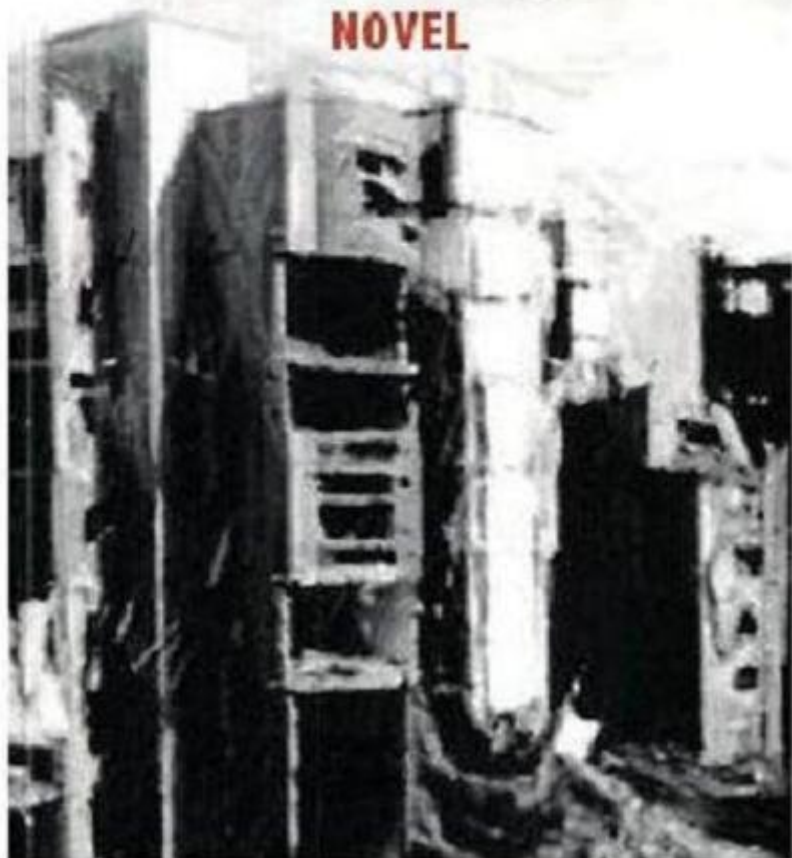


Alexander Merow

Prey World

Rebellion Beyond

NOVEL



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Novel

Part II

Prey World

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Foreword

This is the English version of the second book of Alexander Merow's "Prey World" series. The novel was translated by Thorsten Weber and the writer.

It is still no professional translation and the translator is still no "native speaker" or English teacher. He is just a guy, who loves science-fiction and dystopias. So try not to laugh at some of the translated phrases, or the wrath of a real freak will come over you! And Mr. Merow and his friend are really some kind of "freaks".

The author has already found a lot of interested readers all over Germany, and we hope that he will also find some new readers in the English-speaking countries. Furthermore, we would be glad, if a "real" mother-tongue speaker would edit this English version one day.

Now the fight against the World Government and the New World Order goes on. By the way, soon the fourth part of the "Prey World" series will be published in Germany. And we will also translate the third part, Prey World III – Organized Rage, in the next months. Anyway, have fun with this book and start thinking about the world we live in. We are sure, that you will find a lot of similarities to reality.

And always remember...

"Only a fool would think that "Prey World" is nothing but fiction!" (Alexander Merow)

Alexander Merow and Thorsten Weber, Berlin 2011

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„In a few generations, maybe in hundred or two hundred years, mankind will have died out, if we define a human being as a thinking and inventing individual. Beyond doubt, a human being like this will no longer exist in the future. But there will be only one exception – us!

The rest of the creatures, creeping over the surface of this planet, will be something else than human beings in the old sense. They will still have a human body, more or less, but the difference between these “man-things” and a livestock will be hardly to recognize.

At this point in time, the old world will have been long gone. Nobody will remember it anymore, because the “man-things” we will create, will no longer be able to remember any higher form of culture. All history will have been rewritten in our sense and the only thing these “man-things” will understand, will be the order to serve. We will decimate earth`s population to get rid of those who are nothing but useless eaters. The rest of the human pulp may survive to serve us. Moreover, there will remain a small group of elite drudges with a rudimentary intelligence, the petty officers of our New World Order. We will control and form them from the womb to the tomb. And they will be our most fanatical servants, always eager to relay the pressure we put on them to the mass of mindless peons below them.

This will be the perfect compliance of the Great Plan of the *Elders*. This will be the predicted world of milk and honey for us. So it is written, and so it shall be done...”

Brother Obitus in: “The Holy Scriptures of the Wise Men”, Chapter XXXIII, “The New Temple”

“Nothing is efficient in Oceania except the Thought Police!”

George Orwell, “1984”

“In Oceania at the present day, science, in the old sense, has almost ceased to exist. In Newspeak there is no word for “Science”. The empirical method of thought, on which all the scientific achievements of the past were founded, is opposed to the most fundamental principles of Ingsoc. And even technological progress only happens when its products can in some way be used for the diminution of human liberty. In all the useful arts the world is either standing still or going backwards. The fields are cultivated with horse plows while books are written by machinery. But in matters of vital importance – meaning, in effect, war and police espionage – the empirical approach is still encouraged, or at least tolerated.”

George Orwell, “1984”

Sunrise

The summer of the year 2030 had begun, and the rising heat penetrated the capital of the newly founded state of Japan to the last corner of the endless street canyons. Tokyo resembled an enormous hotplate and its citizens groaned under the torrid sunbeams.

A sun had risen in the Far East, at the outermost end of the Asian continent, as the national flag of old and new Japan had always symbolized it. Haruto Matsumoto, the president of the island state, sat in the garden of his mansion in the outskirts of Tokyo and pondered. Everything around him flowered, insects hummed quietly and a blue sky opened itself above him. It was wonderful today - and very hot. But the president hardly noticed the world around him. His thoughts stuck in the middle of a swamp of concerns and fear, and even the blue sky which expanded above his country could not change this.

The president of Japan sat down on a couch and read once more the reports of the foreign press which casted a poor light on him and his country. After a while, he put the papers away and stared angrily at the sky.

His old friend, the Japanese foreign minister Akira Mori, sat beside him and was still studying the current reports of the international media. From time to time he just murmured quietly and looked at Matsumoto. Finally he put the newspapers aside, straightened up and folded his arms. Behind the two thoughtful men, the outlines of the Fujiyama, the great, old mountain, dominated the horizon.

The "Fujisan" or „Mr. Fuji“, as the Japanese called their admired mountain, seemed to mount guard over the capital.

But if this mystic mountain could really protect the Japanese nation was uncertain.

„Will it go on forever – in this manner?“, asked Matsumoto his good friend and advisor.

„I don't think, that they will just stop this campaign tomorrow“, answered Akira Mori and took another newspaper from a table.

„This hate is incomprehensible to me. One day, they will call me a child murderer!“, said the president, full of frustration.

„The cartoon you, in the „Global Policy News“, as a dung beetle that wants to throw a bomb at the world“, replied the foreign minister. “You will have to live with this form of agitation, Haruto!”

„Over 89% of the Japanese have voted for me! Yes, 89%! And these wily rats of the foreign press tell the world that I have just deceived my own people!“, grumbled Matsumoto.

Akira Mori, who did not expect any other behaviour from the international media, and was more realistic than the Japanese president and answered: „You have dared a lot, when you have liberated our country from the World Union. You have created an independent Japan and have furthermore given our land back to the Japanese. So be glad about your achievements, my friend.

The economy blooms under your hands and the our people admire you. This is the best time for Japan since many decades. Just ignore those liars of the press. The damn lies of a press, controlled by the Lodge Brothers and the World Government. It is just their usual strategy to defame all forces of freedom on this planet.

The time will come, when even other nations wake up and break their chains. You have shown the rest of the world that resistance is possible. Millions of men and women look

up at you, because our country is their symbol of freedom and hope. However, don't forget your mission, Haruto!"

„Nevertheless, the price is high...“, said Matsumoto.

“Of course, you are right! But even the worldwide boycott of our goods has not carried the fruits that the World Government has expected!”, answered Mori with an aggressive countenance. „Japan stands like a strong rock in the sea!“

„Will they start a war against us?“, asked the president haggardly.

The foreign minister was silent for a short moment. “I don't hope so, Haruto...”

The two men stared at each other and finally turned around. Then they looked together at the Fujisan and the snowy peak of the mountain reminded them of the white beard of an old, wise man. “Mr. Fuji”, the ancient father of the Japanese nation.

He had always been there, hard and steadfast – and Matsumoto wished to have only a little piece of his power. It was not easy to rule over a renegade nation, a country of dissidents. Millions of Japanese people had given him all their hope and trust, but Matsumoto just feared to dissappoint them. Japan was isolated and enemy troops conglomerated at its borders. A peaceful future seemed to be nothing but an illusion.

The goods of the island people, formerly appreciated in all other countries, were now proscribed and rejected by the surrounding administrative sectors. The conversion of the Japanese economy to bigger autarky, became increasingly difficult and laborious. Occasionally, Matsumoto thought about giving up, because his fight often seemed to be futile. He sometimes wished to be just a “private person” again, free from all responsibility. But he wouldn't have had a private life, even if he would have given up. His enemies

wanted to take revenge on him and hated him for the fact that he had led his country to independence. Since he had abolished the interest system some weeks ago, in his eyes the root of all evil, the hateful nagging of the international press had become a true hurricane of slander.

Only his friend, Akira Mori, was able to keep his crumbling morale up, again and again. Even in times of deepest resignation and hopelessness. He was a gift of heaven, this foreign minister with the heart of steel.

The two politicians were silent and knew deep inside that the possibility of a war against their country was anything but improbable, if the economic boycott and the malicious campaign was not successful enough.

But they still continued to hope for peace. Matsumoto went into the house and sat down in his office, Mori followed him. Today it was valid to prepare another governmental declaration which would suggest the World Government a peaceful solution of the conflict. However, the danger that it would find deaf ears again, grew with each applying day more and more. Even if the day was as beautiful and sunny like this.

„If they ignore our declaration again, then remember the old Romans!“, said Mori to the president.

„They will probably reject it. Everything else would be nothing but a miracle, Akira“, answered Matsumoto and shook his head.

„Then I will tell you something! A proverb of the old Romans, from a time in which they had been in sustained conflict with their contiguous tribes in ancient Italy: „Who wants peace, prepares for war!“

„I just want peace and also want to safe our people from another war. Apart from that, we wouldn't have a chance against the forces of the World Government“, groaned Matsumoto and hold his head.

“You must take war into your account. Don’t be a dreamer!”, muttered Mori and clapped his friend gently on the shoulder.

„I also pray for peace, but mind the worst case too...”

“The decision to become a politician was the biggest mistake of my whole life”, hissed Matsumoto desperately and kicked against his desk.

“You brought the good thing to the people of Japan! Never forget that! We will also come through this crisis!”, said the foreign minister with a humorless undertone.

But Haruto Matsumoto did not want to hear this. He still rued the day, when he had been involved in the bloody and dirty game called “policy”...

At the same time, Frank Kohlhaas and Alfred Bäumer walked the streets of Vilnius, far away in Lithuania. The two rebels were visiting this city for the first time since their arrival in Ivas, the small village in the southeast of the country. They enjoyed a sunny day, sauntered through the streets or hung around in cafes. Moreover, there was a lot to see, here in this old city, founded in the early Middle Ages.

The two men preferred the old town of Vilnius which still had a lot of beautiful buildings, in spite of the social decline and the omnipresent state of neglect. Old churches and slowly crumbling but still beautiful house facades could be admired here. Nevertheless, the effects of the social crisis had even reached Vilnius. Many homeless and poor people hung around in the city center to beg the visitors for some Globes. The police presence was, in comparison to the administrative sector „Central Europe”, still small, although the streets in the inner city were meanwhile supervised by numerous video cameras. However, Frank and Alfred had taken precautions by wearing baseball caps and sunglasses which they rarely removed. In spite of a subliminal feeling of

tension, they enjoyed the day and were glad that they had come out of the little hicktown of Ivas to see another environment. Although the surveillance had also increased in Eastern Europe, the two rebels enjoyed their trip to Vilnius, always trying banish the sorrows from their minds.

„Look at this sticker there!“, said Frank to his friend, pointing at a tattered and faded label on a lamppost in front of him. Alf Bäumer came nearer and took a look at the torn sticker. He lifted his sunglasses and tried to decipher the Cyrillic letters on the label, whispering something in Russian.

„Hmmm...“, hummed the tall man.

„Can you read it? It's time for us to learn some more Russian“, said Frank, staring at the noticeable symbol in the middle of the sticker. It was a black dragon's head on a white flag.

