thinking that Iris' essence has become like this, I was about to get a hole in my stomach from the anxiety,

However, even after meeting me, Iris kept her voice down the whole time. She seemed to be concerned about the stares of those around her. In other words, this is the true face of Iris at the military academy.....

"But there's a reason why I started to use male language, like that thing I made you listen to earlier."

"I can almost guess."

I whispered in response to Iris, and leered at Beatrix.

"I'm sure you're the one who set this up, right? A friend of the Brehme family, Irisdina, a relative of mine who is infamous as a tactical machine mafioso, at least you wanted to make sure that people didn't look down on her"

Beatrix was drinking her coffee without a care in the world.

"And, In order to shock me in this way, You have been keeping quiet about it, ... and you have also included Iris in it."

"If you understand that much, you're in the clear."

"There is a difference between understanding and acceptance! I thought my heart was going to stop!"

"Loud."

".....!"

"Iris and I are friends, and everyone already knows that you and Iris are brother and sister. So it's no surprise that the three of us are having dinner together — However, we shouldn't stand out too much, should we?"

"I agree with that, but"

I was about to continue when two girls approached Iris. One of the two is a student who was in a platoon with Iris during the training earlier.

"Oh, um, ..."

"Hmm, what's up?"

Iris answered in a man's language, but I could tell from the slightest movement of her face that she was quite nervous.

"...um, thank you so much for what you did earlier. For helping me out during my training."

"No need. I just did what I had to do as a matter of course."

I felt an overwhelming sense of discomfort — but I had a paroxysmal urge to laugh. I was surprised, but I also found it oddly amusing that Iris was trying so hard to speak in men's language and not in her own.

Iris glared at me for a moment, and then continued talking.

"If you ever have any inconveniences in the future, you can consult with me."

"Yes! But, You really are amazing, Iris-san. You rapidly improved your grades, and you are even competing with Beatrix-san for the top spot."

"I'm just trying to do my best, in my own way. Though, it may not be enough to protect my precious family and my motherland."

"You want to be a TSF pilot, right?"

"Yes. My brother is involved in the formation of the tactical surface fighter unit."

"If I am not mistaken, that person ..."

"Ah, that's my brother, Lieutenant Jürgen Bernhard."

"I see...."

It seemed like she wasn't too interested in me, she greeted me with only a thank you, and then said to Iris in a friendly manner.

"So, I'll see you in the afternoon lecture!"

Iris waved back smilingly — I was already at my limit. As soon as the conversation was over, I held my mouth and tried to hold back my laughter. I'm not sure if Beatrix feels the same way, but she doesn't scold me for it.

Iris whispered, her face turning red.

"Hmph, you two should stop enjoying yourselves! I, well, I'm still not used to it and It's..... embarrassing!"

"Sorry, sorry, but you looked better than I thought you would."

"Please don't joke about this!"

"No, No...A beautiful and innocent girl like you, showing an interesting behavior like that, ... is quite something."

"Might there be a man in love?"

Beatrix started to jeer.

"Not gonna lie. Whoever he is, I'll beat the shit out of him."

"Enough already, what are you doing here today?"

Iris forced me to turn the conversation around. Well, enough meddling with Iris for now. I talked for a bit about some of Mr. Boltz's travel tales then I nodded and answered in an even lower voice than before.

"A mission, of course. Involving TSFs."

"For the establishment of a school dedicated to the training of TSF pilots?"

"You are well informed, Or is it a rumour here too?"

"Yes. They said some of the instructors might be transferred."

"If that doesn't happen, I don't think we're going to be able to get things set up fast enough."

A month after I returned from Ukraine, the situation in the East German army was changing dramatically.

First, it was decided that the MiG-21 (Balalaika) would be produced under license in East Germany, ahead of other East European countries. The factory will be attached to the Eisenhüttenstadt TSFs Arsenal and will operate as an integrated production and maintenance facility. The capital will be entirely East German.

The fact that the contract was signed in favor of East Germany, which would have been unthinkable six months ago, could be considered a result of the experimental TSF group in Ukraine.

The MiG-21 (Balalaika) might be able to eliminate the laser class through penetration — the Soviet military accepted this possibility. However, the economy of the Soviet Union was still in turmoil, and considering the speed of the BETA invasion, the risk of locating a factory in Soviet territory was great. In addition, East Germany is the only country that has the know-how to modify the MiG-21P (Balalaika), which can maintain communication with TSF even under heavy metal clouds, and even if the Soviet Union received this know-how for free, it would be difficult to reflect it in the production of the TSFs.

It is said that the decision to bring the MiG-21 (Balalaika) production plant to East Germany was made along these lines.

At the same time, the East German Army reorganized the 1st Tank Corps in Ukraine and the expansion of the TSFs unit in our home country was to take place.

Pulling out the 1st Tank Corps was not possible given the war situation in Ukraine. Even though it failed to eliminate the laser class, the 1st Tank Corps had acquired the best anti-BETA combat capability in Eastern Europe. For this reason, after participating in the parade in East Berlin, Strachwitz immediately returned to Ukraine.

The members of the 40th TSF Experimental Group were not given any time to spare. The decision was made to expand the TSF unit, and they had to scramble to complete the necessary procedures. The nature of the 40th TSF Experimental Group was also said to be changing from being an experimental unit to a model for TSF units in the East German army — something closer to an instructional unit. The military doctrine is also being reconfigured with a focus on TSFs, although this is not known to the public.

The Air Force and the Navy have been the most affected by this reform. Both the Air Force and the Navy have had their budgets and personnel cut, and it has been decided that some of their personnel will be supplied to the Army.

It is said that the intentions of the East German business community were strongly behind the military's decision to go to such great lengths. Perhaps Abel is also working behind the scenes.

The reason I visited the Military Academy was for that purpose, to discuss the establishment of a school specializing in TSF pilots.

Of course, there is a good chance that I will be on the front lines again. The BETA offensive in Ukraine is continuing. The construction of the TSF factory is progressing at a rapid pace — the second and third MiG-21 (Balalaika) equipped units may be formed and fielded by the end of this year.

By then, I wanted to somehow establish a system for training domestic pilots and prepare for future battles.

"By the way, it seems that the BETA has reached the Barents Sea and the Soviet Union has been completely divided into East and West."

Beatrix whispered in an even lower voice than I did.

"It is rumored that the Soviet Union is planning to launch a counterattack from the east and west of the Ural Mountains to cut off the BETA-controlled territory from north to south."

"The Soviet Union, cut off from transporting resources from Siberia and the Baku oil fields, no longer has the power it once had."

I replied.

"There is no doubt that the Eastern European countries will play a leading role in the war in the future — we want to stop BETA at all costs in Ukraine, Poland, and Belarus, and ensure the safety of East Germany."

"But that means we're going to use those countries as shields against the BETA and continue to live in peace."

Iris muttered stutteringly.

"In the Soviet Union, there are millions, tens of millions of refugees, and we don't know how many people are dying."

"Yes. But there's no other way to do it."

Beatrix looked like she wanted to say something, but she kept quiet, and in place of her, I concluded.

"The closer the battlefield is to East Germany, the more refugees there will be, and the more they will flood into East Germany — probably in a certain future. It will put a lot of pressure on East Germany's economy and cause turmoil. However, if the BETA rushes to East Germany at once, even that margin will be lost.

"So where are we supposed to escape to?"

"What do you mean?"

"It's just a hypothetical. If East Germany collapsed under the BETA offensive and we ourselves became refugees, ..."

Before I knew, Iris was expressing her doubts to me with a serious expression.

East Germany is the western end of the eastern camp, so we have no choice but to flee to the west, but West Germany is politically opposed to us.

"This is not the place to talk about it."

I interrupted Iris. It was too risky, indeed, to have a conversation here that was based on the premise that East Germany would be defeated — although I thought that was Iris's unique perspective.

"We'll have to talk about it sometime. I have my own thoughts on the refugee issue."

I witnessed the mass of refugees in Kazakhstan and Ukraine. I want to do something about it, and I want to avoid at all costs that the citizens of East Germany fall into the same situation.

"Yes, thank you."

"Oh, by the way, there was a report about your unit in the paper the other day."

Beatrix added as she remembered.

"It said you and the 1st Tank Corps had a great battle in the attack on the Laser class."

"So the information has finally been released. And?"

"Unfortunately, your unique tactic of, uh, penetrating the laser class was not explained in detail."

"Well, we've got the West watching too."

"Instead, they coined the term 'Laser Jagd'. Did you come up with this?"

"No, I heard it now for the first time. I see. If you write "penetration breakthrough", it would explain the core of our tactics, but if you write "Laser Jagd", it will be a little blurred. In a broader sense, the 1st Tank Corps in Strachwitz also performed a rush against the laser class. Since it is in German, we can also show that it is a tactic invented by the East German army. [\(74\)](#)

I smiled pleasantly.

"Laser Jagd. It has a nice ring to it. I'll check with my superiors to see if we can continue to use it as the official term for the East German army."

The next day, I ordered a newspaper that used the word "Laser Jagd" to confirm it.

Beatrix's story was true. We showed it to Yauch and the others who were at the headquarters that day and had a good laugh. Captain Hannibal liked it and promised to talk to the East Germans about making it an official term in the future.

Everything seemed to be going well. Of course, I was aware that the horrible war in Ukraine was still going on, and that Strachwitz and other East German soldiers were fighting in the middle of it, but still.

That's why I didn't notice the value of the small news item that was placed in the corner of the newspaper as if it was a necessity.

Under the auspices of the United Nations, the foreign ministers of the United States and the Soviet Union met in London, England, to exchange views on the future of the war against BETA.

What an uneventful news. After all this time they consider it.

However, according to what Mr. Boltz told me later, this was a turning point. Yes, the Soviet Union made a diplomatic compromise with the West, telling the West that it would allow Western military operations in the territory of the Eastern camp, depending on what was negotiated.

The "Palaiologos" operation, an all-out human counter-offensive against BETA that will shake the fate of all of Europe and the three of us, was about to begin.

"The following is a report on the developments in the National People's Army (NVA)...."

At the headquarters of the Ministry of State Security (Stasi) in Lichtenberg, East Berlin, the voice of an intelligence officer echoed in one of the conference rooms.