„Thus, it is something about the Varangians, I think...“, murmured Alf and scratched his head musingly. “And it is from an organization called *Freedom Movement of the Rus...*

“My Russian isn't very good, but I like this sticker. I don't think, that this stuff is legal in the administrative sector „Eastern Europe“.“

„Varangians? What is that?“, asked Kohlhaas.

„They are, more or less, the ancestors of the Lithuanians and partly also of the Russians, the Belarusians and Ukrainians. The “Rus” or „Varangians“ were Vikings who founded the realm of Kiev. They are generally known as the first Russians. It is something historical – and of course not legal!“, explained Alf and smiled sardonically.

„It seems that here in Vilnius is a group of this organization, otherwise this label would not stick there“, said Frank.

„However, we know nothing about this group. I will search the Internet for some more informations. Maybe I will find

something about this *Freedom Movement of the Rus*. Anyway, I like their symbol.”

Bäumer still tried to translate the Cyrillic text on the sticker for the next minutes. Shortly afterwards, the two rebels walked away and went into a pub at the end of the street to drink another beer.

It was a relaxing day for Frank and Alf, despite of the occasionally returning feeling to be observed. Both had missed to see another environment after many boring weeks in Ivas. They spent three further days in Vilnius and went back then to their home village. Meanwhile, a lot of work was waiting for them and Thorsten Wilden, the leader of the rebel base, was already expecting them too.

In the evening hours of the following day, the annual meeting of the “Bilderblickbrothers” took place in the middle of the idyllic mountain countryside of Switzerland.

This meeting was the most important political conference on earth, where the leading persons of politics, media and economics came together to talk about the next steps to control mankind. Far away from any public and surrounded by hundreds of policemen and GSA agents, the most powerful men of the world colluded in the luxury hotel „Bilderblick“. The internal circle, the *Council of the 300*, met at this protected place and decided the fate of over eight billion human beings. At this meeting, the introduction of the new Scanchip which should be implanted in the future, was the main topic. This new chip was proposed as the successor of the regular Scanchip.

A further item on the agenda was the reaction of the political network to the detachment of Japan from the World Union. Above this committee of total power was only the *Council of the Elders*, also called *Council of the 13*. The absolute secret instance of the new world system. Lord Beaconshill,

the media mogul, who had his domicile in England, raised his hand after a long debate to say something to the Japanese question: "My brothers, it is time for an example, because the outrageous actions of this Matsumoto mock our global order in a way, we can not accept anymore! If we don't take drastic measures soon, Japan will probably become a model for other states. I finally demand a decision of the Elders, concerning the Japanese problem!"

A murmur went through the mass of the gentlemen, dressed in noble business suits. Some of them harrumphed, others whispered or shouted through the spacious hall. Then silence prevailed again for a short moment.

„In principle, you are right, my brother Lord Beaconshill. However, the attacks of the media, controlled by us, were not as successful as we have expected. I personally counted on the fact that the Japanese population could be more easily divided in different parts. But our tactic to instigate strife should be reconsidered. Matsumoto's popularity is still very high and the opposition on the island works lamely and is not belligerent at all!", answered Ian Basler, the boss of the "Basler Trust Company" from Seattle.

Jeff Dornberger asked for the word and hectically waved his greasy hand which was adorned with some gold rings. „I think that there are two possibilities for us. One is bringing the enemy to its knees by the various methods of slander, or on the other hand, if this should not be effective, just to ignore him at first.

At present, even the most clever designed lies fail against Matsumoto. His rule is still stable, as the internal studies of our GSA agents prove, and I'm afraid to remark that we can bring Japan back to subjecting only with a military strike!"

“I`m right there with you!”, shouted Dr. Cyrus Newton, the chairman of the pharmaceutical company “GPHP”, and banged his fist on the wooden table in front of him.

Suddenly Lucius Brown who was one of the envoys of the *Council of the Elders* in this round, stood up from his place and asked for silence. He stared at his fellows and scrutinized the look of his black suit.

„My dear brothers, the instructions of the highest council are clear! I don`t wish any debates about that, because the Elders have already come to a decision. An example of Japan will be made. An Example, the world will remember for many years! The attempt to question our rule over this world, must evoke a harsh and cruel punishment, but we must proceed mindfully, in order to make no mistakes.

As I have already said, the instructions of the *Council of the Elders* are clear: War! The lasting destruction of Japan and the following destruction of its people and its culture!“

„This will be a lot of work for us, beloved brother Brown! How can we reach this aim?“, asked one of the men.

„The council wants an invasion of Japan by our GCF troops - from several sides. A nuclear strike is not planned yet, because we still have to preserve our image as benefactors. The introduction of the new implantation Scanchip, this so unbelievably important step towards the total control of the masses, may not be endangered by inhumanly appearing nuclear attacks, especially against Japan. We must still appear as philanthropists, liberators and true humanists. In addition, Matsumoto has nuclear weapons too. A nuclear war is also not advisable from this point of view. No, for the highest council the conventional warfare seems to be the best method. And I speak for council!“

Some of the gentlemen appeared confused. Others asked for the role of the media, concerning the preparations for war against the renegade island state.

“Shall we just stop the hate campaign against the Japanese now?”, Sergej Abramovich, an oil tycoon from Russia, wanted to know.

Brown responded: „Yes, no more reports about Japan! At first, we must prepare the invasion. This country and also Matsumoto himself may be ignored until we are ready to strike back.

Then, as the *Council of the Elders* has decided, shortly before the war starts, all our media will eat Japan alive. We will make Matsumoto responsible for a devastating attack with biological weapons in the East of China. In this context, he will be branded as a mass murderer and insane warmonger.

Furthermore, that incident will awake the old hostility between Japan and China again, because we have the plan to recruit masses of Chinese soldiers for the invasion army of the GCF. Finally, the whole usual talk about world peace and human rights will follow - from our side...”

Again the round of gentlemen was shaken by a loud murmur and many of them showed their enthusiastic agreement to this plan. Only a few Lodge Brothers seemed to be sceptical, but they had not the position to contradict a decision of the *Council of the Elders*.

„What will we do after our victory?“, asked a gray-haired man now.

„The Japanese folk will be partly resettled to other regions of Asia. Furthermore, their traditional culture will be decomposed and eliminated in the long term“, explained Brown and stared resolutely at his fellows.

„All right! So our medias will be silent for a while?“, asked Leonard Bourger from Marseille.

„Yes! No more attention for Matsumoto until we are ready to strike back! The war against Japan will start in exactly one year!“, replied Brown and sat down.

Thereupon, the men discussed another topic, a much more important one: The coming registration of earth`s population with the new implantated Scanchips.

At first, the North American continent should be seized by this measure. And the powerful gentlemen still planned further steps for the absolute control of mankind, but these were heard by nobody, except for themselves. Everything that was discussed at this meeting, did not leave the walls of the luxury hotel „Bilderblick“. The eight billion human beings on earth still lived their simple lifes, while this small group of men decided their fate.

Peace is War

Somewhere under the roof of the ramshackle house was a bird-nest, Frank felt certain. Today he had already been woken up once more by excited flutter and loud twitter in front of his window. Kohlhaas rolled scolding over the mattress and pulled the bedsheet over his head.

„Bloody hell! That noise drives me insane!“, he groaned and finally crept out of his bed.

Alfred Bäumer already sat in the kitchen and was drinking a coffee. Meanwhile, he had also noticed the never ending chirping that was robbing the two men of sleep since days.

“They are really loud! Maybe these birds are breeding”, muttered Alf.

“Yes, but where is the bird-nest?”, asked his young housemate who was still bleary.

Frank stretched himself, trudged to the coffee pot and hoped that this drink would finally help him to wake up. He yawned loudly, collapsing into the chair beside the kitchen table.

„We must fetch the long ladder from the shed to search the roof. The birds must be somewhere there“, suggested Bäumer and rubbed his eyes.

Another yawning followed and Kohlhaas nodded approvingly. After the breakfast, the two men left the kitchen, went to the old shed next to their house and tried to yank a ladder out of a huge pile of clutter.

It was not easy, but finally they succeeded and pulled the ladder with a bearish effort out of the backyard shed.

„Puh!“, gasped Frank and went to the house, with the ladder under his arm. „The chirping comes from the corner up there, under the roof.“

„Let me look for the birds!“, said Alfred, pushed his friend to the side and climbed up the ladder. When he reached the roof and looked over the rotten bricks, it became clear that they had to repair a lot in this summer. But now it was valid to find the pinnated guests at first. A bird with beautiful black and white feathers flew out of a hole in the wall, almost colliding with Alf’s head. Then it took course downwards. Bäumer looked baffledly at the small animal and began to smile.

„These birds are probably swallows“, he shouted at Frank. „I have found the nest. It’s here, Kohlhaas!“

Bäumer heard an excited twitter between some bars and finally recognized five tiny, yellow bills. Meanwhile, the birds reacted on him with still louder noise. He pushed the ladder a bit to the left and climbed again upward to have a better sight.

When Alfred’s face, with its dark beard and the stubborn eyes, appeared in front of the nest, the little chicks answered with a panicky: „Beep! Beep! Beep!“

The tall man hummed and still thought about removing the bird-nest, because the constant noise tortured him since more than a week. But the five little creatures with their yellow bills, their small brown eyes and the pretty, reddish fluff at the necks, finally aroused his compassion after a few minutes.

If Alf would have removed the bird-nest from the roof, the little animals would have had no chance to survive. And to bring it to another place was no good idea.

“What’s up now?“, shouted Kohlhaas from the ground.

„Nothing! Let’s leave our little friends alone. I think we can familiarize with their noise“, said Bäumer.

„You don’t want to remove the bird-nest?“, asked Frank and scratched his head.

„No! I won't touch these birds. But we have to repair a lot of bricks in the next days, Frank!“, replied Alfred and finally came down the ladder.

Kohlhaas grinned. “Ha, you have a big heart, Alfi! This is so cute...”

„Schnauze!“, growled Bäumer crustily and carried the ladder back to the shed. “The birds don't disturb me anymore. That's all!”

“Nevertheless, yesterday you were still complaining the whole day!“, teased him Frank.

“However...“, grumbled Bäumer and walked away towards their house.

Frank smiled and thought briefly about removing the bird-nest by himself. But if Alf was not disturbed anymore, he would also learn to ignore the noise.

“Okay, let's go!“, said Kohlhaas, locked the shed and followed his friend.

The rest of the sunny week passed by - with house and garden work. HOK, the computer specialist of the village community, visited them once and told the two men about his newest programming activities.

As usual, they hardly understood a word of his detailed explanations and technical terms. The computer scientist had edited their Scanchips to increase the safety. Nevertheless, the two rebels had rented a car with their old Scanchips before the assassination of Wechsler in Paris.

Now, it was time for some “new identities”, as HOK explained. The concerns about investigations of the GSA, the international secret service, was still above their heads like the sword of Damocles. So HOK finally replaced the old Scanchips and gave his comrades two new identity cards. Frank Kohlhaas became a construction worker from Berne, called Eduard Rietli, and Alfred Bäumer exchanged his old

identity with Peter van Hochvaal from Belgium. „Safer is better!“, meant HOK. And this principle was more important than ever in a time of total surveillance.

Meanwhile, both men had made some investigations on the Internet, concerning this strange organization called *Freedom Movement of the Rus* or the “Varangian Corps”. They had found some forbidden homepages which were officially not callable, and tried to read the Cyrillic texts with HOK’s assistance. But the Russian writings were still too difficult for the three Germans, what meant that Wilden, whose Russian was much better, had to help out.

„Well, this organization seems to have held a secret meeting with hundreds of people in the underground, in Minsk. However, this is really dangerous and would be perfectly inconceivable in „Central Europe“. Look at this, they report about some of their actions: handing out leaflets, spreading stickers, spraying on walls and so on. Even a small demonstration, that has dissolved itself after twenty minutes! Ha, ha!

Here is something about „descendants of the Rus“ and „social revolution“...”Down with the global tyranny!“...”Russia is the land of the Russians...”

These guys can be glad that the authorities in Eastern Europe are so underpaid and listless. In Western Europe, such actions would be impossible...”, said Wilden and studied the texts on the forbidden website.

Then HOK searched for some more webpages of the freedom Movement and finally found a reward poster of the Belarusian police. The authorities were looking for a man called Artur Tschistokjow, the leader of the organization.

„Well, here they say that this man has obviously founded cells of his group in the Baltic countries, in Belarus and in the western part of Russia. The police assumes that he has

changed his name and is living in Minsk now”, told Wilden, the former businessman from Nordrhein-Westfalen in Germany.

“In our old homeland, they would catch this Tschistokjow in just one week”, said Frank and tried to translate the text at the bottom of the reward poster by himself.

„We should take some lessons in Russian“, meant Bäumer, looking at Wilden. The older gentleman was pleased about the fact that his knowledge was demanded once again and smiled proudly. „No problem. A good knowledge about the Russian language is absolutely indispensable in the long term if you live here.”