"The reform of the NVA is expected to progress further, following the lessons learned in Ukraine. In the future, tactical surface fighter-centered tactics and doctrine will be issued."

The conference room was filled with moans of displeasure.

It was a natural reaction. The Stasi is the secret police of East Germany, and at the same time it is known as the largest intelligence organization in Europe in terms of population. The status quo was becoming like after the relocation of the Soviet Capital to Khabarovsk, and the functions of the KGB being "sent to Siberia" along with its entire staff.

And for the Ministry of State Security (Stasi), the National People's Army (NVA) has always been a political rival.

The Stasi, as the secret police, controls the security of East Germany, but it has not been able to exert much influence over the military, which actually has military power.

"The NVA is trying to reform its military structure ahead of us". A senior official from the Stasi participating in the meeting muttered something annoyingly. He was a member of the First Central Bureau, which was in charge of intelligence for the NVA, the People's Police, and the border guards.

"That's the problem. If the NVA is the only one with tactical surface fighter, then we will have no way to counter it if the need arises."

"The KGB has expressed the same concern."

The agent replied.

"If the NVA bared its fangs at your party, who would stop them?"

"Hey, hey, isn't that the role of the Soviet troops stationed in Germany?"

"We hear that the Soviet government is considering withdrawing Soviet troops from Germany. In return, we hope that our authority will be strengthened and that the clampdown on the NVA will be tightened."

"They are doing whatever they want, but in the face of the threat of the BETA, I suppose it can't be helped."

He muttered as if to spit, then changed the direction of the conversation.

"As a West German intelligence officer, what do you have to say about that?"

The official asked the man sitting across from him, a well-dressed man with the face of an actor.

"If you're involved in the West German intelligence scene, I think you would have some insight into the situation."

"I also believe that the formation of a TSF unit in the Stasi is urgently needed."

The man said it in a smooth, lickety-split tone, as if he were telling a familiar joke.

"The West German military is currently in the process of making the fourth round of changes to its formation in preparation for the war against BETA. It is said that they are pressing the U.S. to introduce not only the F-4 (Phantom) series, but also highly mass-producible TSF that have been converted from training planes."

"In other words, in that sense, the deployment of TSFs by the Stasi is permissible."

"Politically enough — it's entirely possible that a military tactical pilot could defect to the west in a TSF."

"Very well. Let me make a proposal to the center along those lines. The Stasi already has an anti-terrorism force equivalent to one division. If we expand it, there will be less opposition from the military."

"The West Germans will call us the second coming of the Nazi armed SS."

"Let them say what they want. We can change the name as we see fit... Do you have any guesses as to how we'll get personnel?"

"For the time being, we will have to rely on scouts from the NVA and the People's Police."

The agent who had just reported in answered.

"I've already marked the ones I want. If it is a cadet, non-commissioned officer, or police cadet in training, there will be little opposition. Among them is a girl, despite being the daughter of a senior party official, has entered the military academy and is aspiring to become a TSF pilot."

"I see. Show me the list later, and tell me about the girl too. But, you're going to be busy, aren't you?"

The official sarcastically called out to the man with the actor's face.

"If the war in the Soviet Union continues to worsen, a huge number of refugees are likely to arrive in East Germany. This would be the perfect opportunity to expand the power of the Stasi under the guise of managing the refugees. At the same time, however, a major problem will arise. If the Soviet Union loses its footing, the number of East Germans who will cry out for cooperation with the West will increase."

"Just like those Polish bastards."

"That's right. They are the ones who rode the Soviet Union's coattails to victory in the war, and now they act like they're so high and mighty. And now they want democracy? What will happen if that virus

spreads to us? After all, it would be better if they were destroyed once again. We can treat them as slaves again. If only the BETA would be so good at destroying them."

"You're absolutely right."

"Anyhow, in this regard, you will be allowed to demonstrate your skills to your heart's content. In the past, as an elite member of the 20th Bureau, you have crushed numerous asylum plans and suppressed the activities of dissidents, as 'Heinz the Brown'."

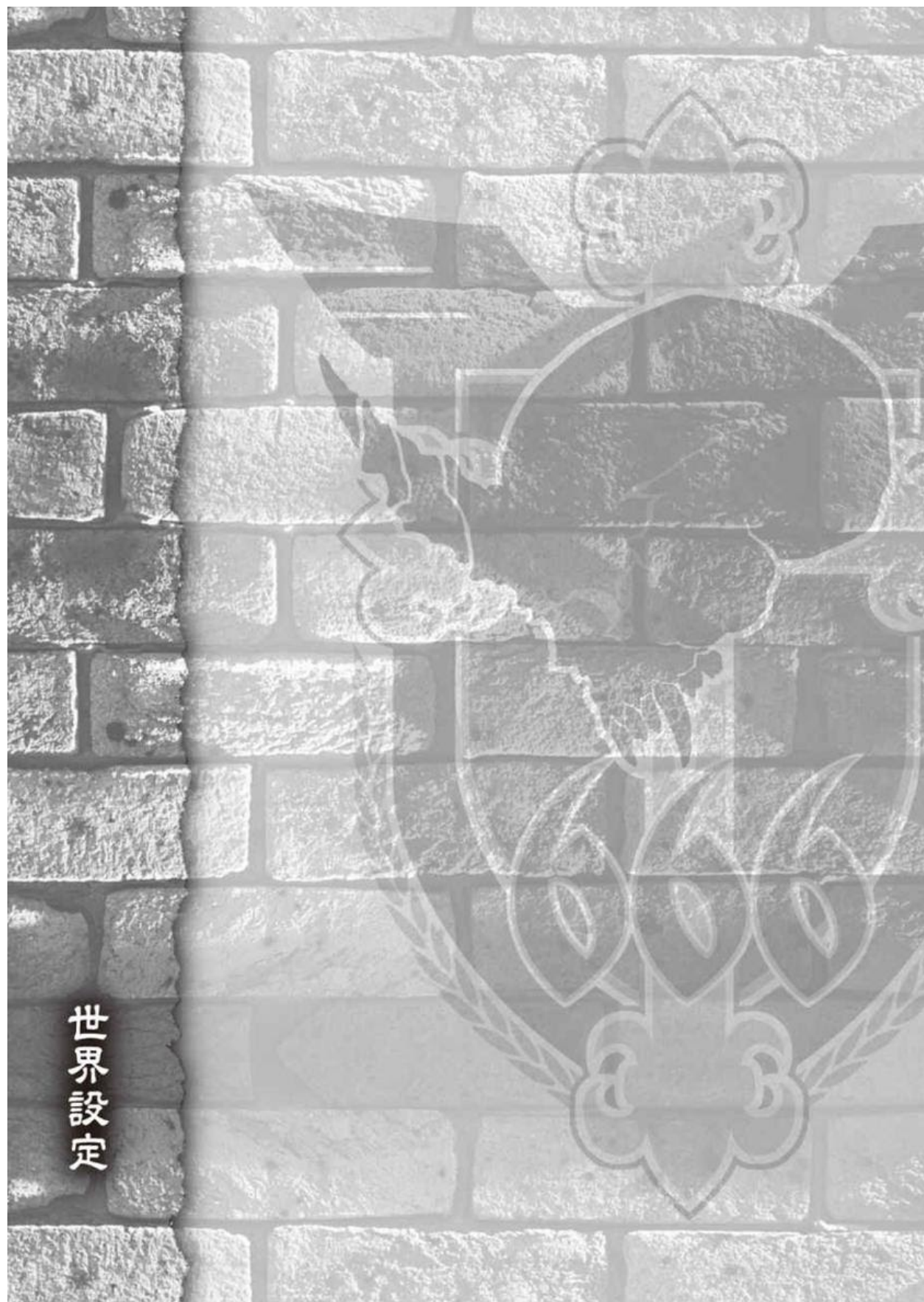
"Thank you for your kind words."

Heinz Axmann, an intelligence officer at the Central Reconnaissance and Control Bureau, which is in charge of foreign intelligence within the Stasi, replied with a tight-lipped smile.

"All you have to do is ask, and I'll show you the results without delay."

This work is a revised version of "Schwarzesmarken: Bernhard in Shadow" which appeared in the December 2005 to March 2006 issues of TECH GIAN.

世界設定



World Setting

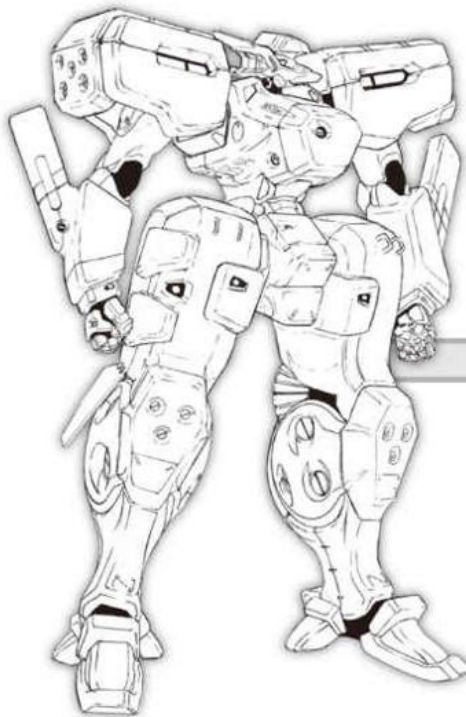
東ドイツ初の戦術機開発への道

東ドイツ・国家人民軍による戦術機運用は複雑な過程を辿った。

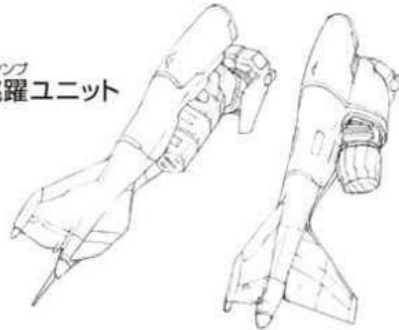
BETAが地球への侵攻を開始した1973年4月、東ドイツは戦術機の開発・運用に殆ど関与していなかった。後にTトファントムとなる宇宙戦用の大型MMUの改良型がアメリカで開発されていることはソ連からの情報で把握していたものの、この時点で軍の装備調達はソ連の監督下であり、独自の戦術機開発は不可能で、またその必要性も認められていなかった。しかし、この認識は地球における対BETA戦の拡大と、ソ連とアメリカによる戦術機の実戦投入およびその成果で変化していった。

1974年、東ドイツは自国への戦術機導入を図るため、T委員会を編制。技術習得のため多数の留学生とともにソ連に送り出した。これは東ドイツ独自の動きであったが、本土決戦の最中で政治的に混乱していたソ連にこれを咎めることはできなかった。

1975年、東ドイツはソ連からの供与のかたちで戦術機を受領、戦術機部隊の編制を開始した。しかし、戦術機をどのように用いるか——ドクトリンについては論争が続き、その決断はウクライナでの戦いの成果に委ねられることになった。



ジャンプ
跳躍ユニット



F-4R ファントム

アメリカが開発した人類初の戦術機、F-4ファントムのソ連への供与バージョン。寒冷地用の改修が行われている。対BETA戦初期におけるソ連軍の主力戦術機として活躍したが、近接格闘能力の不足により、無為に消耗を重ねることも多かった。東欧諸国への配備は1975年以降となったが、これはソ連がアメリカの兵器であるF-4Rの東欧配備に政治的な懸念を感じたことが原因と言われている。

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> 跳躍(ジャンプ)ユニット

The Road to the Development of East Germany's First Tactical Surface Fighter

The operation of Tactical Surface Fighters by East Germany's National People's Army was a complicated process.

When BETA began its invasion of Earth in April 1973, East Germany had little involvement in the development and operation of TSFs. Although it was aware from Soviet intelligence that an improved version of the large MMU for space combat, which would later become the F-4 Phantom, was being developed in the U.S., at this point military equipment procurement was under Soviet supervision, and independent development of TSFs was not possible, nor was the need for it recognized. However, this perception changed with the expansion of anti-BETA warfare on Earth and the fielding of TSFs by the Soviet Union and the U.S., and their results.

In 1974, East Germany formed the T Committee in order to introduce TSFs to its own country, and sent a large number of foreign students to the Soviet Union to learn the technology. This was a unique move by East Germany, that the Soviet Union, which was in the midst of a decisive battle on the mainland and was in political turmoil, could not respond to.

In 1975, East Germany received TSFs from the Soviet Union and began to form a TSF unit. However, controversy continued over how to use the TSF - doctrine - and the decision was left to the outcome of the battle in Ukraine.

F-4R Phantom

A version of the F-4 Phantom, the first TSF developed by the United States and supplied to the Soviet Union. It has been modified for cold weather. It served as the main TSF of the Soviet Union in the early stages of the war against BETA, but due to its lack of close combat capability, it was often wasted in vain. The MiG-21 Balalaika was not deployed to Eastern European countries until 1975, but this is said to have been due to the Soviet Union's political concerns about the deployment of the F-4R, an American weapon, in Eastern Europe.

> Jump Unit

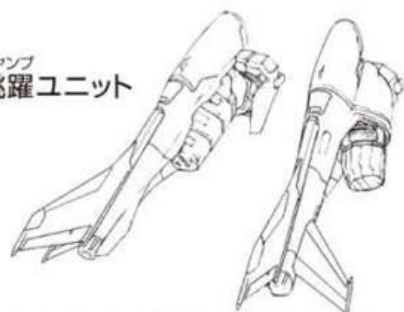
MiG-21 バラライカ

ソ連が開発したF-4Rの改良型。
ソ連が独自に開発した最初の戦術機
で、生産の^{フアントム}パテントもソ連が保有し
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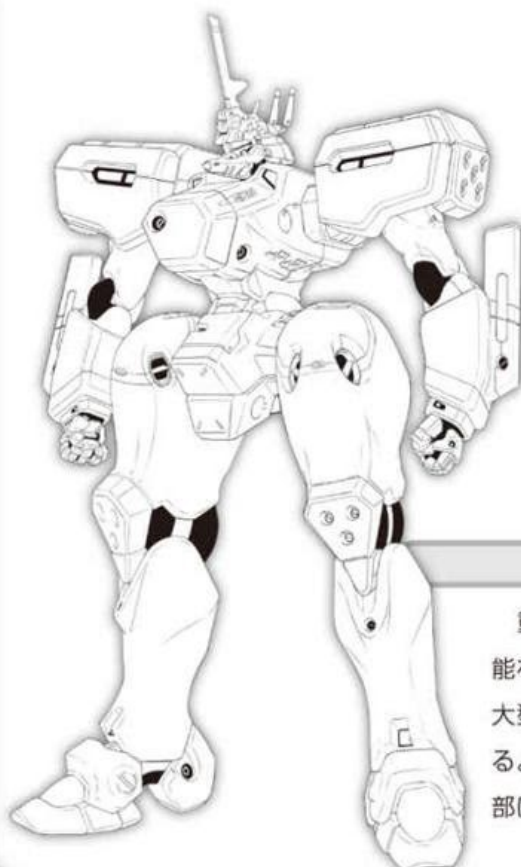
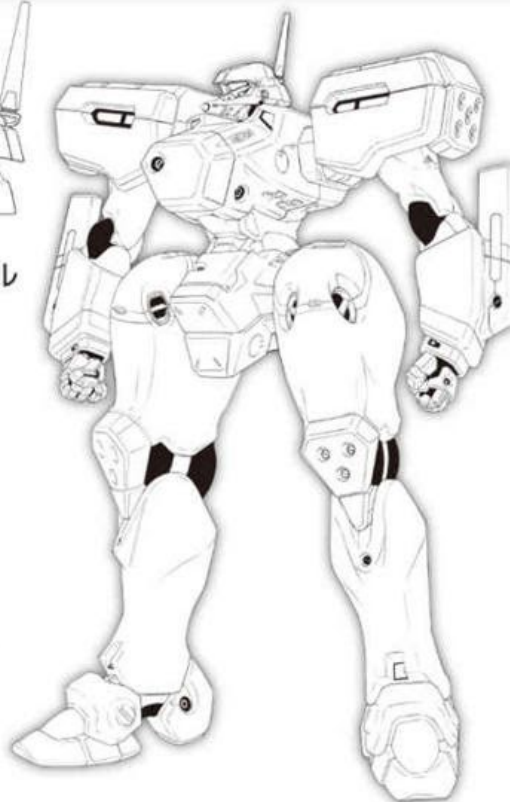


頭部
モジュール

ジャンプ
跳躍ユニット



戦術機の高い機動性は、腰部に接続された
2基の^{ジャンプ}跳躍ユニットによってもたらされる。



頭部
モジュール

MiG-21P バラライカ

重金属雲下での使用を考慮し、通信・索敵機
能を強化した試作機。^{バラライカ}ベースのMiG-21に比べ、
大型で高出力のセンサーマストが搭載されてい
る。1号機はフラミンゴレッドに塗装され、肩
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ソ連が開発したF-4R(ファントム)の改良型。ソ連が独自に開発した最初の戦術機で、生産のпатентもソ連が保有している。F-4R(ファントム)より、機動力が向上している。

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> 頭部 (モジュール)

> 跳躍(ジャンプ)ユニット

> 戦術機の高い機動性は、腰部に接続された2基の跳躍(ジャンプ)ユニットによってもたらされる。

MiG-21 Balalaika

An improved version of the F-4R (Phantom) developed by the Soviet Union. The MiG-21 was the first TSF developed independently by the Soviet Union, and the Soviet Union holds the patent for its production.

MiG-21P Balalaika

The MiG-21P Balalaika is a prototype with enhanced communication and reconnaissance capabilities designed for use in heavy metal clouds. Compared to the base MiG-21 (Balalaika), the MiG-21P is equipped with a larger and more powerful sensor mast, and the first model is painted flamingo red with a red star on its shoulder.

> Head (Module)

> Jump Unit

> The high maneuverability of the tactical machine is provided by the two jump units connected to the waist.

After Word

It's nice to meet you, and it's been a while since I've seen you.

I'm Hiroki Uchida.

Thank you very much for taking a look at "Schwarzesmarken: Bernhard in Shadow 2" this time.

So here it is, the second volume of "Shadow". I hope you enjoyed it.

To be honest, I don't know what to write in the afterword.

The reason for this is, as I'm writing this (end of December, 2005), the anime "Schwarzesmarken" is about to air, and I think it's because I'm fidgeting with it.

By the time this goes on sale at the end of January, the third episode will have already aired, and I'm excited to see what everyone who has seen the anime has to say about it.

Uchida also participated in the scenario and art meetings for the anime from the beginning of the project, and he really learned a lot, and some of the knowledge he gained is reflected in "Shadow".

By the way, if you are thinking "I want to hear more of the voice actors' voices! or "I want to know more about the setting!" , you should definitely play the first part of the game version "Schwarzesmarken: Crest of Red Blood", which was released at the end of November.

When I observed the recording of the anime, I felt that the voice actors' passionate performances were truly amazing, and when their voices were added, the characters finally had a "soul" and started to move as living human beings. I was often reminded that this is how the character was in many cases!

It's a bit of a boring talk, but I hope you can look forward to the future development of "Schwarzesmarken", whether it's the anime, the game, or the novel.

Oh, as for this "Shadow 2", I had an unusual amount of fun writing the scene where Beatrix is verbally abusing Jürgen.

I would like to thank everyone who helped me write this story.

We would like to thank CARNELIAN for the original illustrations and Aru Mimizuku for the illustrations. Thank you very much for the many illustrations this time! Iris Dina and Beatrix in their younger days are both cute and charming! I look forward to working with you on the game as well!

The original author, Mr. Kouki Yoshimune. Thank you very much for your supervision this time. We look forward to working with you again in the future.

I'd also like to thank Mr. Hatano and Mr. Hiki of the Tech Gian editorial department, Mr. Kawazaki and Mr. Totsuka of the Famitsu Bunko editorial department, and all of the Age staff for their help.

As for the internal situation of the East German army, which often appears in this film (in the world of the main story), I would like to express my gratitude to Mr. De Jay in Berlin, Germany, and Mr. Opechan in Warsaw, Poland, who are Japanese entertainment fans, for their advice. I would like to express my gratitude here.