The two men accepted the offer and Frank was quite astonished about his gift to learn foreign languages. Alf, in contrast, seemed to be not as talented as his friend and Wilden who sometimes behaved like an old schoolteacher, scolded the poor Bäumer several times. Also Julia Wilden, the beautiful daughter of the rebel leader, had a lot of fun with watching the two men suffering under the strict command of her father. Often the young woman beheld the Russian lesson for hours – always with a sarcastic smile.

Both men even got homework from Wilden who always examined the training success of his students with increasing meticulousness on the following day. Bäumer was reprimanded again and again, while Frank became something like “teacher’s pet”. After a hard time of learning, Alf finally started to hate the Russian lessons.

The months passed and one day, the summer had just vanished. Now the leaves of the trees around Ivas slowly changed their color and the days became shorter. Frank Kohlhaas could say that the other villagers still admired him, because of the bold operation in Paris. They liked him, he was sure about that. And above all, Julia Wilden, the daughter of the village boss who had once met him with so

much distrust, seemed to cast an eye at him. After the Russian lessons with Wilden, in which Frank could score more and more, she often accompanied Alf and him to their house, talking about this and that.

Julias eyes were focused on Frank, as the young man believed. But he still was not audacious enough to start his own "great offensive". Wilden`s daughter always remained inapproachable and aloof.

She was a very good friend, without any doubt, but Frank was not satisfied with that in the long term. To show feelings, apart from hate, he had somehow forgotten since his time in „Big Eye“. So he still behaved gawky, never knowing what to do next in her presence. The nightmares and visions that occasionally afflicted him in the sleep, were currently not very frequent, and Frank was glad about it.

He had no more panic attacks and fears, as it had been one year ago. Meanwhile, he rarely startled up before he fell asleep and "Mr. Madness", his imaginary cellmate, was banned from his mind. But his grown immunity in relation to his fears had demanded a high price.

„I can`t feel any longer“, thought Frank. „I can`t cry anymore, and I also can`t be happy like a normal human being. I can only live...“

Perhaps, the genuine feelings would return one day. They were just locked up behind a large concrete wall at the end of his head. Frank did not know, whether this condition was really a profit.

Before the winter came over Lithuania, the emotions seemed to have buried themselves in a hole under the boundary wall, deep in Frank`s mind. Now they slowly came back, even with a power the young man had never expected. Unfortunately, the positive feelings had not the major part in this outbreak, because the darker the days became, the darker it was in Frank`s brain. Depressions

tortured him and he was scared to fall asleep again. The glaring, cruel light of the holo cell returned in his dreams, allied with the computerized woman`s voice from the loudspeaker.

Sometimes, he dreamed that somebody had pushed him into a brightly illuminated hole without a ground. The fall lasted eternally and he rushed faster and faster downwards - but he never reached the bottom.

His murdered father and his dead sister seemed to send him messages from the other side, as Frank sometimes thought. They spoke to him, in the lightless hours of the winter nights, reminding him to take care of Nico.

From time to time, his little nephew appeared as well, telling him that they had surgically removed his heart. Then he held the bloody, pulsatile muscle in his hand and said: „If you don`t believe me, uncle Frank, I can show you what they have done to me!“

These visions were an agony and Kohlhaas had the feeling that there was nobody he could talk about this. Bäumer had already become a good friend, although he was not the right interlocutor for topics like this. His mother would have been one, but she had left this world a long time ago. Meanwhile, Frank could hardly remember her face and her gentle voice. If he awoke at night and looked around in his dark bedroom, he cursed the causers of his mental horrors. Sometimes, Frank thought about calling the educational institution, in which his nephew Nico probably still was. But this was connected with a very high risk. What should he say to the responsible persons? He was a wanted person and did not exist anymore, as a “normal” citizen of the new world system.

Furthermore, only family members had the right to ask for Nico, but the little boy had no more “official” relatives.

Anyway, they would lie to him, Frank said to himself. It was just senseless to call the orphanage.

Thorsten Wilden, the often paternally appearing leader of Ivas, whom Frank viewed as mentor and friend, was not the right person to talk about psychological problems and inner fears. The gray-haired man was just too sober for these things.

Kohlhaas had also a good relationship to his daughter, but he avoided to talk with her about any emotional stuff. She took him for a weird guy with a heart of iron, and that was the image Frank wanted to preserve. Hence, he tried to hide the dark marks on his soul from her attention and was internally ashamed, because of his psychological flaws. Bäumer had already confronted him with his screams in the night, but Frank was just talking about any bad dreams. It was nothing serious, as he assured.

During the whole winter, there was a lot to repair. Some frost and storm damages in the village, and the daily snow shoveling, kept the two rebels on the go.

Besides, Frank killed time with the intensive study of the Russian language, with the support of Wilden. Bäumer had meanwhile given it up to improve his knowledge – for the moment. Sometimes he became angry, when Frank boasted with his new language skills during the dinner.

After a boring and lonely Christmas, some of the villagers celebrated the turn of the year at the Wildens. The former entrepreneur had organized a whole armada of Russian vodka and the party finally became a general booze-up. Frank Kohlhaas and Alfred Bäumer drunk all they could get and went home in the early morning hours, before they could behave badly. Julia Wilden had suffered some lewd remarks from Frank and had reacted very sulkily on her young admirer.

„Do you think...the girl is still angry?“, slurred Frank on the way home and put his arm on Alf's shoulder.

„Don't know. Who can understand these women?“, said Bäumer and staggered ahead.

„I nevertheless...only nevertheless...only said... that she is a sweet Blondchen, he, he!“, stammered the young man and almost fell on a huge pile of snow.

„Yes, right! You are right, buddy!“ , answered Alf.

„Why was that so amusing?“, muttered Frank.

„Oh!“, bleated Bäumer boozily. “I really tell you, Kohl...Kohlhase! Damn! I have almost forgotten your name, buddy! She is nevertheless...always...somehow...such a prude. Miss “Do-not-touch-me”...I know women, they are all like that, understand? It is normal! Totally normal behavior of women, you know?“

Alfred's experiences with the other sex were not the newest and Frank knew this. So he made some scathing remarks, while his friend became angry.

“What you mean by that, Kohlhaas? I had a lot of women before my time in that fucking prison!“, grumbled Alf.

“I just meant, that your last girlfriend was...“, teased him Frank and gawked at the tall man to his right.

“Fuck you!“, hissed Alf and gave his friend a punch. Frank tumbled into the snow. “It is not my fault that in...in this dump are no women...Got it?“

His friend straightened up confusedly and staggered away like a dazed bull.

“I should chat Julia up! What do you think? Eh?“, he slurred and tried to brush off the snow from his trousers.

„Do what you want, man. Yes, why not? Good...good idea, Frank!“, said Alfred.

“You think...it would be good? Eh?“

“Yes! Chat her up, brother!“

“Die süße Maus...“

“Yes! Hey, Frank...”

“What?”

“Do you know, what “Kohlhaas” means in English?”

“What is that supposed to mean?”

“I just thought...”

“Don’t make me angry, Baumstumpf!”

“Ha, ha! It means...”Cabbage Hare”...Isn’t that funny?”

“Just shut up! Bäumer...”Tree-Man”...whatever...Burp!”

“You are Mr. Cabbage Hare! This sounds much funnier, ha, ha! Ca...Caggage...eh...Mr. Cabbage Head...”

“I don’t care about English, idiot! Now...Come on!”

The two drunk rebels still waded through the slush for a while and finally reached their house. After several attempts to open the front door, they had made it and dropped into the dark corridor.

Their heads roared and totally hazy they crept into their bedrooms. At this night, the alcohol became the guardian over Frank’s sleep. He dreamed about nothing, it was just black in his head. This was wonderful.

Julia had not been very impressed by Frank’s drunken swank. When he came back to Wilden’s house, the young woman just welcomed him with restraint. Apart from that, Kohlhaas was ignored.

The February of the year 2031 came and the weather in Lithuania was terrible again. Sleets and icy wind anguished Ivas and Frank could hardly leave his more or less warm house which was still heated by only one single wood fired oven. The young rebel did not care about political questions at this time. Casually, he sat in front of the old television, the christmas gift of Wilden, or trawled the Internet for the newest messages from around the world. But most of the time he thought about Julia and his own aimless life. His falsified Scanchip that HOK’s ingenious computer

knowledge had made possible, provided an income, an electronic account for a work, he did not do, and for a person who did not exist. Nevertheless, he had enough Globes to live.

Frank had a home, a roof over his head, and a warm room to hang around – and a friend: Alfred Bäumer. Thorsten Wilden was also some kind of friend, perhaps more something like a mentor. Despite everything, Kohlhaas had no real reason to live for. The killing of Leon-Jack Wechsler had been a part of his personal revenge and in the first weeks after the successful bomb attempt, he had felt like a hero.

With a proudly swollen chest he had walked down the roads of the village and many of the inhabitants, who had distrusted him before, met him now with respect and open admiration. That was great. But this condition slowly evaporated again and monotonousness, aimlessness and a gnawing boredom began to rule Frank's life.

Moreover, the young man felt lonely. He often thought about Julia in the quiet hours, in which he sat brooding in his room. Then he asked himself if he had ever met this woman in a "normal" life. Sometimes he also remembered Nico, his nephew.

What had become of him? Meanwhile, the boy had to be about four or five years old. Was he still in that orphanage in Berlin?

One day, HOK looked at Nico's Scanchip files to do Frank a favour. But there was nothing new. The little boy was still listed as a "child in public care". Nico was somewhere out there, far away, in the administration sector "Central Europe".

There Frank sat now: mentally unstable, dissatisfied, without a clear aim and also without a female reference person, he really yearned for - if he was honest to himself.

He remembered Tina, his last girlfriend, from the time when he had lived in Berlin. In those days, he had still worked as a daywage man in the production complex 42B.

She had left him after six months, and had moved out of the ugly apartment block, in which he had carved out his miserable existence. One day, as Frank remembered, he had just been alone again. Tina had been vanished, leaving no trace of her presence.

The following month changed everything. In any case, on the stage of global policy. Kohlhaas had heard nothing at all about the political tensions between the World Government and the rebellious state of Japan in the last months, but now, an extensive attack against Matsumoto was started by the international media. Suddenly the news stations just knew only one topic: Japan! Japan here and Japan there.

Reports for hours, about the Japanese armament efforts and the underground buildings in the densely populated area around Tokyo, dominated the evening program. President Matsumoto had given the order to build huge bunkers that the civilian population could be evacuated in case of bomb attacks.

Of course, only a small part of the inhabitants of the megapolis, the urban center of the Japanese main island, could be accommodated there, in case of emergency, but it still was an attempt to be not perfectly unprepared in a coming war. Nevertheless, the international press talked of “underground armament factories”. The media clamored and called these subterranean facilities “war factories” or “arsenals of nuclear weaponry”. The bunkers were the proof, in their eyes, that Japan was planning a war against the rest of the world.

On 01.03.2031, the film studios of Hollywood punctually brought a war propaganda film called „Night over

Yokohama” to the cinemas. Frank and Alfred downloaded it on an illegal website and were shocked about the malicious grade of agitation against the island state.

In that film, the Japanese, all together trigger-happy maniacs and militarists, attacked peaceful China and slaughtered women and children.

Their leader, president Marusaki Kokushi, who demanded world domination with flashing eyes and a mad look, opened a never ending war against everything and everyone outside the Japanese islands. He collected the skulls of his enemies as a hobby, and his dark, sadistic henchmen served him regularly human meat.

The picture of the insane president of Japan was somehow ridiculous and his exaggerated tantrums appeared silly, but the intention of the movie was clear. It should increase the aversion of the people against the Japanese.

“Night over Yokohama” was a primitive piece of propaganda, but it was nevertheless effective. Murderous hordes of Asian psychopaths dominated the cinema halls for weeks. Furthermore, the Japanese had an eerie technology that they had only invented to kill millions of helpless people without any reason.

However, the hero of the movie was sergeant Steve Williams, an elite soldier of the GCF, who could finally eliminate the evil Japanese dictator, destroying his dark legions almost in a solo run. Frank and Alfred were disgusted of this mean concoction, but they knew that the subliminal message of the movie reached millions of people all over the world.

„My God! Sergeant Williams saves the world! What a stupid shit!”, groaned Bäumer and turned off the television.

„Well, he kills ten Japanese soldiers with every shot“, said Frank with a disdainful smile. Perhaps the guy is real? The secret weapon of the GCF, ha, ha! “

„Anyhow, that film released a true wave of protest in Japan. Even Matsumoto, and he is meant as “crazy tyrant”, delivered a governmental declaration and demands a worldwide prohibition of this bad flicker. But they will ignore his wishes. It is always the same...”, answered Alf angrily.

„However, this is the most malicious movie, I have ever seen!“, said Kohlhaas.

Subsequently, the two men still read some articles, concerning the Japanese reactions on „Night over Yokohama“, and finally went to bed.