While "Schwarzesmarken" is gaining momentum with the anime, "Shadow" will also be moving on to the "Palaiologos" operation chapter that will decide the fate of humanity from the next volume. Due to the development of the story, it may become a more heartbreaking story than before, so Uchida is looking forward to writing it Mmm-hmm! And he is going to be very enthusiastic about it.

See you in the next volume!

One day in December, 2005 Hiroki Uchida

Original work

Kouki Yoshimune (Age)

Representative of the PC game brand Age. He was in charge of planning and drafting for the "Kimi ga Nozomu Eien" and "Muv-Luv" series. He was also in charge of scenario and tactical machine design for "Muv-Luv Alternative" and "Muv-Luv Alternative Total Eclipse". He also designed the mecha for "Schwarzesmarken".

Text

Hiroki Uchida

Hiroki Uchida made his debut in 2004 with the virtual war story "The Glory of the Phantom Wings" (YURAKU PUBLISHING CO., LTD.). Since the 2000s, he has been working on works that combine moe and military, such as the "Schwarzesmarken" series (original work: Kouki Yoshimune) and "Fleet KanColle" (original work: "KanColle").

Illustration

Owl Mimizuku

Owl Mimizuku is an original artist belonging to ARIDESIGN, a company headed by Mr. CARNELIAN. He is in charge of the original drawings for "Bernhard in Shadow" and "Schwarzesmarken". In the past, he has also done original art for "FANATICA" and "Silver Eclipse".

Translator Notes

(1): **Red One**: (紅一点 or kōitten) is A metaphor for one thing that stands out among many like it. It's used nowadays especially to denote the only woman among many men. It is originally a phrase from a poem titled "Ode to a Pomegranate Tree" or (咏石榴詩) by written by Wang Anshi, a literary figure from the 11th century Northern Song Dynasty in China.

The song is about a tree with one pomegranate flower on its branch. It argues that It is not necessary to have a lot of spring colors. A little red or the red one refers to the pomegranate flower. Spring color refers to the scenery. The picture becomes lively and beautiful when a red flower is embellished on the background of rich green; the beauty and preciousness of pomegranate does not lie in its thousands of red and enchanting colors, but in the fact that the leaves are sparse and few, while the flower becomes more and more vivid and charming.

(2): **Germany** is bordered by Poland to the east, and **Belarus** is the same for Poland, also to the east. Minsk is the capital and the largest city of Belarus, located on the Svislach river and the now subterranean Niamiha rivers. Belarus shares a border with five countries: Poland in the west, Lithuania in the northwest, Latvia and the Russian Federation in the north, the Russian Federation in the northeast and east, Ukraine in the south.

(3): **War and Peace** is regarded as one of Tolstoy's finest literary achievements and remains an internationally praised classic of world literature. The novel chronicles the French invasion of Russia and the impact of the Napoleonic era on **Tsarist** society through the stories of five Russian aristocratic families. **Tsarist autocracy**, also called Tsarism, was a form of autocracy (later regarded as absolute monarchy) specific to the Grand Duchy of Moscow and its successor states the Tsardom of Russia and Russian Empire. In it, the Tsar possessed in principle authority and wealth, with more power than constitutional monarchs counterbalanced by a legislative authority, as well as more religious authority than Western monarchs. The institution originated during the time of Ivan III (1462–1505), and was abolished after the Russian Revolution of 1905.

(4): **Sokoku or 祖国** implies motherland; fatherland; and native country. I have deliberated over which term to use, and learned some interesting concepts. **Motherland** usually implies one's birth place or cultural identity, while **Fatherland** can be viewed as a nationalist concept, to evoke a sense of emotions related to national identity and patriotism. Historically, German government propaganda used its appeal to nationalism when making references to Germany and the state.

In German, the word became more prominent in the 19th century. It appears in numerous patriotic songs and poems, such as Hoffmann's song Lied der Deutschen which became the national anthem in 1922. Because of the use of Vaterland in Nazi-German war propaganda, the term "**Fatherland**" in English has become associated with domestic British and American anti-Nazi propaganda during World War II. This is not the case in Germany itself, where the word remains used in the usual patriotic contexts. So with all of this in mind, I will be using Fatherland from here forward.

(5): **Socialist Camp or The third camp**, also known as third camp socialism or third camp Trotskyism, is a branch of socialism that aims to oppose both capitalism and Stalinism by supporting the organised

working class as a "third camp". The term arose early during World War II and refers to the idea of two "imperialist camps" competing to dominate the world: one led by the United Kingdom and France and supported by the United States; and the other led by Nazi Germany and supported by Fascist Italy.

(6): The **Ural Mountains** or simply the Urals, are a mountain range that runs approximately from north to south through western Russia, from the coast of the Arctic Ocean to the river Ural and northwestern Kazakhstan. The mountain range forms part of the conventional boundary between the regions of Europe and Asia. From the 13th century, in Bashkortostan there has been a legend about a hero named Ural who sacrificed his life for the sake of his people who then poured a stone pile over his grave, which later turned into the Ural Mountains (Stone Belt Mountains in Russian).

(7): **The Moscow Kremlin**, or simply the Kremlin, is a fortified complex in the center of Moscow founded by the Russian ruling dynasty of Rurikids noble lineage. It is the best known of the kremlins (Russian citadels), and includes five palaces, four cathedrals, and the enclosing Kremlin Wall with Kremlin towers. In addition, within this complex is the **Grand Kremlin Palace** that was formerly the Tsar (Monarch)'s Moscow residence. The complex now serves as the official residence of the President of the Russian Federation and as a museum with almost 3 million visitors in 2017. The Kremlin overlooks the Moskva River to the south, Saint Basil's Cathedral and Red Square to the east, and the Alexander Garden to the west.

(8): **Kubinka** is a real air base in Moscow Oblast, Russia, located 5 km (3.1 mi) northwest of Kubinka. In close proximity to Moscow, the Kubinka facility showcases the best of the Russian Air Force to the general public.

(9): **Red Square** is one of the oldest and largest squares in Moscow, the capital of Russia. Owing to its historical significance and the adjacent historical buildings, it is regarded as one of the most famous squares in Europe and the world. It is located in Moscow's historic centre, in the eastern walls of the Kremlin. It is the city landmark of Moscow, with iconic buildings such as Saint Basil's Cathedral, Lenin's Mausoleum and the GUM. In addition, it has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1990.

(10): **Manned Maneuvering Unit**, often shortened to MMU, is a large bipedal machine, often used for heavy construction work involving orbital/surface ships and assets in sub-1G gravity conditions. Its basic frame and design would be used for the development of the Hardiman Feedback Protector during the 1967 Lunar War.

(11): **Extravehicular activity (EVA)** is any activity done by an astronaut or cosmonaut outside a spacecraft beyond the Earth's appreciable atmosphere. Normally, the term applies to what has been termed a spacewalk outside a craft that is orbiting Earth (such as the International Space Station). However EVA also applies to lunar surface exploration (commonly known as a moonwalk), as performed by six pairs of American astronauts in the Apollo program from 1969 to 1972. A Stand-up EVA (SEVA) is when an astronaut does not fully leave a spacecraft, but is completely reliant on the spacesuit for environmental support. Its name derives from the astronaut "standing up" in the open hatch, usually to record or assist a spacewalking astronaut. The Soviet Union/Russia, the United States, Canada, the European Space Agency and China have all conducted EVAs.

(12): The **Volga Germans** (German: Wolgadeutsche or Russlanddeutsche - a more generic term for all Russian Germans-), are ethnic Germans who settled and historically lived along the Volga River in the region of southeastern European Russia around Saratov and to the south. Recruited as immigrants to Russia in the 18th century, they were allowed to maintain their German culture, language, traditions and churches (Lutheran, Reformed, Catholics, Moravians and Mennonites). After the German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 during World War II, the Soviet government considered the Volga Germans potential collaborators, and deported many of them eastward, where thousands died. After the war, the Soviet Union expelled a moderate number of ethnic Germans to the West. In the late 1980s and 1990s, many of the remaining ethnic Germans moved from the Soviet Union to Germany.

(13): **Nuclear winter** is a severe and prolonged global climatic cooling effect that is hypothesized to occur after widespread firestorms following a large-scale nuclear war. The hypothesis is based on the fact that such fires can inject soot into the stratosphere, where it can block some direct sunlight from reaching the surface of the Earth. It is speculated that the resulting cooling would lead to widespread crop failure and famine. When developing computer models of nuclear-winter scenarios, researchers use the conventional bombing of Hamburg, and the Hiroshima firestorm in World War II as example cases where soot might have been injected into the stratosphere, alongside modern observations of natural, large-area wildfire-firestorms.

(14): **Chernozem** (from Russian "black ground") is a black-colored soil containing a high percentage of humus (4% to 16%) and high percentages of phosphoric acids, phosphorus, and ammonia. Chernozem is very fertile and can produce high agricultural yields with its high moisture storage capacity. The name comes from the Russian terms for black and soil, earth or land (chorny + zemlya). The soil, rich in organic matter presenting a black color, was first identified by Russian geologist Vasily Dokuchaev in 1883 in the tallgrass steppe or prairie of European Russia.

Chernozems cover about 230 million hectares of land. There are two "chernozem belts" in the world. One is the **Eurasian** steppe which extends from eastern Croatia (Slavonia), along the Danube (northern Serbia, northern Bulgaria (Danubian Plain), southern and eastern Romania (Wallachian Plain and Moldavian Plain), and Moldova), to northeast Ukraine across the Central Black Earth Region of Central Russia, southern Russia into Siberia. The other stretches from the **Canadian** Prairies in Manitoba through the Great Plains of the US as far south as Kansas. Similar soil types occur in Texas and Hungary. Chernozem layer thickness may vary widely, from several centimetres up to 1.5 metres (60 inches) in Ukraine, as well as the Red River Valley region in the Northern US and Canada (location of the prehistoric Lake Agassiz).

The terrain can also be found in small quantities elsewhere (for example, on 1% of Poland). It also exists in Northeast China, near Harbin. The only true chernozem in Australia is located around Nimmitabel, with some of the richest soils in the nation.

Chernozems are also a Reference Soil Group of the World Reference Base for Soil Resources (WRB).

(15): The **breadbasket** of a country or of a region is an area which, because of the richness of the soil and/or advantageous climate, produces large quantities of wheat or other grain. Rice bowl is a similar term used to refer to Southeast Asia; and California's Salinas Valley is sometimes referred to as America's salad bowl. Such regions may be the subject of fierce political disputes which may even escalate into full

military conflicts. Breadbaskets have become important within the global food system: concentrating global food-production in a small number of countries, and (in countries such as India) in small geographic regions.

(16): The **autonomous regions** are the highest-level administrative division of China. Like Chinese provinces, an autonomous region has its own local government, but under Chinese law an autonomous region has more legislative rights, such as the right to "formulate self-government regulations and other separate regulations." An autonomous region is the highest level of minority autonomous entity in China, which has a comparably higher population of a particular minority ethnic group. Autonomous regions in China have no legal right to secede, unlike in the Soviet Union - the Law of the People's Republic of China on Regional Ethnic Autonomy, written in 1984, states that "each and every ethnic autonomous region is an inseparable part of the People's Republic of China," and that "any form of separatism is absolutely prohibited."

(17): In a **capitalist economy**, the market determines prices through the **laws of supply and demand**. For example, when demand for coffee increases, a profit-seeking business will boost prices to increase its profit. If at the same time, society's appetite for tea diminishes, growers will face lower prices and aggregate production will decline. In the long run, some suppliers may even exit the business. Because consumers and suppliers negotiate a new "market-clearing price" for these goods, the quantity produced more or less matches the public's needs. Under a true **socialist** system, it's the **government's role** to determine output and pricing levels. The challenge is synchronizing these decisions with the needs of consumers. Socialist economists such as Oskar Lange have argued that, by responding to inventory levels, central planners can avoid major production inefficiencies. So when stores experience a surplus of tea, it signals the need to cut prices, and vice versa.

One of the critiques of socialism is that, even if government officials can adjust prices, the lack of competition between different producers reduces the incentive to do so. Opponents also suggest that public control of production necessarily creates an unwieldy, inefficient bureaucracy. The same central planning committee could, in theory, be in charge of pricing thousands of products, making it extremely difficult to react to market cues promptly. Furthermore, the concentration of power within the government can create an environment where political motivations override the basic needs of the people. Indeed, at the same time the Soviet Union was diverting vast resources to build up its military capability, its residents often had trouble attaining a variety of goods, including food, soap, and even television sets. More on the subject of today's socialist economy [here](#).

(18): The **KGB** (Russian tr. Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti, or the Committee for State Security, was the main security agency for the Soviet Union from 13 March 1954 until 3 December 1991. As a direct successor of preceding agencies such as the Cheka, GPU, OGPU, NKGB, NKVD and MGB, it was attached to the Council of Ministers. It was the chief government agency of "union-republican jurisdiction", carrying out internal security, intelligence and secret police functions. Similar agencies operated in each of the republics of the Soviet Union aside from the Russian SFSR, with many associated ministries, state committees and state commissions.

(19): **Saint Ursula** (Latin for 'little female bear') is a legendary Romano-British Christian saint who died on 21 October 383. There is little information about her and the anonymous group of holy virgins who

accompanied and, on an uncertain date, were killed along with her at Cologne, Germany. Her legendary status comes from a medieval story, in which she was a princess who, at the request of her father King Dionotus of Dumnonia in south-west Britain, set sail along with 11,000 virginal handmaidens to join her future husband, the pagan governor Conan Meriadoc of Armorica. After a miraculous storm brought them over the sea in a single day to a Gaulish port, Ursula declared that before her marriage she would undertake a pan-European pilgrimage. She headed for Rome with her followers and persuaded the Pope, Cyriacus, and Sulpicius, bishop of Ravenna, to join them. After setting out for Cologne, which was being besieged by Huns, all the virgins were beheaded in a massacre. The Huns' leader fatally shot Ursula with an arrow in about 383 AD (the date varies). Ursula is the patron of the Order of St. Ursula (Ursulines), a congregation of nuns dedicated to educating girls.

(20): The **Mil Mi-24** (NATO reporting name: **Hind**) is a large helicopter gunship, attack helicopter and low-capacity troop transport with room for eight passengers. It is produced by Mil Moscow Helicopter Plant and has been operated since 1972 by the Soviet Air Force and its successors, along with 48 other nations. In NATO circles, the export versions, Mi-25 and Mi-35, are denoted with a letter suffix as "Hind D" and "Hind E". Soviet pilots called the Mi-24 the "flying tank", a term used historically with the famous World War II Soviet Il-2 Shturmovik armored ground attack aircraft. More common unofficial nicknames were "Galina" (or "Galya"), "**Krakadir/Crocodile**", due to the helicopter's camouflage scheme, and "Drinking Glass", because of the flat glass plates that surround earlier Mi-24 variants' cockpits.

(21): 同属嫌悪 - **dōzokuken-o** means disliking people similar to oneself. It's a Japanese nuanced expression that implies hating people of the same character. Another expression with the same pronunciation but with different kanji 同族嫌悪 but this one is often used for members of the same family or relatives. The one Vikman used 同属嫌悪 can be used for a wider range of people, such as friends, lovers, colleagues in the same department, team mates and classmates.

(22): **Balalaika** is a traditional Russian instrument with a wooden triangle-shaped body and three (or rarely six or four) strings. It is sometimes called a "Russian three-string guitar." The word balalaika is similar to the Russian words "балакать," "балаболить" and "балабонить" meaning "babble" or "jabber." This connection not only underlines the folk origins of the balalaika but also uncovers its essence as an easy and fun instrument with a sonorous but soft and even tender voice.

(23): The **Russian-German War** lasted from the German invasion of 22 June 1941 until 8 May 1945 and is often known by its Russian name as the "Great Fatherland (or 'Patriotic') War" (Velikaia Otechestvennaia voina). It was the largest military campaign ever fought, and the most costly in terms of human life. The outcome determined German defeat in World War II. Unlike many other campaigns of the war, it was primarily a land conflict, although an advanced one at a technical level. Another distinguishing feature was that one of the two major powers involved suffered prolonged occupation of much of its territory by the other, and so occupation policy and popular resistance to it (the "partisan" war) were significant dimensions. Related to this was the importance of ideology, which meant that many of the normal restraints of modern interstate warfare were ignored.

(24): **The Caspian Sea** (also known as Mazandaran Sea, Hyrcania Sea, Tatarstan Sea or Khazar Sea) is the world's largest inland body of water, variously classed as the world's largest **lake** or a full-fledged sea.

An endorheic basin, it lies between Europe and Asia; east of the Caucasus, west of the broad steppe of Central Asia, south of the fertile plains of Southern Russia in Eastern Europe, and north of the mountainous Iranian Plateau of Western Asia. It covers 371,000 km² (143,000 sq mi) (excluding the highly saline lagoon of Garabogazköl to its east) and a volume of 78,200 km³ (19,000 cu mi). It is bounded by Kazakhstan from mid-north to mid-east, Russia from mid-north to mid-west, Azerbaijan to the southwest, Iran to the south and adjacent corners, and Turkmenistan along southern parts of its eastern coast.

(25): **Nizhny Novgorod**, colloquially shortened to Nizhny, and was known as **Gorky** between 1932 and 1990, is the administrative centre of Nizhny Novgorod Oblast and the Volga Federal District. The city is located at the confluence of the Oka and the Volga rivers in Central Russia, with a population of over 1.2 million residents. Nizhny Novgorod is the sixth-largest city in Russia, the second-most populous city on the Volga, as well as the Volga Federal District. It is an important economic, transportation, scientific, educational and cultural center in Russia and the vast Volga-Vyatka economic region, and is the main center of river tourism in Russia. In the historic part of the city there are many universities, theaters, museums and churches. During the Soviet period, the city turned into an important industrial center. In particular, the Gorky Automobile Plant was constructed in this period. Then the city was given the nickname "Russian Detroit". During World War II, Gorky became the biggest provider of military equipment to the Eastern Front. Due to this, the Luftwaffe constantly bombed the city from the air. The majority of the German bombs fell in the area of the Gorky Automobile Plant.

(26): **The operational manoeuvre group (OMG)** was a Soviet Army organisational manoeuvre warfare concept created during the early 1950s to replace the cavalry mechanized group which performed the deep operations on the Eastern Front during the Second World War. The deep operations theory developed in cooperation between the Red Army and Wehrmacht theorists in the 1930s later influenced the Blitzkrieg operations and echelon-based doctrine. In the Soviet Army doctrine the Operational Manoeuvre Groups would be inserted to exploit a breakthrough by a Front during a potential war against NATO in Europe. After the motor-rifle units, heavily supported by artillery, helicopters and close air support aircraft would have broken NATO front, the operational manoeuvre groups would be inserted to exploit the breakthrough using elements of, or whole tank armies. At the Front level an Operational Manoeuvre Group could include two tank divisions and three to five motor-rifle divisions.

(27): An **echelon formation** is a (usually military) formation in which its units are arranged diagonally. Each unit is stationed behind and to the right (a "right echelon"), or behind and to the left ("left echelon"), of the unit ahead. The name of the formation comes from the French word *échelon*, meaning a rung of a **ladder**, which describes the shape that this formation has when viewed from above or below. The tactic still persists and is regularly employed by all branches of the modern armed forces. Tactically, echelon formations are used because of the excellent range of vision offered to each participant in the formation. In particular, it is commonly employed by armored cavalry because of the large, overlapping fields of fire that it gives to each tank in the formation, and by combat aircraft, allowing them to communicate visually and maneuver as a single unit.



(28): An airborne early warning and control (AEW&C) system is an airborne radar system designed to detect aircraft, ships, vehicles, missiles, and other incoming projectiles at long ranges and perform command and control of the battlespace in an air engagement by directing fighter and attack aircraft strikes. AEW&C units are also used to carry out surveillance, including over ground targets and frequently perform BMC2 (battle management command and control). When used at altitude, the radar on the aircraft allows the operators to detect and track targets and distinguish between friendly and hostile aircraft much farther away than a similar ground-based radar. Like a ground-based radar, it can be detected by opposing forces, but because of its mobility and extended sensor range, it is much less vulnerable to counter-attacks. **AWACS** (Airborne Warning and Control System) is the name of the specific system installed in the E-3 and Japanese Boeing E-767 AEW&C airframes, but is often used as a general synonym for AEW&C.