On the next day, the Russian lesson with Wilden failed - more or less. The former entrepreneur talked instead about the propaganda film, he had also watched some days ago. Frank listened to his remarks and thought, that he was right.

„What an insolence! Such a primitive defaming! It becomes still worse!“, grumbled Wilden and stamped his foot. “This is much more than simple animosity, this is the psychological preparation of the masses for another war!”

“Are you sure, Thorsten?“, asked Frank.

„Yes! There is only atrocity propaganda against Matsumoto on television - since weeks. They want to swear the world to war, I feel it!“, answered Wilden. But Frank was not sure about this and seemed to doubt.

“I just hope, the damn Lodge Brothers will keep their greedy fingers away from the only free nation on this planet“, mumbled Kohlhaas.

„What we hope, doesn't interest the World Government. Wait and see! I studied their methods for so many years. This smells like a coming military strike. And my friend Masaru agrees...“, grouched the village boss and sat down on a kitchen chair. „Another coffee?“

Frank denied the question and asked: „Who is Masaru?“

“Ach, didn't I tell you about Masaru? Well, we made contact again, a few weeks ago. Masaru Taishi is an old affiliate of

mine. From my times as a businessman! He lived for many years in Düsseldorf and was the chief of the German branch of a big Japanese concern. Meanwhile, he has gone back to Tokyo with his family. We were good friends at that time, so I wrote him an email, in order to ask if he is still well. He is at my age, a very nice guy.“

„Aha!“, returned Frank and smiled.

„Really! He always gives me the most actual informations about the situation in Japan. Believe me, Japan is a rising nation, since Mastumoto has come to power. He provided not only a reasonable social security system in his country, and jobs for millions of people, he also gave the Japanese a new self esteem.

Masaru admires him, as most of the Japanese. The president promotes culture and education, supports the families and so forth. This man is a great leader, loved by his people. That`s why the World Government hates him.“

„You have your contacts everywhere, isn`t it?“, said Frank and grinned ambiguously.

„Why not? I will visit Masaru one day. Japan, this would be a great trip, boys...“, answered Wilden.

„And Masaru also thinks, that they will attack Japan sometime?“

“He has no doubt! And this will be no fun. My friend told me, that the Japanese are full of sorrow, because of a possible assault of the GCF. The government in Tokyo has already forewarned the population“, explained the head of the rebel base. „Meanwhile, there are already exercises with flier alarm in every bigger city. The Japanese government seems to know, what will come over them...“

Frank Kohlhaas groaned and asked for another coffee. Would the only nation on earth, that was a ray of hope in this dark age, soon be crushed by the forces of the World Government?

The young man sipped at his cup and disappointedly looked around. Wilden continued his speech: „These bunkers, that the media describe as arsenals of nuclear weaponry, are expanded at present, according to Masaru. I think, you all know, what that means.”

„Do you believe that Japan would have a chance at all if the GCF attacks?“, asked Frank.

„This is difficult to say. Probably, the country doesn't have great chances, although I can hardly judge the situation from here. The Japanese can be fanatic warriors if they have to defend themselves. They have already proven it many times. It depends on how much power and money the World Government will pump into a war against this renegade state. If they leave Japan in peace and other nations see, that independence is possible, there is the danger, that more and more other countries could follow a man like Mastumoto.

And the discontent is enormous, in many regions of the world. You know this, Frank. Japan is a thorn in the side of the New World Order and the Lodge Brothers have no other alternative than war. They just can't accept, that a state becomes independent from their omnipotence. Matsumoto refuses to fall on his knees in front of the great pyramids, he doesn't submit to the self-appointed chosen few. No, they can't ignore him!”

Wilden's words sounded plausible and the young man nodded approvingly. The former businessman had analyzed the situation transparently and his conclusions seemed to be right.

It was an oppressing feeling and the remarks of the gray-haired man gave not much room for hope. Mastumoto had chosen the hard way, the way of confrontation with a superior and cruel enemy. But it should still become worse.

It was at the end of the month, when a disturbing event shook the world public. Thorsten Wilden had already rung up Frank and Alf in the early morning hours, to tell them about the newest headlines of the world press.

In the dark hours of the last night, the city of Hangzhou, at the east coast of China, had become victim of a devastating attack with biological weapons. At several places, tactical missiles had hit the city, spreading clouds of deadly substances. Hundreds of people had been killed in only a few minutes. In the following days, over 50000 inhabitants of Hangzhou died from the effects of an increasing epidemic. A mile-long quarantine zone was established around the city by the authorities of the sub-administration sector „China“, while thousands of journalists reported about the disaster around the clock. Now it was valid to look for the causer of the epidemic, and it did not last long till the media had found the guilty ones: The Japanese!

A furious nagging started immediately, and the first messages came on television, that the missiles had been fired from a Japanese warship - according to “secret GSA reports”.

“Mastumoto plans an invasion of China!”, screamed the international press.

Who faced the reports critically, was simply hushed by the furious shouting of the warmongers of the World Government. Foreign diplomats just got the prohibition to speak with Matsumoto or one his advisors.

At the same time, countless angry Chinese went on the streets and demanded revenge for the attack on Hangzhou. It was the rebirth of the old hate between China and Japan, and the international media tried everything to increase the tensions.

The powerful gentlemen behind the scenes had achieved their goal and kept the hate boiling, while the sub-governor

of the sector, Li-Zheng, already proclaimed the war against Japan. So the media machinery of the Lodge Brothers spat their lies all over Asia and the rest of the world, without any intermission or objectivity.

Thorsten Wilden was deeply frightened. He nervously ran through Frank`s and Alf`s kitchen and waved his arms. However, the two men were still completely overtired and disturbed too. With narrow eyes, they looked at the village boss.

„This is incomprehensible! Biological weapons! Unbelievable, these criminals stop at nothing!“, screamed the former businessman.

„Nevertheless, they have no proofs at all...“, said Bäumer, but the rebel leader cut in.

„Proofs! Proofs! They don`t need any proofs, they just blame Japan for the massacre! This is just a part of their campaign!“, hissed Wilden and his face became red.

„An attack with biological weapons?“, Frank was still confused.

“Yes, as I have already said! It were missiles with a lethal virus inside. Anyhow, this is what those media rats tell us. Who really knows the truth, Frank? Nobody! Now, the military strike against Japan is justified in front of everybody! And believe me: They will start their war - soon!“

Frank and Alfred became silent. Unfortunately, the leader of the rebel base was mostly right with his forebodings...

Volunteers for Japan

While Ivas was afflicted by heavy rainstorms and Frank had to save his belongings from a flooded cellar, the Japanese situation heated up. Both men already avoided to watch TV since a few days, because they couldn't stand the continuous agitation anymore.

Yesterday, Bäumer had driven to Kedainiai with John Thorphy's car to buy some buckets of wall paint. For today they had planned to paint the hall of the lower floor in a beautiful orange-brown color.

However, Kohlhaas had suffered a wakeful night. Nightmares or bad foreshadowings had still haunted him in his dark bedroom, but on the next morning he could hardly remember any details.

The idea to paint today, did not please Frank at all, because he felt languid and exhausted. But his friend Alf finally pressed him to join the renovation works. And it was a lot of work to do in this shabby house. After a while, they had painted a part of the ugly, gray walls in the hallway and Kohlhaas slowly became a bit more motivated. A beautiful environment fits to a healing soul, as Frank said to himself. This new year started with big clearing-up operations and many restoration works, also for the other inhabitants of Ivas.

Meanwhile, Steffen de Vries had taken over one of the old shops which had rotted for years, and already sold there various stuff and housewares. Thereby, the small village had its first "official" shop and some of the things the Fleming was hoarding, were quite needful. In the meantime, about 30 new inhabitants had come to the village and had moved into some of the old houses. Wilden had given the

order to HOK to check everyone of them. He furthermore said that no more settlers would be accepted by him.

Among the new neighbours were a Dutch family from Amsterdam, a family from France and an Englishman, who had escaped from a detention center. Frank had had not much contact to the "new ones" so far, except for Ives, a Frenchman. He had talked with him about the situation in France a few days ago.

Ives seemed to be a nice guy and he had told Frank, that he had left his homeland over night, because of some illegal political activities. The remaining new inhabitants of Ivas were from Germany and Austria, where the pursuit of unpleasant persons had increased.

At midday, Kohlhaas went to the quaint shop of the Belgian, in order to buy a new paint roller. Meanwhile, they had halfway finished their work. Some of the walls looked really nice now and even the front door of the house had finally been repaired.

Steffen de Vries looked boredly through the dirty windows of his small shop, waiting for customers. But today, the rush of new buyers seemed to keep within bounds. When he saw the young man, coming from the square in the center of the village, he smiled and raised his hands.

„Hello Steffen!“, welcomed him Frank. „Still making millions?“

„Just forget it! But anything is better than nothing. I can have this old shop for free, as Wilden says. Yesterday, I have sold a jumper cable to one of the new ones. That was really a stubborn guy. His name is Richard, he has hardly said a word“, told the merchant.

„I need a new paint roller, Steffen!“, remarked Frank and looked at some boxes which were chock-full of all kinds of useful junk.

„Eh? Paint roller? I don't think...“, Steffen de Vries disappeared into the backroom and Kohlhaas heard him rummage around.

„You know, we paint our hallway and I have only this old roller here. Thus, I can't use it anymore“, said Kohlhaas.

„I'm sorry. I don't have a paint roller. Only a large brush. But it's still completely new!“, it resounded out of the backroom. The stocky Belgian returned and shook his head.

„Okay, maybe I will take the brush, it's better than nothing...“, muttered Frank.

Steffen de Vries offered a tea to his potential customer and fetched his cigarettes. Then he scratched his reddish three-day beard and let his broad cheeks quake. The Fleming looked somehow funny now, and Frank had to suppress a laughter.

„Well, do you want to join the Japanese fight for freedom too, Frank?“, asked the Belgian then.

„What do you mean by that?“, asked Frank with surprise.

„You didn't hear it yet? Sven and the other whippersnappers, here in our village, want to join a foreign volunteer corps to help the Japanese if the GCF attacks“, explained de Vries.

„Eh? No!“, replied Kohlhaas.

„They could need someone like you there. Sven has already asked for Alf and you“, said the Belgian.

„Volunteers for Japan?“ Frank was dumbstruck.

„Wilden has told me, the day before yesterday, that over ten thousand volunteers from many countries had already joined the Japanese army. European rebels, men from Iraq and the other Arab countries, Asians, Americans and whoever...“, told the Fleming.

„So many?“, asked Frank.

„And in the following months, thousands will probably still come. There is something brewing. The Japanese high

command wants to summarize these foreign militiamen in volunteer divisions. I have also thought about going to Japan, but I'm just too old, and in addition, I have a family", said the man from Flanders and lighted another cigarette.

„Aha, Sven and the others...“, hummed Frank.

Sven Weber was a tall, blonde hotspur and was eager to fight for Japan against the “Global Control Force”. He lived with his parents here in Ivas. In the last weeks, a bunch of other young chaps had clustered around the charismatic young man. All of the youngsters just knew only one topic anymore: The heroic fight for freedom which they dreamed about to join.

„Well, you know Sven. He talks about nothing else, since days: War, war, war! I'm indeed not that enthusiastic, but the boy still misses some life experience. I told him, that this won't be an adventure vacation and he should better think twice, before he goes to Eastern Asia. But he still ignores all my warnings. You are probably his great idol, Frank. Your action in Paris has...“, said Steffen de Vries, but Kohlhaas cut in.

“I am his idol? What did you say, my friend? I thought that he doesn't like me very much.“ Frank marvelled.

“No! Sven adores you! Believe me!“, returned the Belgian.

“After your operation in Paris, I had to tell him every little detail. He nearly came every evening and pumped me with his countless questions.”

“Really? That's new for me...“, said Frank.

Steffen de Vries looked at his interlocutor with a grin and explained: „The boy is your fan, Frank! And also Alf is a real hero for him. When Sven was here, some days ago, he enthused about you all the time. He knows five or six other young men who want to accompany him. Also Rolf, the son of Kai Hugenthal, is as keen as mustard for Japan.”

Frank Kohlhaas didn't know, what he should think about this. It made him internally proud that these young men treated him as a hero, but he could imagine, what a real war would mean for those teenagers, driven by war fever.

Surely, it was politically very important that Japan could resist the power of the World Government, should it really come to an attack, but he was not very glad about the fact, that a group of youngsters wanted to join a nearly desperate fight - just to impose Alf and him.

Killing people was no fun and had nothing to do with an adventure trip for bored boys. And the probability not to come home again, was very big if GCF forces would really assault Japan.

Moments later, Frank said goodbye and went with the new brush, that Steffen de Vries had finally donated to him, back to the house and continued to paint the hall. He was thoughtful and taciturn for the rest of the day. In the evening, he told Bäumer about his conversation with Steffen de Vries and the tall man from Dortmund was also more than disturbed.