(29): **Suzerainty** is a relationship in which one state or other polity controls the foreign policy and relations of a tributary state, while allowing the tributary state to have internal autonomy. The dominant state is called the "**suzerain**". Suzerainty differs from sovereignty in that the tributary state is technically independent, but enjoys only limited self-rule. Although the situation has existed in a number of historical empires, it is considered difficult to reconcile with 20th- or 21st-century concepts of international law, in which sovereignty is a binary which either exists or does not. While a sovereign state can agree by treaty to become a protectorate of a stronger power, modern international law does not recognise any way of making this relationship compulsory on the weaker power. Suzerainty is a practical, de facto situation, rather than a legal, de jure one.

(30): **Merchants of death** was an epithet used in the U.S. in the 1930s to attack industries and banks that had supplied and funded World War I (then called the Great War). The term originated in 1932 as the title of an article about an arms dealer named Basil Zaharoff: "Zaharoff, Merchant of Death". It was then borrowed for the title of the book *Merchants of Death* (1934), an exposé by H. C. Engelbrecht and F. C. Hanighen.

(31): **内容が内容** - *naiyō ga naiyō* da or the insides/content are the insides/content, is a use of "emphasis" through repetition of a noun, and by reduplicating the "content", the expression emphasizes

the importance of that "content". For example, 歩きに歩いた or aruki ni aruita means that person walked a lot, but literally it's written as walked to walk. Or 病気が病気だ/ byōki ga byōki da, the disease is the disease, emphasizing it's a difficult disease or a hard to treat disease.

(32): **Sorbs** are a West Slavic ethnic group predominantly inhabiting Lusatia, a region divided between Germany and Poland. Sorbs traditionally speak the Sorbian language, which are closely related to Polish, Kashubian, Czech, Silesian, and Slovak. Sorbian is an officially recognized minority language in Germany. Sorbs are genetically closest to the Poles and Czechs. Under German rule in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, policies were implemented in an effort to Germanize the Sorbs. These policies reached their climax under the Nazi regime, who denied the existence of the Sorbs as a distinct Slavic people by referring to them as "Sorbian-speaking Germans", and persecuted them fiercely. Due to a gradual and increasing assimilation between the 17th and 20th centuries, virtually all Sorbs also spoke German by the early 20th century and many of the current generations no longer speak the Sorbian language. The community is divided religiously between Roman Catholicism (the majority) and Lutheranism. The former Minister President of Saxony, Stanislaw Tillich, is of Sorbian origin.

(33): **Mecca** is generally considered "the fountainhead and cradle of Islam". It also is reputedly the birthplace of the Islamic prophet Muhammad. It is one of the religion's holy sites and the sole direction of prayer for all religious practitioners, and Muslims travel from around the world visit the city of Mecca for holy pilgrimages as an obligation upon every muslim. Jürgen is making a nod to a place of similar popularity and significance.

(34): **Grünheide** is a municipality in the Oder-Spree District, in Brandenburg, Germany. It is situated 30 kilometres south-east of Berlin city centre, on the River Löcknitz. In 2020 Tesla, Inc. began to build Gigafactory Berlin-Brandenburg in Grünheide near the Autobahn A10 (federal controlled-access highway system in Germany). The name "Grünheide" is a compound of grün (green) and Heide (heath)

(35): An **airport Apron** is like an Airport Ramp. The terms are used interchangeably, but "ramp" is used more frequently in casual conversation among airport employees, even though "apron" is technically the correct term. In general aviation, they refer to the part of the airfield where ground vehicles and aircraft share the same space, as opposed to the taxiway or the runway, which is for aircraft only. It's where aircraft are parked, loaded and unloaded, and serviced. The term "ramp" dates back to the days of seaplanes, when there was an actual ramp going down to the water. The "apron" got its name from its original shape, which was sort of like a baseball field, and allowed aircraft to perform multi-point turns to get facing the right way.

(36): In aviation, a **touch-and-go landing** (TGL) or circuit is a maneuver that is common when learning to fly a fixed-wing aircraft. It involves landing on a runway and taking off again without coming to a full stop. Usually the pilot then circles the airport in a defined pattern known as a circuit and repeats the maneuver. This allows many landings to be practiced in a short time. If the pilot brings the aircraft to a full stop before taking off again, it is known as a "stop-and-go". If the aircraft's wheels do not touch the ground, it is known as a "low pass". Both a touch-and-go landing and a low pass are types of go-around. An unplanned touch-and-go landing is also called a "rejected landing" or "balked landing". Touch-and-go landings can perform a crucial safety role when a plane lands with not enough space to come to a

complete stop, but has enough space to accelerate and take off again. In British parlance, the maneuver is often called circuits and bumps.

(37): **水を向けた** or **mizuwomuketa**: To direct water. The literal meaning is directing water, but the implied meaning is To offer water to the spirits. In particular, when a miko (shrine maiden) invokes the spirits, water is directed to them. So it has become an expression that leads to the meaning of turning around the subject and convincing the other person to start talking about something, or encourages paying attention. It can also imply that someone is fishing for information from another party.

(38): **Strichtarn** (English: Line Camouflage) was a military camouflage pattern developed in East Germany and used from 1965 to 1990. The Strichtarn was adopted by East Germany in 1965 in service with the National People's Army to replace the Flächentarn, which was adopted in 1958. In East German service, it was known as "Kampfanzug 64" (English: Combat Suit 64). Strichtarn was designed with broken vertical red-brown lines on a grey-green field, which was also known as the **raindrop pattern**. The patterns made for the Strichtarn consisted of Type 1, which was made from 1965 to 1967. The Type 2 was made from 1967 to 1990.

(39): **針の筵** or **hari no mushiro**, written with the kanji for needle and the kanji for straw mat, literally means a straw mat of needles. A "**needle in a straw mat**" is a metaphor for not being able to rest for a moment because of the criticism around you. That kind of painful place or circumstances, is just like sitting on a mat with sharp needles. In the book "Seken manbyo kaishun" (A collection of funny stories), there is a passage that says, "If you decide to push your husband to do something, you will not be at ease for a while, just as if you were sitting on a bed of needles."

(40): **Russian jokes** (Russian: анекдоты, romanized: anekdoty, lit. '**anecdotes**') are short fictional stories or dialogs with a punch line, which commonly appear in Russian humor. Russian joke culture includes a series of categories with fixed settings and characters. Russian jokes treat topics found everywhere in the world, including sex, politics, spousal relations, or mothers-in-law. Every category has numerous untranslatable jokes that rely on linguistic puns, wordplay, and the Russian language vocabulary of foul language. Russian political jokes are a part of Russian humour and can be grouped into the major time periods: Imperial Russia, Soviet Union and finally post-Soviet Russia. In the Soviet period political jokes were a form of social protest, mocking and criticizing leaders, the system and its ideology, myths and rites. Quite a few political themes can be found among other standard categories of Russian jokes, most notably Rabinovich jokes and Radio Yerevan.

(41): **The Deutsche Mark** "German mark", abbreviated "DM" or "D-Mark" was the official currency of West Germany from 1948 until 1990 and later the unified Germany from 1990 until the adoption of the euro in 2002. In English, it is commonly called the "Deutschmark", this expression is unknown in Germany. The Germans usually called it D-Mark when referring to the currency, and Mark when talking about individual sums. One Deutsche Mark was divided into 100 pfennigs.

(42): If you still didn't get it, Allow me to explain a few things about the **Inner German Border**, not to be confused with the **Berlin Wall**. The Berlin Wall was a guarded concrete barrier that physically and ideologically divided Berlin from 1961 to 1989, constructed by the GDR themselves, While the inner German border was a heavy fortified frontier made of interlocking systems and security zones. The border

was 1,393 kilometres (866 miles) long and ran from the Baltic Sea to Czechoslovakia, and to escape it, you would need to pass by guard towers, bunkers, and dogs, in addition to multiple parallel rows of fences, each up to several meters high, with minefields in between. All of this was constructed to stop the large-scale emigration of East German citizens to the West. The guard is arguing that if he was alone, he would have passed to west germany, as anti personnel mines were the last line of the defense in the outer borders.

(43): **Flak towers** were large, above-ground, anti-aircraft gun blockhouse towers constructed by Nazi Germany. There were 8 flak tower complexes in the cities of Berlin (3), Hamburg (2), and Vienna (3) from 1940 onwards. Other cities that used flak towers included Stuttgart and Frankfurt. Smaller single-purpose flak towers were built at key outlying German strongpoints, such as at Angers in France, Helgoland in Germany. The towers were operated by the Luftwaffe to defend against Allied strategic air raids against these cities during World War II. They also served as air-raid shelters for tens of thousands of local civilians.

(44): The popularity of the **Iron Curtain** term is attributed to its use in a speech Winston Churchill gave on 5 March 1946, in Fulton, Missouri. It's a metaphor that symbolizes the efforts by the Soviet Union (USSR) to block itself and its satellite states from open contact with the West and its allied states. On the east side of the Iron Curtain were the countries that were connected to or influenced by the Soviet Union, while on the west side were the countries that were NATO members or nominally neutral. It later became a term for the 7,000-kilometre-long (4,300 mi) physical barrier of fences, walls, minefields, and watchtowers that divided the "east" and "west". The Berlin Wall was also part of this physical barrier.

(45): The **Caucasus** or **Caucasia** is a region spanning Europe and Asia. The North Caucasus region is known as the Ciscaucasus, whereas the South Caucasus region is commonly known as the Transcaucasus. The Transcaucasus borders the Greater Caucasus range and Southern Russia to its north, the Black Sea and Turkey to its west, the Caspian Sea to its east, and Iran to its south. The watershed along the Greater Caucasus range is considered by some sources to be the dividing line between Europe and Southwest Asia.

(46): 水を打ったよう / mizuwōttayō, **Like hitting water** is an idiom that refers to a quiet state or perfect and complete silence. Striking water is a word derived from the fact that when water is sprinkled, dust does not stand up.