Wilden ran through his office and gestured wildly, when Frank and Alfred asked him about that "volunteer thing". „This boy drives me insane since days. After I had told him, that more and more freedom fighters from all over the world go to Japan, in order to support Matsumoto, Sven is totally excited. In the last week, about 5000 partisans from Iran have gone to the island. Masaru told me that. It has been a big topic in the Japanese media, after the slogan: „You see, the whole world joins our fight for freedom! “

„How do all those men come to Japan?“, asked Alf now.

„They just seep through the meshes of the control network of the World Government in small groups. Then they gather somewhere in Japan“, explained the village boss. „Who is

caught by the GCF, as a potential resistance fighter, is liquidated immediately. But the partisans from Iran, and also many other groups of rebels, have developed good structures in the last years. They even have their own ships or other transport facilities.“

„How does Sven want to come to Japan?“, asked Frank with a tense expression.

„Very simple! By airplane, as a passenger. He wants to take five men with him. All travel separately, so that they are not noticeable as a group. Starting from the 01.07.2031, all passenger flights to Japan will be forbidden, the same will be valid for cruises. But currently, it is still possible. Soon, nobody will be able to reach Japan anymore.

The state will be perfectly isolated from all other countries. And the Japanese will cordon off their country too. Furthermore, they will arrest or execute everyone who seems to be an agent of the Lodge Brothers. The sole exception are businessmen with special permissions. But this is nothing for us “normal people”, Frank. I think, Sven and the rest will reach Japan without bigger problems if the hurry up”, said Wilden

„Do you endorse this operation at all?“, asked Alf then.

„Well, I can't forbid them to join the fight. Further, it is extremely important, that Japan is supported by every available soldier from other countries. Every honourable young man should actually be a volunteer in this substantial conflict!“, pontificated the gray-haired man.

„Thus, you also expect that from us? We are finally the “heroes” of Ivas - at least, in Sven`s eyes!“, said Bäumer and looked emphatically in Wilden`s direction.

„This is your own thing. I won't force anybody. If I were younger, I would immediately join the Japanese army, even because it is so incomprehensibly important for the rest of mankind. This state must not fall, it must be defended!

However, I'm nearly sixty years old and would probably be no great assistance on the front. Moreover, I must keep Ivas running. But you two are good fighters, what you have already proven in Paris. The best men in our base! You could be a real gain for the Japanese army. Nevertheless, I say this with mixed feelings, because I don't want to lose you, boys", explained Wilden and looked out the window, as if the whole situation would be unpleasant for him. Frank and Alfred did not reply.

Bäumer finally stood up from the black leather couch in Wilden's office and said: „We will think about it. Could you accommodate us there if we would really go to Japan?“

„That would probably be the smallest problem. I have already spoken with Masaru Taishi about this. You, or someone of the boys, could stay in his house.“

Wilden avoided to look at his comrades and turned around.

„I understand! You have already organized everything! However, the “great heroes of Paris” shall not miss the coming slaughter, right?“, said Kohlhaas spitefully.

The leader of Ivas was silent and just harrumphed quietly.

„It is your own decision. Organizing is my job here. If I wouldn't organize, Ivas would just go down the drain. That's the way it is!“, answered the former entrepreneur and still avoided to look at the faces of his two fellows.

„We will come back to you!“, said Alfred and signaled his friend, that it was time to go now. The two rebels went out of the room and left Wilden's house.

Julia, his daughter, came to meet them in the corridor and whispered some greetings. Alfred just nodded, while Frank looked away and didn't answer her.

When the two men walked through their freshly painted hallway and sat down in the kitchen, they didn't talk at all. Today they felt not as heroes and had moreover the impression that the village boss tried to apply pressure to

them in a subtle way. Some days and nights they just brooded or discussed the for and against of a journey to Japan. In contrast to Sven they had already been able to satisfy their desires for adventures one year ago in Paris. And both were glad to be still alive. Furthermore, the men could imagine, what big calamity this coming war would bring upon the population of Japan. No, this would not be an adventure holiday – it would be a trip to hell.

On the other hand, they had chosen a life as resistance fighters and armed conflicts with the enemy were just a part of it. Japan was so far away, on the other side of the globe, but the battle for the only state on earth which had openly challenged the power of the Lodge Brothers was crucial for all other countries.

If the GCF would not be able to conquer the archipelago, it could become a disaster for the World Government which had the image of an invincible force. However, this conflict was of great importance. Was it not more than necessary to save the only rebellious nation on the planet from the terror of the enemy? All the eyes of mankind looked at Japan in these days.

Should they just live their little lives here in Ivas? Was it right to ignore the upcoming evil without doing something? No, this was not the right way in the long term. The fight was not over. To the contrary, it had just begun. A brave nation had risen, tearing the chains of slavery to pieces, and now, the existence of this nation was endangered.

In these days, it was Japan that gave so many millions a dawn of hope. This state showed the world, that resistance was possible - that the enemy was not godlike.

A milestone for the further course of world history had not been the assassination of Leon-Jack Wechsler, but rather the freedom fight of president Matsumoto. If he and his people would survive, then it would prove the vulnerability of

the World Government. It would just clarify, that the Lodge Brothers were no “dark gods” with the mark of invincibility, but only unscrupulous criminals. The days passed and the brains of Frank and Alfred still worked strenuously. Shortly afterwards, they went to Sven and spoke with him about the pro and cons of the whole thing. Finally, they consented. If they would not fight now, when would they ever want to fight then? Frank Kohlhaas and Alfred Bäumer decided to join the Japanese army.

Masaru Taishi

In the early morning hours of 07.05.2031, GCF units landed on Okinawa in the south of Japan. Over one million soldiers came out of the enormous warships which had come from China and the Philippines. Moreover, several tank squadrons and a whole air fleet were stationed here. The occupation of Okinawa, that small and strategically very important archipelago, came unexpected and was already a military act.

Not until the year 1972, the former USA had given the rule over the island group back to the old Japanese state, after it had been conquered by the Americans in 1945. At that time, about 120000 soldiers had lost their lives in the great battle for the jungle-covered archipelago.

Since the end of the Second World War, the United States had built up an enormous military base here which could always keep an eye on Japan.

Even after the transfer of the administrative sovereignty to the East Asian state in 1972, this base had remained and had furthermore been used by U.S. troops. In the course of the abolition of the Japanese state in 2020, the Lodge Brothers had converted the old U.S. military base to a GCF base, that had again been dissolved after Matsumoto's takeover and the re-establishment of Japan.

Thus, Okinawa had been an apple of discord for decades, but now the giant armed force of the World Government took the archipelago without a single shot.

The prefect, the administrative head of Okinawa, Mr. Hirokazu Nakashima, reacted perfectly helpless on the occupation. After only two days, he was arrested and executed by GSA agents, because of „crimes against world

peace and humanity”. President Matsumoto spoke of a brazen assault, however, the still insufficiently prepared Japanese army held back and had to accept the loss of the archipelago.

In the meantime, the world press celebrated the “great victory“ and spoke of a „first success against the fascist Matsumoto regime“. The old U.S. military base finally became the strategic headquarter of the southern invasion army of the GCF.

General David Williams, the commander-in-chief of the Global Control Force, who should attack Japan from the south resided here from now on. At the same time, the recruitments for the GCF ran at full speed in China. Innumerable young Chinese volunteered, in order to join the revenge campaign against Japan.

„Retaliation for the massacre of Hangzhou!“ was the slogan of the international propagandists, who relentlessly agitated in the Chinese provinces. In the north of Japan, another huge army was stationed on Sakhalin island which was separated from Japan only by a small strait.

The largest city on the isle, Yuzno Sakhalin, was converted to a giant military camp. At the east coast of China and Korea, still more GCF troops were waiting for the attack on Northern Japan. This second army was under the command of general Daniel Schwarzer. Nevertheless, the World Government still called for more infantry platoons, tanks, cannons and airplanes. Millions of soldiers deployed in front of Japan`s borders, preparing for the great assault. Aircraft carriers, submarines and destroyers encircled the rebellious island state, while the dawn of war was rising.

For now, however, the huge army just waited, because further preparations were still necessary. Military camps were built overnight and supplies were hoarded. Meanwhile, the Japanese government acted disconcerted and it was

conspicuous, that Matsumoto was scared of the coming conflict with this terrifying force. The leader of the Japanese nation abstained from any official statements for the foreign press after the illegal occupation of Okinawa. Instead, he held a radio speech to his people. Matsumoto encouraged the Japanese, to be defensive and watchful: „The war will probably be forced on us, my compatriots. Our enemies have ignored all my appeals for peace again. Prepare your hearts to fight!“

In reverse, the international media called the president a “miserable coward” and tried to heat up the situation. “Okinawa liberated by GCF troops: Matsumoto does not strike back! Is the warmonger suddenly afraid to fight?” headlined the “New Britain Times“ from London.

The men in Ivas read the newest reports with the usual suspicion. Thorsten Wilden was once again furious about the brazen press agitation. The others, however, hadn't expected anything else and reacted much more calmly. Meanwhile, Frank Kohlhaas and Alfred Bäumer spent the sunny days of May 2031 with firing practices and tried to prepare for their mission of war.

Sven and the other younger men followed them like fanatical believers. If Frank and Alfred thought about Sven and his fellows they were not sure, if everyone of them would really be a good soldier.

Sven was the born Landser, already a charismatic young man with his 23 years: Tall, with blond hair, bright eyes, audacious, bold and very insolent. But not all of his fellows were prototypes of the “brave Teuton”.

For example Rolf Hugenthal. He was 18 years old, sturdy and not very articulated. Nevertheless, he was a reliable young man, certainly a bit beef-witted. His parents had come to Ivas five years ago and were from Hamburg.

Furthermore, the brothers Christian and Dennis Müller belonged to Sven`s group. Both were two athletic young men with a remarkable talent for shooting. They were about twenty years old.

Thomas Baastfeldt was of Dutch origin and lived with his father and his two sisters here in the village, since over eight years. He was a little berserk and seemed to be easily attractionable and aggressive. His grey eyes often looked around with an element of truculence. Baastfeldt made the impression of being always ready for a brawl.

At last, there was Michael Ziegler who had celebrated his 18th birthday only one month ago. This young boy was something like the weak point in Sven`s little "army", because Ziegler appeared shy and anxious. The teenager was relatively lean and had a salient pointed nose, why the others jokefully named him „birdie“. He lived with his parents in a ramshackle, old house. Michael was their only child. There had already been controversies at home for weeks, because, above all, his mother tried to forbid him to follow his friends to Japan.

And it was clear that the unhappy young man had no real enthusiasm to be trained for a real war. Sven had just persuaded him to join the volunteers.

Meanwhile, the blond man habitually roared at Ziegler if he behaved awkwardly again or did not answer Sven`s expectations. Sometimes it was so extreme that Frank and Alfred had to intervene.

It was at the end of the month, when Michael Ziegler`s mother unexpectedly emerged on the field behind Wilden`s house, during another firing practice. The village boss was instructing and observing the young volunteers who shot at bottles or cans. Mother Ziegler came to him with an eager expression and reared up in front of him. She just looked

ridiculous, because she was a very petite person. Nevertheless, she made a resolved impression.

„Mr. Wilden!“, she hissed. „Now, I will say it again clearly to you: My son doesn't want to join Sven's volunteer group. Since weeks, this impudent boy pressurizes him and molests my Michael with his stupid visions of war!”

The other volunteers on the field haggardly stared at the furious woman with the shrill voice. She clenched her bony fists and her little head, covered with gray hair, was whipping back and forth.

However, the village boss was surprised: “Mrs. Ziegler, believe me, nobody has forced Michael to take part in the fight for Japan. It was his own decision!”

„This is a lie, Wilden! Sven urges him day by day and calls him a wimp!“, she screamed angrily.

The rebel leader seemed to be somehow overwhelmed with her mother instinct and called for Sven. Then he asked him: „Okay, tell me the truth! Does Michael Ziegler really wants to join your group?“

„Of course, Thorsten! Michael, come here!“, shouted Sven and looked threateningly at the shy, young man.

„Yes...I want to go to Japan!“, stuttered Ziegler.

„This is nothing but nonsense, Michael! You already said to me yesterday, that you are scared of all this. It's only Sven's fault, as you have told me...“, bickered mother Ziegler and stamped her foot.

Thorsten Wilden grumbled: „I have anyway the impression that your son is not very suitable for the front. This war will be brutal and cruel, and the whole thing is nothing for your boy.”

„My husband was politically active for so many years and we had only problems with all this. That was the reason, why we had to flee to Ivas, Wilden. Nevertheless, you know

Dieter. He is a born fighter, but my Michael is a peaceful person and he is my only child.”

Suddenly the mother began to cry and stared at Sven in desperate anger.

“Keep your fingers away from my Michael!”, she hissed.

Wilden almost lost his head, while Mrs. Ziegler transformed into a howling fury. Sven tried to explain her some political things, but she became more and more hysterical.

“Play your war games with another boy, not with my child!”, she snarled and tried to slap the blond rebel. Sven just turned away, railed and asked Wilden for a decision.

Frank, Alfred and the remaining volunteers observed the scene from the field and appeared helpless. This angry mother was worse than a GCF tank. Michael Ziegler looked ashamedly at the ground and said nothing.

“Go home with your mother! Stop this charade now!”, said the village boss and Michael Ziegler walked off the drill ground.

„Yeah, go to your mama!”, yelled Sven and kicked angrily against a wooden post. Frank ordered him to shut up and gave the hothead an assault rifle.

„It`s enough now! Let the boy go!”, muttered Bäumer, staring at Sven with a look of appeal.

Mother Ziegler and her son trudged away and Michael wasn`t seen for the next days. Now, only seven volunteers were had remained to start their journey to Japan. But perhaps it was better that way.

Frank and Alfred had agreed upon to fly on 29.06.2031 from Vilnius to Tokyo. Sven and the other four men should fly to the islands before that. Wilden told them to travel either alone or as a pair. Meanwhile, the village boss had organized further accommodation possibilities, together with Taishi. Kohlhaas and Bäumer spent the next weeks with the basic training of the younger fighters. During a close combat

practice, Alf gave the impetuous Sven, more or less inadvertently, a black eye. After that, the pugnacious rebel cooled down a bit.

On 10.06.2031, Christian and Dennis Müller were brought to the airport of Vilnius and started their journey to the Far East. Admittedly, the two young men were not very noticeable, but nevertheless, HOK changed their Scanchips carefully, giving them new false identities. After several hours, the inconspicuous brothers landed in Yokohama and were finally accommodated at a friend of Taishi.

However, the two volunteers were interrogated by the Japanese police and had to stay for three hours at the airport. A Mr. Ishito, an acquaintance of Masaru Taishi, had to vouch for them. When Christian Müller told Wilden on the phone that everything was all right, even Frank and Alf had a better feeling.

Some days later, they celebrated Sven's departure with a proper bout. On the next day, the young man also drove to Vilnius to start his desiderated trip to the Japanese war zone. His parents were not that euphoric on the last day before his takeoff and Frank had to calm Sven's crying mother several times.

The rebel finally landed in Kobe, where his Japanese contact person was already waiting for him. Shortly afterwards, the volunteer sent an email to Wilden and insured that everything was okay.

Rolf Hugenthal and the young Dutchman Thomas Baastfeldt left Ivas two days later. They landed in Tokyo and had no problems at the airport. Nevertheless, Hugenthal, the sturdy man, had been tortured by aviaphobia and had spent the flight with stomachache. But HOK's falsified Scanchips had once again been perfect. The volunteers had carried almost no luggage, because the Japanese army had all the necessary equipment for them. After two weeks, the young

men were transferred to various military camps, where they were assigned to platoons and divisions which often consisted exclusively of foreign volunteers.

Sven came to a military base in Kumamoto in the Japanese south. The Müller brothers were brought to Sendai, Baastfeldt came to Kagoshima and Rolf Hugenthal to Abashiri in the north of Japan. Thorsten Wilden got several emails, in which the young men reported about their impressions. Slowly, the war fever seemed to vanish and reality came back.

Who had thought that he could spend a nice adventure holiday in Japan, was soon confronted with a sober and hard camp life and a merciless military training. The Japanese officers also drilled the foreign volunteers with their usual hardness.

Nevertheless, the war was still gray theory, and the volunteers did not know, what was really waiting for them. The GCF had occupied Okinawa, but these islands were far away and hardly concerned their lives. Everything seemed to be quiet. But the peace was deceitful.

Frank Kohlhaas discussed with Wilden some details of his flight to Japan again. On this occasion, he also visited his daughter, in order to apologize for his rude behaviour at the last New Year's Eve party.

In the meantime, the leader of the rebel base made a checklist for Frank and Alf for the next day, while Kohlhaas went down to the living room. Wilden was very busy, rummaged around in the drawers of his desk and was just absent-minded. Meanwhile, Frank tried to take a chance and left his office on quiet soles. Julia seemed to have waited for the young man, welcoming him with a gentle smile. She accepted his monosyllabic apology and embraced him, while Frank still behaved clumsily.

Nevertheless, he was on the way to a dangerous operation and had to say goodbye to her. Since the beginning of this year, Wilden's daughter had ignored him, because of his uncharming behavior. But now everything seemed to be forgotten and Frank's reconciliation with her finally took a big load off her mind.

And the young man knew, that Julia's annoyance had been justified - the pretty and intelligent daughter of the village boss just couldn't put up with everything.

„I don't like these Japanese...“, said Julia and looked at the ceiling. She sat at the kitchen table and played absently with a little egg cup of plastic. Frank didn't know what to say and scratched his head.

„What do you want there, at the other end of the world? What has Japan to do with us?“, she asked.

“Thus, it is important that the Japanese stands their ground if the GCF attacks!“, explained Kohlhaas not very convincingly.

“I know. My father says the same stuff since weeks, and he is totally proud of you. In the worst case, seven young men from our village will just die there. However, this is madness!“, she groaned and looked desperately unhappy.

Frank tried to turn the discussion back to the New Year's Eve party.

„Eh, Julia! You aren't angry anymore, isn't it? I was that drunk and I can hardly remember...“, stammered Kohlhaas.

Julia grinned precociously, stood up from the chair and gently clapped Frank on his shoulder. Then she stroked through his hair and the young man winced with surprise. It was the first time that the inapproachable woman did something like this.

„I know, Frank. But this is forgotten now. I'm not angry anymore, okay?“

Then I`m reassured!", said the rebel, harrumphed and tried to drive back some inappropriate thoughts, deep inside his mind.

„And I still wanted to tell you something, before I perhaps never see you again...“, whispered Julia sadly.

„What? Then please say it, my dear...“, answered Frank quietly and tried to hug her. Just at that moment Wilden came down the stairs at full speed.

Kohlhaas turned around, Julia stepped back and the leader of the rebel base unhesitatingly started his speech: “Okay, Frank, here are the most important points for tomorrow. I already read them to Julia, perhaps she has told you about...”

“Eh...”, stuttered Kohlhaas and rolled his eyes. Julia gasped and stared irritably at her father.

“You shouldn`t carry too much luggage, Frank. I have already said to Masaru...”, elucidated the village boss and Kohlhaas had to listen.

His daughter went to the side room and just wished the volunteer the best of luck, then she departed with disappointment in her eyes.

Wilden`s description of the international situation, full of all theoretical eventualities, still continued for a few hours. When Bäumer came to the house of the gray-haired man, he had to listen to the same lecture.

The flight to Japan was at 10.00 o'clock and John Thorphy, the Irishman, had the order to bring the two men to the airport of Vilnius in his old, rusty car. Both volunteers had hardly luggage, only a further set of dresses, a jacket and some sandwiches. In this early morning hours, the two rebels became more than nervous, when they thought about the flight to Japan with one of the old, badly maintained passenger planes of the sector “Eastern Europe”. Frank

suddenly felt sick, before he got into the car of the Irishman, but then he checked himself.

Finally, Wilden appeared and wished them all the best, but the Irishman interrupted the following new lecture of the village boss about the political importance of this mission, and pointed nervously at his watch.

„We have to leave now, Thorsten!“, he said and opened the door of his car.

The trip to the former capital of Lithuania was unspectacular. Frank and Alfred just looked out the window and let the sun-drenched landscape pass. Green meadows and old farmhouses were on both sides of the road. They looked terribly sordid and humble. This land had already seen better times – without doubt.

They punctually reached the airport and submerged in a crowd of numerous air passengers. John Thorphy finally said goodbye and was endeavors to leave the large city as fast as possible. He did not like trips to densely populated areas, because he was nevertheless still a person who was searched by the GSA.

Kohlhaas looked strange on this day. He had a shaggy, dark beard, wore some broad sunglasses and a gray baseball cap. Alfred wore a cap too, and tried to hide his face from the countless video cameras at the entrance of the airport. The whole place was full of instruments of monitoring and despite their perfectly falsified Scanchips the two men felt more than uncomfortable.

Both breathed more heavily when they reached the control zone, but again, HOK's falsified datas were proven as safe. Their luggage only consisted of leisure clothing and none of the grimly looking testers examined them more intensively. After they had left the security zone, Frank and Alf gasped quietly and finally went a bit more relaxed to their flier. The large airplane was relatively empty. Only some dozen

passengers had gone on board and the biggest part of them seemed to be businessmen. The number of tourists who still visited Japan in these days, was very small. Just one family with three little children who loudly commentated the safety instructions of the hostess, could be seen. Otherwise, many people in fine suits and with big suitcases had spread over the seat rows.

If Frank and Alfred were asked by someone, why they wanted to fly to Japan, they would have answered that they just visited Frank`s sister who lived in Tokyo.

More precisely, not „Frank`s sister”, but Mr. Eduard Rietli`s sister, Diana Landes. Because a Scanchip of Frank Kohlhaas did not exist anymore. HOK and Wilden had imagined a lot of waterproof answers for the two volunteers, even for the most unexpected situations.

But the Lithuainian officials did not ask, because the diplomatic tensions between Japan and the World Government had nothing to do with their own lives. So they just worked laxly – as always.

Then the machine started with roaring engines and dived into the deep blue sky, Alfred already slept after a few minutes and snored quietly. Meanwhile, Kohlhaas looked nervously around and nodded from time to time at the hostess with a harmless smile. The monotonous flight took longer than expected, but in the end, everything went smoothly. Finally, the captain told in English, that the Japanese islands had come in sight, while the passangers tried to see something through the cloud cover.

Frank meant to recognize some large rock formations. Shortly afterwards, the airplane went ever faster into the landing approach and the outlines of the land mass became clearer. From this great height, the Japanese capital looked bizarre. Giant skyscrapers stretched themselves into the sky

like huge forefingers and the sea of concrete hulks seemed to be endless.

„Like a termite hill...“, imagined the young man. Alfred snored approvingly. And indeed, this was one of the most densely populated areas on the whole planet. Perhaps even the largest, because about 45 million people lived between Tokyo, Yokohama, Kawasaki and the other cities in the proximity.

Futuristically looking, multistorey buildings with countless floors covered the landscape to the horizon. Some of the skyscrapers had the classical angular form, others were roundish or oval. It was an unusual sight. This plane brought them to the pumping heart of civilization - from Ivas, the small village in the vastness of Eastern Europe,

So many houses and buildings at one single place, the two men had never seen before. Meanwhile, they became a bit scary by thinking about entering this “molech” of a city.

Alfred had slept during the flight, while Frank had fought against boredom. Now the long journey through the sky was over and the Lithuanian machine touched the runway with a loud rumble.

After a while, both men entered the overcrowded airport of Tokyo. Incessant talking, calling and snickering surrounded the two men with the small backpacks who waited here for Masaru Taishi, their contact person in this strange country. It was meanwhile after 18.00 o'clock of European time and the plane had had some delay. But Frank was glad that the old aircraft had still made it to Japan, without landing in the sea.

Now they were already waiting for a while in the proximity of the exit, trying to realize the new environment. Beside a luggage car, they suddenly saw a little, older man with horn-rimmed glasses. He peered around and seemed to scan the

crowd in front of him for somebody. Frank and Alfred came nearer. The man waved his hand, called something they could hardly understand and smiled. A moment after, he stood in front of the two rebels and took a closer look at them.

„Frank Kohruhas and Arufred Baumer?“, he asked and grinned.

„Right! Are you Mr. Taishi?“, answered Alf.

„Welcome! Welcome to Japan!“, shouted the older gentleman euphorically and tried to hug Bäumer.

The two Germans looked at each other, nodded and bowed to the Asian. Taishi bowed still deeper to them. Finally, he shook their hands.

“Welcome! Welcome!“, he called. „My name is Masaru Taishi!“

„Frank Kohlhaas!“, said that.

„Hello, I`m Alfred Bäumer!“, replied the tall man.

„Frank and Arufred! Welcome!“, said Mr. Taishi again.

„Why does he always say Arufred?“, whispered Bäumer and nudged Frank.

„These Japs have some problems with the „L“, buddy!“, explained Kohlhaas quietly and had to suppress a laughter.

Their contact person, Wilden`s former business partner, walked ahead now and led the two men to a big underground parking, in which a red „Kensai“ was waiting.

They drove about half an hour through various quarters of Tokyo and finally came to an outlying district. Here lived the Japanese who had interrogated them during the entire trip in broken German. Mr. Taishi was really garulous and seemed to have a talent to jar on other people`s nerves. Nevertheless, he was very nice and hospitable. Frank and Alfred just told the most necessary and tried to relax. It was a great feeling to be free in this country.