(47): **Pechka** is the heart of the traditional rural Russian home used to be a large, brick stove that took up about nearly one-quarter of the living space of a peasant home. The immense structures weighed between one and two tons and served multiple purposes. First, they were used for various kinds of cooking. Secondly, because the ovens were made of materials such as brick, stone, and clay which absorb heat and cool slowly, they were also used to heat homes. Expansive in size but efficient when it comes to energy, the ovens only needed to be lit twice a day to keep dwellers warm. Third, the flat top of the stove served as a warm place for those most susceptible to the effects of the cold, such as the elderly, to sleep.

Wood chips served as fuel. Once the fire was lit and burnt out, the ash was either removed or swept aside before cooking began. Some homes had chimneys for the acrid smoke to escape. They were called white huts. Those without were called black huts. During the reign of Peter the Great, black huts were outlawed

but continued being built into the 1900's. The ovens have made their way into Russian folklore in the form of fairy tales. Often the oven is personified. In "The Magic Swan Geese" a young girl meets a Russian oven and asks it for directions. It assists the girl by giving her directions, food, and protection from the swan geese.

(48): This is a reference to the movie: "**Mr. Smith Goes to Washington**", 1939 American political comedy-drama film directed by Frank Capra,

(49): A **filibuster** is a political procedure where one or more members of a Congress or Parliament debate over a proposed piece of legislation so as to delay a decision being made on the proposal or entirely prevent such a decision from occurring. It is sometimes referred to as "**talking a bill to death**" or "talking out a bill" and is characterized as a form of obstruction in a legislature or other decision-making body. This form of political obstruction reaches as far back as Ancient Roman times and is synonymous with political stonewalling.

The name is inspired from the spanish word *filibustero*, also known as a freebooter, which refers to someone who engages in an unauthorized military expedition into a foreign country or territory to foster or support a political revolution or secession. The term is usually applied to United States citizens who incited insurrections across Latin America, particularly in the mid-19th century, usually with the goal of establishing an American-loyal regime that may later be annexed into the United States. Probably the most notable example is the Filibuster War initiated by William Walker in Nicaragua.

Filibusters are irregular soldiers who act without official authorization from their own government, and are generally motivated by financial gain, political ideology, or the thrill of adventure. Unlike mercenaries, filibusters are independently motivated and work for themselves, whilst a mercenary leader operates on behalf of others. The freewheeling actions of the filibusters of the 1850s led to the name being applied figuratively to the political act of **filibustering** in the United States Congress.

(50): 魑魅魍魎 - **chimimōryō**, evil spirits of rivers and mountains is one of the most difficult idioms to write because of its large number of strokes. In modern Japanese, "Evil spirits of mountains and rivers" refers not only to monsters but also to people who are as unpredictable as monsters. The Deceptive Spirits of Mountains and Rivers infest the world of politics. Jürgen is referring to Strachwitz's political standing, and the devil's part implies fighting against the BETA. A man who is able to do all that, might have also anticipated his failure.

(51): **Prost** is **Cheers** in German, You can also say, "ein Prost!" which means, "a toast!"

(52): **Ernst Johannes Fritz Thälmann** 16 April 1886 – 18 August 1944) was a German communist politician, and leader of the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) from 1925 to 1933.

(53): **The Baltic Sea** is an arm of the Atlantic Ocean, enclosed by Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, Sweden and the North and Central European Plain. The Baltic Sea is connected by artificial waterways to the White Sea via the White Sea-Baltic Canal and to the German Bight of the North Sea via the Kiel Canal.

After 1945, the German population was expelled from all areas east of the Oder-Neisse line, making room for new Polish and Russian settlement. Poland gained most of the southern shore. The Soviet Union gained another access to the Baltic with the Kaliningrad Oblast, that had been part of German-settled East Prussia. The Baltic states on the eastern shore were annexed by the Soviet Union. The Baltic then separated opposing military blocs: NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Neutral Sweden developed incident weapons to defend its territorial waters after the Swedish submarine incidents. This border status restricted trade and travel. It ended only after the collapse of the Communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe in the late 1980s.

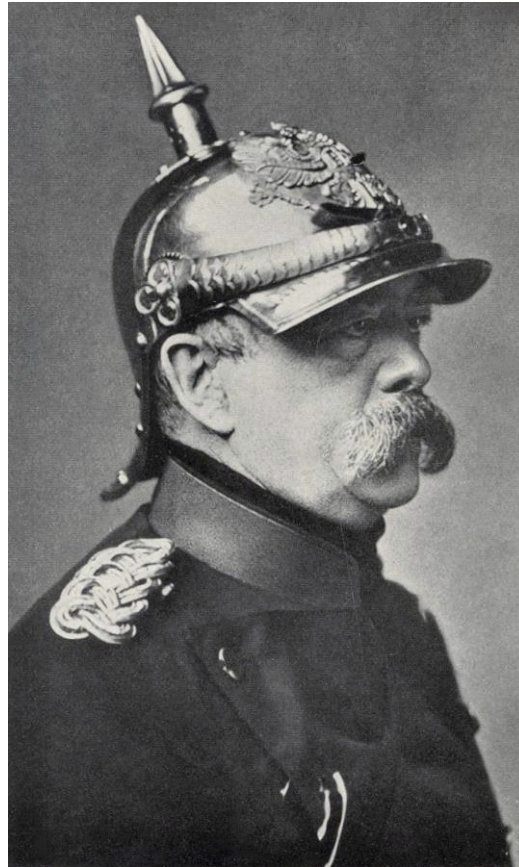
Since the end of World War II, various nations, including the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States have disposed of chemical weapons in the Baltic Sea, raising concerns of environmental contamination. Today, fishermen occasionally find some of these materials: the most recent available report from the Helsinki Commission notes that four small scale catches of chemical munitions representing approximately 105 kg (231 lb) of material were reported in 2005. This is a reduction from the 25 incidents representing 1,110 kg (2,450 lb) of material in 2003. Until now, the U.S. Government refuses to disclose the exact coordinates of the wreck sites. Deteriorating bottles leak mustard gas and other substances, thus slowly poisoning a substantial part of the Baltic Sea.

(54): **Rostock**, officially the Hanseatic and University City of Rostock, is the largest city in the German state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and lies in the Mecklenburgian part of the state, close to the border with Pomerania. With around 208,000 inhabitants, it is the third-largest city on the German Baltic coast after Kiel and Lübeck, the eighth-largest city in the area of former East Germany, as well as the 39th-largest city of Germany. Rostock was the largest coastal and most important port city in East Germany.

Rostock stands on the estuary of the River Warnow into the Bay of Mecklenburg of the Baltic Sea. The city stretches for about 16 km (10 mi) along the river that flows into the sea in the very north of the city, between the boroughs of Warnemünde and Hohe Düne. The city center lies further upstream, in the very south of the city. While most of Rostock's inhabitants live on the western side of the Warnow, the area east of the river is dominated by the port, industrial estates and the forested Rostock Heath. The city's coastline east and west of the river mouth is relatively undeveloped, with long sandy beaches prevailing. The name of the city is of Slavic origin and the river is of Lithuanian origin.

The city is home to the oldest university in the Baltic region and one of the oldest universities in the world, the University of Rostock, founded in 1419. The university's hospital, Universitätsmedizin Rostock, is one of two university hospitals in the state, along with Universitätsmedizin Greifswald of the University of Greifswald in Western Pomerania.

(55): The **Pickelhaube** (pl. Pickelhauben; from German: Pickel, lit. 'point' or 'pickaxe', and Haube, lit. 'bonnet', a general word for "headgear"), also Pickelhelm, is a spiked helmet that was worn in the 19th and 20th centuries by Prussian and German military officers, firefighters and police. Although it is typically associated with the Prussian Army, which adopted it in 1842–43, the helmet was widely imitated by other armies during that period. It is still worn today as part of ceremonial wear in the militaries of certain countries, such as Sweden, Chile, and Colombia.



(56): **Nap-of-the-earth (NOE)** is a type of very low-altitude flight course used by military aircraft to avoid enemy detection and attack in a high-threat environment. During NOE flight, geographical features are used as cover, exploiting valleys and folds in the terrain by flying in, rather than over, them. This keeps below enemy air defence radar coverage, avoiding being silhouetted against the sky. Other, mostly older terms include "ground-hugging", "terrain masking", "flying under the radar" and "hedge hopping".

(57): **Pyrotechnics** is the science of using materials capable of undergoing self-contained and self-sustained exothermic chemical reactions for the production of heat, light, gas, smoke and/or sound. Used under extreme emergency situations (such as distress), these are provided onboard ships to grab the attention/inform ships within range so as to seek help and assistance of the vessels for rescue. Basically, it is a visual method of sending SOS signals. In the unfortunate event (such as an 'abandon ship' situation) wherein one's own ship is beyond saving, pyrotechnics can be one of the last resorts for the ship personnel's survival and rescue out at sea.

(58): A **parabolic** (or paraboloid or paraboloidal) **reflector** (or dish or mirror) is a reflective surface used to collect or project energy such as light, sound, or radio waves. Its shape is part of a circular paraboloid, that is, the surface generated by a parabola revolving around its axis. The parabolic reflector transforms

an incoming plane wave travelling along the axis into a spherical wave converging toward the focus. Conversely, a spherical wave generated by a point source placed in the focus is reflected into a plane wave propagating as a collimated beam along the axis. Parabolic reflectors are used to collect energy from a distant source (for example sound waves or incoming star light). Since the principles of reflection are reversible, parabolic reflectors can also be used to collimate radiation from an isotropic source into a parallel beam. In optics, parabolic mirrors are used to gather light in reflecting telescopes and solar furnaces, and project a beam of light in flashlights, searchlights, stage spotlights, and car headlights. In radio, parabolic antennas are used to radiate a narrow beam of radio waves for point-to-point communications in satellite dishes and microwave relay stations, and to locate aircraft, ships, and vehicles in radar sets. In acoustics, parabolic microphones are used to record faraway sounds such as bird calls, in sports reporting, and to eavesdrop on private conversations in espionage and law enforcement.