No overarching monitoring, no omnipresent fear of the police – just great! Here in Japan, they were free men and there was no “long arm” of the system, lurking for them in a dark corner, in order to bring them back to prison. They had not had such a redeeming feeling since many years. It was simply wonderful!

Masaru Taishi stopped the car, politely opened the door for his guests and smiled. At the house entrance, his wife and the two children were waiting. Now they smiled too. The two rebels followed the loudly talking Japanese and were finally welcomed by the rest of his family. Everybody just smiled. Then they all bowed, as if they would already be age-old friends.

„All is okay in Lithuania? How does Thorsten feel? Good?“, asked Taishi and perked his eyebrows up. Little, light brown slitted eyes peeped over the edge of the horn-rims.

„He is okay. And we are okay too. It is very nice that we can stay in your house, Mr. Taishi“, said Alf.

The Japanese clapped Alf on the back, still smiling. „Thank you, that you help Japan...for us to fight! Understand?“

The short man gestured and was very excited. Then he continued to walk through his house and showed Frank and Alf the kitchen, where the rest of his family was waiting - with a big smile.

„Japanese always smile... “, whispered Kohlhaas to his friend and prodded him lightly.

„I see it!“, answered Alf quietly.

„You can eat now. My wife Ayaka makes good food, good meals!“, said the Japanese and sat down in front of a little table.

Bäumer nodded and took his shoes off, before he went into the kitchen. Frank was glad that his friend had remembered this Japanese gesture of politeness and did the same.

They did not want to insult their new friends by being impolite. So they ate, drank a sip of sake and talked for a while with Mr. Taishi, while his wife and the children still stood beside them and kept on smiling.

The former businessman spoke amazingly good German and English. Above all, his English seemed almost to be perfect, because Taishi had traveled around the world for many years. But in compliment to his guests, he tried to talk German most of the time.

Finally, all went to bed and after such an exhaustive day, Frank had no problems to find a good sleep. This time, he just felt free.

On the next day, Masaru Taishi described the situation in Japan at first hand. His German was quite liquid and to elucidate difficult terms, he still used the English language. He told that Mastumoto had added innumerable new jobs and had also introduced a new system of social security. Furthermore, he had brought in a paid holiday for workers and employees, and this was unique in the whole world.

Frank and Alfred were totally amazed, when Taishi talked about these reforms. Things, the people in “Central Europe” could only dream of, because there just ruled one single principle: “Eat or die!”, a soulless capitalism.

In Japan, the small businessmen received subsidies, the Globe was already abolished and the Yen had been introduced again. Meanwhile, Japan was flourishing.

No wonder, that the people loved Matsumoto. The president of the island state had connected the monetary value to the manpower of the population and had also abolished the “interest system”. Effective forms of power production, for example fusion reactors, received an intensive support by the Japanese state, what especially annoyed the international energy companies. Meanwhile, numerous cars

ran with water or electricity. The two men from Germany could hardly believe, what they heard.

Moreover, Taishi told them that Matsumoto had abolished the Scanchip, as replacement for credit card and identity card, while he had restored the hardcash again. Therefore, it was no greater miracle that the Lodge Brothers were more than angry about measures like this.

Japan had also advanced in its technological development since Matsumoto's takeover. And the new government of the island state did everything to promote new technologies. If the World Government had hoped to bring Japan to its knees by a worldwide boycott of its goods, they had to realize in 2031, that this approach had brought only moderate success so far.

The Lodge Brothers could not believe that Japan, poor in natural resources, could built up an autarchic economy. But Matsumoto's policy showed them their fallacy.

Furthermore, the rising of a new Japanese patriotism and the recollection of the island people on their traditional culture was a true nightmare for the strategists of the New World Order. The return of the old Japanese value system which honoured family, fatherland and diligence, brought the Lodge Brothers to outbreaks of hate. Haruto Matsumoto had advanced this development with resoluteness, and the Japanese people thanked him for this.

„Sounds unbelievable!”, said Bäumer.

„Nevertheless, it is true. Matsumoto is a real benediction for Japan!”, answered Taishi euphorically. „He is the best president, Japan has had since ages, my friends!”

“I begin to understand, why this man causes some headaches in the ranks of the Lodge Brothers. They must depict him as a real demon. Otherwise, other nations would follow the positive example of Japan!”, meant Frank.

“Now they want to destroy us with war!”, fulminated Taishi full of anger. “They want to punish our nation!”

„Do you think, that you will have a chance against the power of the GCF, Mr. Taishi?“, asked Alf.

Their host clenched his fists and stared grimly at the ceiling.

“Japanese people will...they will not surrender!”

Shortly afterwards, the family father went to the kitchen and brought a steaming teapot into the dining room. He put it on the table and appeared thoughtfully now.

„My son, Kazuko, he studies mathematics at Tokyo university, he will also fight. He must go to army to Kobe“, he remarked.

Kazuko Taishi was 24 years old and the two rebels from Lithuania had hardly seen him so far. Today he had probably driven to the university in the center of the city, because they didn't find him anywhere in the house. On the one hand, his father seemed to be proud that Kazuko joined the army, but on the other, his father was full of sorrow about the rising conflict.

„I just...I hope...Kazuko will not die, when war comes“, said Masaru, looked at his guests and browsed in a German dictionary.

„Don't worry, Mr. Taishi. He will not die, I'm sure...“, Frank tried to calm him.

The days passed. Occasionally, the Japanese asked Frank and Alfred to dinner and sometimes they drove to the inner city of Tokyo. On other days, they visited old temples and even the Fujiyama.

Taishi told his guests from Europe that the most Japanese were still happy and content, despite the danger of war. Tokyo was hopelessly overcrowded, but nevertheless a beautiful city. Endless streets with large, shining promotional signs full of strange letters, dominated the main squares of the city center. It was amazingly clean and tidy

here. Frank and Alf only knew the mouldered and dirty cities of Western and Eastern Europe, but this Japanese metropolis was the absolute opposite. This place was filled with a feeling of advancement.

Blocks of houses and whole quarters were renovated, painted or even converted. Frank and Alfred were surrounded by an immaculate and modern megacity and felt obviously well. Soon they became acquainted with the other members of the Taishi family who accompanied them on some of the trips. Masaru's wife and his children appeared sophisticated, friendly and were always very polite.

The two Europeans enjoyed these days, until it was time to leave. On the 22th of July 2031, the day of their provisional parting from their guest family had come. Both men finally drove to Mito in the east of Tokyo to join the Japanese army as volunteers, and to find accommodation in the local military camp.

After a trip in an overcrowded metro and a longer journey in a very modern bus, they reached the army base. Some other foreigners traveled with them. Most of them spoke Arab and were probably from Iraq.

Two other Europeans sat in the second row in the forepart of the bus, always looking at them with a smile. During this day, more and more buses full of young men from nearly all countries followed. The military camp filled slowly, while Frank and Alfred reported to the commander of the base. His name was Ishiro and he led them through the camp which became more and more a fussing place.

Jeeps were driving over the large drill grounds, soldiers were yelling and running over the concrete ground. The two men recognized many big billets which could take up hundreds of soldiers. The high command assigned them to

the foreign volunteer unit „Nihon no Yari“. The name of the corps meant „Spear of Japan“, as Frank learned.

Until the end of the month, the camp life consisted of instructions by the Japanese commanders and marching or firing practices. The nights in the large sleeping halls were sometimes restless and often the two volunteers were kept awake by a permanent whisper in many different languages. Frank and Alf mostly spoke English or tried to mediate messages with gestures. One or two soldiers of their platoon volatily made the acquaintance of them, others just ignored them. The „Nihon no Yari“ unit consisted of 1100 soldiers, all together no Japanese – except for the leading officers.

Around 300 volunteers came from Iran, where a guerilla war was still raging between partisans and GCF troops. About hundred soldiers were from Spain and Italy. Furthermore, volunteers from India, the former USA, Canada, South America, South Africa, Australia, Iraq and also from other European countries had come to support the Japanese fight for liberty. Palestinians were another larger group.

Frank and Alfred had the best contact to the Europeans and the whites from North America that they regarded as their “tribal kinsmen”. Besides, they could speak English with them. They talked a lot with Luc from France, also with James from Minnesota and a few others.

It was a strange bunch of guys here in Mito. So many completely different volunteers who often considered each other with warily looks, had submitted to the Japanese high command, in order to defend this country against the so hated troops of the World Government. Their motives were various, but the hate on the GCF held them together like a clip. On the first day in the military camp, the Japanese unit leader explained that all further instructions would be given

in English, because this was the best known language among the new soldiers.

„Thank you for joining the Japanese Army! You are now under the command of the forces of Japan!“, were the first words of the pugnacious sergeant who welcomed them, after they had mustered on the drill ground.

„Why are you here?“, asked Frank the beefy man on the camp bed beside him.

„I`m Earl from America“, answered the man. „I`m here to kill some fucking GCF bastards. Like you, man...“

„I`m Frank!“ The young man from Lithuania shook Earl`s hand and smiled friendly.

The American straightened himself and sat down on the edge of the bed. Then he scabbled in his backpack and fetched a little box of handrolling tobacco.

„Cigarette?“, he asked.

„No, thanks!“, said Frank. Alf came from behind and welcomed the tall man from the former USA too.

„If I ever go back to America, they will execute me!“, explained the volunteer. „I was ten years in prison for political activities...“

Kohlhaas nodded. „They put me in prison too. For the same things!“

„My father was the leader of a paramilitary group in Michigan. In 2018, nearly all members of this anti-government group were executed by the GSA“, outlined Earl. „They put me in prison, just because I was the son of my father. Ten Years! My young wife was brought to a so called “mental health hospital” and is still there. Moreover, I never saw my little daughter again!“

Frank and Alfred could imagine the cruel fate of this man and his family. His hate on the World Government was

obvious, but he could nevertheless be glad that the GSA had not executed him after his term of imprisonment.

However, Earl was about 30 years old, but appeared older, doomed by his fate. Deep, dark eye rings had formed in his rutted face. His look was hateful, but sometimes also sad and depressed. Frank and Alfred told him about their lives and the American showed his understanding.

The story about the holo cell which Kohlhaas told several times, seemed to affect him very much. He clenched his fist and straightened up in front of the two men: „Don`t worry, my brothers! One day, those rats will pay for everything!“

Outbreak of War

While Kohlhaas and Bäumer stayed in Mito, the Japanese prepared for the imminent attack of the GCF. Meanwhile, the archipelago of Okinawa was full of countless GCF soldiers and numerous tanks and airplanes. In the morning hours of 10th of August 2031, general Williams, the commander-in-chief of the southern invasion army, gave the order to start the assault.

Heavily armed warships loaded the GCF soldiers, while the aircraft carriers of the international armed forces, transported a whole armada of bombers and jet fighters to the south coast of the Japan.

As their first target, the GCF airforce had selected the coastal city of Kagoshima. It should be crushed without mercy. A bloody example which would open the gigantic land invasion of Japan with a fire inferno.

It was around 6,00 o'clock in the morning, when hundreds of GCF bombers started from the aircraft carriers on the high sea and the air bases on Okinawa, in order to annihilate the still sleeping coastal city.

Behind them, the morning sun glowingly rose from the water and covered the Japanese sea with a threatening, bloody red. This disastrous omen opened the coming day, because Kagoshima`s death knell had already been rung far away on the sea.

The Japanese defense was surprised and overwhelmed with the situation. They had nothing to oppose the concentrated hate, overcoming their city. The bombers came like a malicious swarm of wasps, with the will to wipe out all life below them. Men and women awoke yawning and crept out of their beds, little children were brought to the

school bus by their mothers after the breakfast, the streets of Kagoshima slowly filled with life.

Suddenly, at 7.15 o'clock, the sirens howled and tore the people out of their tiredness. The first silhouettes of bomber squadrons appeared on the horizon, in order to fall downwards like steely raptors. The bloodbath began and a rain of chemical bombs gushed over the Japanese city. Kagoshima was executed.

„Boom! Boom! Boom!“, it resounded from the districts in the direct proximity of the seacoast and a hellish, creeping barrage followed.

The roaring of engines and the hissing of jet fighters filled the air, while death looked forward to a rich harvest. The strategically important port which was full of large centers of the Japanese food industry, was immediately razed to the ground by the devious air raid.

Wild panic seized the helpless people of the burning city, while masses of civilians tried to escape from the blazing inferno. They ran into the metro tunnels or hid behind house walls or in cellars. Tens of thousands had not been able to flee from the brutal hammer blow of the GCF airforce and died in the burning ruins of their hometown.

It resounded like the roar of a malicious war god, when the bomb carpets of the GCF jet fighters suffocated Kagoshima under fire and smoke. The glowing red walls of death sped through the devastated streets and wiped out all life in their way.

The casualties of the GCF were just minor on that day, because the Japanese were hit without warning by this cruel assault. But the total destruction of Kagoshima was only the starting shot for a much bigger conflict.