[\(59\)](#): A **chase plane** (or a Tactical Fighter/Aircraft) is an aircraft that "chases" a "subject" aircraft, spacecraft or rocket, for the purposes of making real-time observations and taking air-to-air photographs and video of the subject vehicle during flight.

[\(60\)](#): A **red star**, five-pointed and filled, is a symbol that has often historically been associated with **communist** ideology, particularly in combination with the hammer and sickle, but is also used as a purely socialist symbol in the 21st century. It has been widely used in flags, state emblems, monuments, ornaments, and logos. One interpretation sees the five points as representing the five fingers of the worker's hand, as well as the five populated continents (counting the Americas as one). A lesser-known suggestion is that in communist symbolism, the five points on the star were intended to represent the five social groups that would lead Russia to communism: the youth, the military, the industrial labourers, the agricultural workers or peasantry and the intelligentsia. In Soviet heraldry, the red star symbolized the Red Army and military service, as opposed to the hammer and sickle, which symbolized peaceful labour.

Different countries across Europe treat the symbol very differently. Some former Warsaw Pact nations have passed laws banning it, claiming that it represents "a totalitarian ideology", but other Eastern European countries hold a very positive view of it as a symbol of antifascism and resistance against Nazi occupation. Red Star has also been used in a non-communist context and before the emergence of this movement, in symbols of countries and states since the 19th Century. It appears for example on the flags of New Zealand and the U.S. state of California. Red star has also been used as a logo by private agencies and corporations, such as the oil giant Texaco and beer multinational Heineken.

[\(61\)](#): Hi **G-Force (Gravitational Force) Environments**, or Gravitational Force. They can include a loss of consciousness (G-Loc), a situation when the action of g-forces moves the blood away from the brain to the extent that consciousness is lost. Incidents of acceleration-induced loss of consciousness have caused fatal accidents in aircraft capable of sustaining high-g for considerable periods.

[\(62\)](#): **Mikhail Iosifovich Gurevich** was a Soviet aircraft designer who co-founded the Mikoyan-Gurevich military aviation bureau along with Artem Mikoyan. The bureau is famous for its fighter aircraft, rapid interceptors and multi-role combat aircraft which were staples of the Soviet Air Forces throughout the Cold War. The bureau designed 170 projects of which 94 were made in series. In total, 45,000 MiG aircraft have been manufactured domestically, of which 11,000 aircraft were exported. The last plane which Gurevich personally worked on before his retirement was the MiG-25.

(63): The **Wehrmacht** (lit. 'defence force') was the unified armed forces of Nazi Germany from 1935 to 1945. It consisted of the Heer (army), the Kriegsmarine (navy) and the Luftwaffe (air force). The designation "Wehrmacht" replaced the previously-used term Reichswehr, and was the manifestation of the Nazi regime's efforts to rearm Germany to a greater extent than the Treaty of Versailles permitted. After the Nazi rise to power in 1933, one of Adolf Hitler's most overt and audacious moves was to establish the Wehrmacht, a modern offensively-capable armed force, fulfilling the Nazi régime's long-term goals of regaining lost territory as well as gaining new territory and dominating its neighbours. This required the reinstatement of conscription, and massive investment and defense spending on the arms industry.

(64): **Kharkiv**, also known as **Kharkov** (Russian: Харьков) is the second-largest city in Ukraine. Located in the northeast of the country, it is the largest city of the historic Slobozhanshchyna region. Kharkiv is the administrative centre of Kharkiv Oblast and of the surrounding Kharkiv Raion. Kharkiv was founded in 1654 as a Kharkiv fortress, and after humble beginnings as a small fortress, it grew to be a major centre of industry, trade and Ukrainian culture in the Russian Empire. At the beginning of the 20th century the city was predominantly Russian in population, but after the Soviet government's policy of Ukrainization the city became populated mainly by Ukrainians with a significant number of Russians. Kharkiv was the first capital of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, from December 1919 to January 1934, after which the capital relocated to Kiev (Modern day Kyiv).

Presently, Kharkiv is a major cultural, scientific, educational, transport and industrial centre of Ukraine, with numerous museums, theatres and libraries, including the Annunciation and Dormition Cathedrals, the Derzhprom building in Freedom Square, and the National University of Kharkiv. Kharkiv was a host city for UEFA Euro 2012. Industry plays a significant role in Kharkiv's economy, specializing primarily in machinery and electronics. There are hundreds of industrial facilities throughout the city, including the Morozov Design Bureau and the Malyshev Tank Factory (leaders in world tank production from the 1930s to the 1980s); Khartron (aerospace, nuclear power plants and automation electronics); Turboatom (turbines for hydro-, thermal- and nuclear-power plants); and Antonov (the multipurpose aircraft manufacturing plant).

(65): **Belgorod** is a city and the administrative center of Belgorod Oblast, Russia, located on the Seversky **Donets** River 40 kilometers (25 mi) north of the border with Ukraine. The name Belgorod (Белгород) in Russian literally means "White city", compounding the sememes "белый" (bely, "white, light") and "город" (gorod, "town, city"). The city thus acquired its name because the region was rich in limestone. Etymologically, the name corresponds to other Slavic city-names of identical meaning: Belgrade, Belogradchik, Białogard, Biograd, Bilhorod, and Bilhorod-Dnistrovskiy.

(66): **Ukraine** is a country in Eastern Europe. It is the second-largest country by area in Europe after Russia, which it borders to the east and north-east. Ukraine also shares borders with Belarus to the north; Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary to the west; Romania and Moldova to the south; and has a coastline along the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea. It spans an area of 603,628 km² (233,062 sq mi), with a population of 41.3 million, and is the eighth-most populous country in Europe. The nation's capital and largest city is Kyiv.

(67): **Commissar** is an English transliteration of the Russian комиссáр (komissar), which means "commissary". In English, the transliteration "commissar" often refers specifically to the political

commissars of Soviet and Eastern-bloc armies or to the people's commissars (effectively government ministers), while administrative officers are called "commissaries". In the Red Army, a **political commissar** was a high-ranking functionary at a military headquarters who held coequal rank and authority with the military commander of the unit. The Bolshevik Party established political commissars in 1918 to control and improve morale in the military forces. Commissars were in charge of communist political propaganda and indoctrinating the public with communist ideology. During the early stages of the usage of commissars, no military order might be issued which did not have the prior approval of both the commander and the commissar.

(68): **Backhand Blow** is a reference to a strategy of the same name, conducted at the same location in Kharkov in 1943. More on the subject [here](#).

(69): **Crimea** is a peninsula along the northern coast of the Black Sea in Eastern Europe. It has a population of 2.4 million, made up mostly of ethnic Russians with significant Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar minorities. The peninsula is almost entirely surrounded by both the Black Sea and the smaller Sea of Azov; it is located south of Kherson Oblast in Ukraine, to which it is connected by the Isthmus of Perekop, and west of Krasnodar Krai in Russia, from which it is separated by the Strait of Kerch though linked by the Crimean Bridge since 2018. The Arabat Spit is located to its northeast, a narrow strip of land that separates a system of lagoons named Sivash from the Sea of Azov. Across the Black Sea to the west lies Romania and to the south is Turkey.

(70): The 2K12 "**Kub**" (English: cube) (NATO reporting name: SA-6 "Gainful") mobile surface-to-air missile system is a Soviet low to medium-level air defence system designed to protect ground forces from air attack. "2K12" is the GRAU designation of the system. Each 2K12 battery consists of a number of similar tracked vehicles, one of which carries the 1S91 (SURN vehicle, NATO designation "**Straight Flush**") 25 kW G/H band radar (with a range of 75 km (47 mi)) equipped with a continuous wave illuminator, in addition to an optical sight. The battery usually also includes four triple-missile transporter erector launchers (TELs), and four trucks, each carrying three spare missiles and a crane. The TEL is based on a GM-578 chassis, while the 1S91 radar vehicle is based on a GM-568 chassis, all developed and produced by MMZ.

(71): **Reactive armour** is a type of vehicle armour that reacts in some way to the impact of a weapon to reduce the damage done to the vehicle being protected. It is most effective in protecting against shaped charges and specially hardened kinetic energy penetrators. The most common type is explosive reactive armour (ERA), but variants include self-limiting explosive reactive armour (SLERA), non-energetic reactive armour (NERA), non-explosive reactive armour (NxRA), and electric armour. NERA and NxRA modules can withstand multiple hits, unlike ERA and SLERA, but a second hit in exactly the same location may potentially penetrate any of those, as the armour in that spot is compromised. Essentially all anti-tank munitions work by piercing the armour and then either killing the crew inside, or disabling vital mechanical systems, or both. Reactive armour can be defeated with multiple hits in the same place, as by tandem-charge weapons, which fire two or more shaped charges in rapid succession. Without tandem charges, hitting the same spot twice is much more difficult.

(72): **Zoya Anatolyevna Kosmodemyanskaya** (September 13, 1923 – November 29, 1941) was a Soviet partisan. She was executed after acts of sabotage against the invading armies of Nazi Germany; after

stories emerged of her defiance towards her captors, she was posthumously declared a Hero of the Soviet Union. She became one of the most revered heroines of the Soviet Union.

(73): Iris said 歩調を合わせるぞ, hochōwoawaseru(**zo**) meaning to keep in step with or to act in concert/act as one. However, the particle ぞ /zo/ is a masculine sentence-ending particle. It can be used by anyone, but it will always sound masculine. In the same way, the sentence-ending particle わ /wa/ is feminine, and is used by Beatrix a lot throughout the story. Jürgen is referring to the sentence ending particle she used, and not the words she said. There are many grammatical constructions in the Japanese language associated with men or boys (Otoko kotoba), while others are associated with women or girls (Onna Kotoba).

(74): The penetration breakthrough is called (Shintō Toppa/浸透 突破), which literally translates into penetration and breakthrough, so it's pretty obvious. But Laser Jagd is written with the Kanji for "Laser Class Rush" or (kōsenkyū tokkan/光線級呐喊). Tokkan means charging at the enemy with a shout, so it's like how Jürgen implies, an abstract wording to hide the true meaning of the technique. The term "**Laser Jagd**", written in Japanese as "Reza Yakuto/レーザーヤクト", means "Laser Hunt" or Laser chasing in German.