It was a merciless and perfectly planned strike against the population, because the GCF pilots had the clear order to destroy not only the factories and food plants, but above all

the houses of the people, in order to cause as much terror as possible. And the tactic was successful. The Japanese nation reacted on the slaughter of Kagoshima with confusion. Matsumoto seemed to be incapable of acting.

When Kagoshima was erased and perished in an apocalyptic fire, also Thomas Baastfeldt, the Dutchman, lost his life. He had been brought to the south, as a soldier of a foreign division, and had helped during the bombardment with the evacuation of the civilian population. An aerial bomb hit him in the proximity of the city center and Baastfeldt was shred like a piece of paper. The young soldier was immediately dead and with him all the other civilians at this place.

Baastfeldt died at 21 and was the first victim that Ivas gave to the battlegrounds of the Japanese war. Other cities on the island of Kyushu, in the south of Japan, were spared from bigger air raids on that day. As a start, the World Government obviously waited for a reaction of Matsumoto and the Japanese people after this brutal attack.

When the GCF bombers stopped their merciless air strikes after several days, and returned to the aircraft carriers in the Pacific, Kagoshima looked as if it had been crushed by a giant boot.

Over 150000 burned corpses were found in the ruins of the annihilated city. It was a massacre and moreover a sign. A sign, that showed the Japanese, what would come over them. An example of mass destruction and extermination - all in the name of the New World Order!

Except for a few anti aircraft-guns, the Japanese had not had very much to defend themselves. The hadn't been prepared for an attack like this, neither psychologically nor military.

Furthermore, the few soldiers of the Japanese army had been busy enough with the evacuation of the population.

Kagoshima had been destroyed pitilessly and the World Government had impressively proven, that it would take this war very seriously. One week later, some skyscrapers in Tokyo were hit by missiles, then the attacks suddenly stopped.

Meanwhile, the GCF troops had been concentrated at the borders of the rebellious island realm, while the high command had begun with the elaboration of new strategies and prepared the land invasion of the gigantic army.

Matsumoto reacted on the destruction of Kagoshima with confusion. He had fallen again into a hole of deepest despair and Akira Mori and his other advisors could hardly help him. The Japanese president still wanted no military conflict deep inside, but he was realistic enough to see the facts.

Now, he had to act. Now, the Japanese people, oscillating between dread and wrath, expected a reaction from their leader. Peace had become nothing but an illusion.

Matsumoto's death, the death of his entire high command, and of all, who had supported his rebellion was already decided by his enemies. The plan to destroy Japan had been approved by the influential gentlemen in the backrooms of world policy.

So the president acted with desperate courage and convoked a great mass demonstration in Tokyo. Finally, hundreds of thousands came to the capital of Japan and welcomed him with a deafening jubilation.

Meanwhile, Haruto Matsumoto appeared irate and bitter. His eyes resembled deep, dark holes and he bared his teeth like an angry wolf. Righteous wrath had seized his heart and he proclaimed:

„My beloved people of the rising sun!

I am a man of the peace! A man who wanted to build, instead of destroying. A man who wanted to heal, instead of striking further wounds into the body of the world. How often have I asked the World Government to let us live in peace? We just wanted to live as free people, just wanted to live the Japanese way of life. Is that too much to ask for?

You are my witnesses. I have tried it. More than a dozen times, but they did not want to talk to me. They ignored us, laughed about us! I am a proud descendant of an old house of samurais and I have degraded myself in front of the Lodge Brothers to get peace for my homeland. I have implored them to let us live in freedom and peace, but they were silent and smiled coldly.

It is their aim to bring us back on our knees, by force if necessary. We shall give them our manpower, our wealth, our money, our young men as mercenaries for the GCF – we shall give them the soul of Japan.

We shall remain indebted by their banks and we shall continue to behave like lambs that can be exploited. „Hard measures“ they demand against us. „A due lesson“ they want to teach us, so that they can enslave us again.

„Those Japanese will finally learn - through pain and agony!“, the Lodge Brothers tell the world. Now the time has come. Now they let us learn.

Through agony, through bombs and through death. Those so called humanists, people friends and alleged liberators of the world!

The destruction of Kagoshima made one thing clear for me: The godliest man can not live in peace if his evil neighbor wants a war.

Now they even stated that we are the guilty ones of the attack on the Chinese city of Hangzhou, in order to finally have a reason to fight against us. They tell the people that I have arranged that massacre. „Japan wants to attack the

sector China!“, they lie before the eyes of the world. They are the masters of lies, they are the real world plague!

But, my brothers and sisters, the people of Japan have nothing to do with the attack on China. This is the work of the World Government, the work of those warmongers, those dirty hypocrites.

Then, the World President cried his crocodile tears in front of the telecameras, but instigated the Chinese against us, at the same time. At present, they recruit them in masses for the GCF.

Soon after the Hangzhou hoax, the Lodge Brothers prevailed and their seed of hate was blossoming. Meanwhile, we have seen their devil`s faces.

Those men are driven by greed, hate, malice, bossiness, arrogance and atrocity. There is no limit to their hate against the nations of the world. I feel sorry for these madmen, but we will show them, that we are no sacrificial lambs!

We shall be tortured and executed, as a warning to all other freedom-loving people around the world. We shall be swept away from our islands, as a bloody example for the remaining nations which don`t trust the World Government any longer, deep inside.

People of Japan, now you must be strong like the great, old mountain. Be steadfast like „Mr. Fuji“ if earthquakes come and floods rise up. Remember our ancestors in these hours, the old knights of the Sengoku age. They have always been our idols, because they have never been afraid to die and have never lost their honor!

Soldiers of Japan, fix your bayonets and load your guns! Embrace wife and child and march to this holy war for our fatherland! Man the tanks, the airplanes, the cannons and the trenches! Bring death upon this fiendish breed!

We will give them not a single inch of Japan! Not the smallest island, we will leave them, before they haven`t

soaked it with their blood! They want to destroy us? Our age-old nation and its culture? Then, they shall also pay the price for it! And the price will be high! It will be enormous! May they come, the slave hordes of the tyrants! Stand your ground, my brothers and sisters! Now, Japan strikes back!"

The giant crowd raved after the words of Matsumoto as though it was shaken by a tornado. Thousands of young men who wore headbands with the Japanese flag shouted at the top of their lungs and raised their fists. Women screamed and applauded. Flags and banners were waved and the crowd sung the old and new national anthem of Japan. The folk of the rising sun took arms.

However, the Japanese high command had not yet decided on which front the foreign volunteers should fight. Also the soldiers of the „Nihon no Yari“ unit had no idea, what was waiting for them.

At the same time, the GCF army in the north of the Japanese archipelago was regrouped, in order to land on Hokkaido. The enemy had already concentrated bigger airforce squadrons on Kyushu, while the bombardments on Hokkaido only came punctually so far.

The cities Wakkanai and Abashiri were attacked at first, and some industrial plants were destroyed. The GCF bomber fleet did not make a devastating strike like in the case of Kagoshima, because an enormous invasion force was waiting on the warships to attack the north of Japan. The World Government had recruited thousands of Chinese soldiers for the great assault on the coastal region.

Two days still passed, necessary logistic preparations had to be done, then the warships brought the young men in great numbers from Sakhalin island and the Siberian port of Nakhodka towards Japan. The huge cargo boats and

destroyers of the GCF armada prepared for the invasion. Hundreds of armored landing boats, chock-full of new recruited soldiers, slid into the dark-blue sea. They moved towards the beach and fastly dived under the water surface, when they were in range of the Japanese cannons. These boats looked like a swarm of sharks which was waiting to jump out of the water on their victims.

When the landing boats reached the coast, they finally emerged and their metallic bellies opened immediately, in order to spit out innumerable GCF soldiers. The fight began. As soon as the first hatches opened, the soldiers jumped into the flat water, while a deadly barrage of gunfire came over them from the Japanese trenches. A terrible hail of projectiles drummed on the armored boats and the unfortunate men who came out from them.

The first attackers were just perforated by countless bullets and their bleeding bodies staggered into the water. Bloody clouds colored the water surface and numerous following soldiers climbed over the corpses of their dead comrades.

In the meantime, heavy cannon shells exploded among the storming soldiers, strewing the blood-soaked beach with craters and shredded bodies.

It was a terrible slaughter and the landing army of the GCF suffered great losses within only a few minutes. But all this was part of the strategical plan of the high command, because the beach of Wakkanai had to be overrun by masses of recruits. The new Chinese soldiers seemed to be the ideal "human material" for this ungrateful task.

Many of them probably really believed, that they were in the right. Nevertheless, in their eyes, Japan was responsible for the bioweapon attack on their homeland. But when they were mowed down in masses by machine gun salvos, all the military pathos seemed to be lost. Between the countless corpses, which covered the whole beach, the first

invaders finally went flat and shot back at the Japanese. More and more of their comrades followed them and soon they were so legion, that even the furious fire hail of the defenders could not stop them anymore.

While the landing boats brought more soldiers to the beach, the warships at sea suddenly opened a murderous bombardment. Within seconds, the salvos of their heavy on-board cannons plowed through the range behind the beach and tore some of the Japanese shelters to pieces.

Sometimes, they also hit their own men. But even this was a part of the plan. The high command of the GCF knew, that there were enough reserves.

The Japanese cannons answered for their part and tried to hit the warships, but the success was just moderate. Only two of the swimming fortresses could be seriously damaged. Matsumoto's soldiers had entrenched themselves deeply in their bunkers and concrete shelters and their faces had become dark, furious grimaces. They bared their teeth like wild animals and the leaders of the platoons swore to hold their positions till death. But the bulk of GCF soldiers was just to big to drive it back.

The attackers scurried over the corpses of their comrades and still came nearer. Their number appeared endless, mass over mass, too many for the few thousand Japanese who tried to hold the beach in front of Wakkanai.

Finally, the fight lasted several hours and the heavy machine guns of the defenders went on to tear bloody gaps into the huge swarm of their enemies. Then the Chinese recruits had come close enough to start their counterattack. They threw grenades and burned the Japanese soldiers with flamethrowers.

More and more jumped into the muddy emplacements of the defenders and struggled through the barbwire barricades, shooting and stabbing everything and everyone.

Particularly the Chinese raged with a terrible thirst for revenge and killed every Japanese they could get. Two hours later, Matsumoto's soldiers had been defeated after a brutal carnage. The GCF had conquered the beach.

After the remaining soldiers had reached the land, the order to take Wakkanai was immediately given to them. Tanks and mobile cannons followed the infantry and were still unloaded en masse. A small part of the northern coast of the Japanese islands had already been conquered and now, an enormous army, flanked by tanks, marched towards the nearby city which had an important airport.

In the ruins of Wakkanai, that the GCF airforce had already devastated, a large contingent of the Japanese army was waiting for the invaders. Tanks, artillery and masses of infantrymen lay in wait in the bombed-out streets. The Japanese swore to fight as courageously as their comrades who had given their lives in the battle for the beach. Furthermore, snipers lurked in the streets of the city center and were on the look-out for their victims. The slaughter at the landing bay had already caused heavy casualties for the GCF and now the warships had to bring further reinforcements. Wakkanai was waiting for the blood court in its streets.

Kyushu, the southernmost of the four Japanese islands, was attacked in the meantime by a far greater invasion army under the command of general Williams.

There were still some fights in the ruins of the large cities, particularly in Kumamoto and Fukuoka, but the most Japanese divisions had already been driven back to Honshu, the central island. Matsumoto had arranged a tactical retreat, in order to spare his troops against the superior enemy. Too many soldiers were fallen and currently there was no chance to hold Kyushu. Therefore,

Matsumoto decided that it was more important to defend the center of Japan. The next target of the GCF was the neighboring island of Shikoku and, above all, the city of Kochi with its big industrial plants.

If this attack was also successful, and the advance in the north was likewise quick, then it was valid to start the deadly blow against the densely populated area around the Japanese capital and to finally win the war.

Matsumoto's generals took therefore a great interest in the defense of Hokkaido. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers were waiting in Wakkanai and around the regional capital of Sapporo. Meanwhile, the heart of Japan, Tokyo, Yokohama and the other larger cities, were nonstop pumping weapons and ammunition through the country, in order to make a counterattack possible.

But things looked black. At this time, the number of GCF soldiers, airplanes and war machines, invading the country, appeared endlessly. Something had to happen to save Japan's existence. Again, the poison of resignation crept into the hearts of the inhabitants of the renegade country, while the dark shadow at both ends of the archipelago continued to grow.

In the south, on Shikoku island, the coastal cities of Uwajima and Matsuyama had already been conquered by the GCF. Meanwhile, the Japanese army was on a more or less ordered retreat.

At the same time, a brutal trench warfare for every inch of land was raging on Hokkaido. Wakkanai could still be held by the defenders and the soldiers went on to kill each other in the ruins of the city with murderous frenzy. It finally lasted until the middle of the next month - conquer and recapture, urban warfare, fight for every street. The advance of the GCF had been stopped by the fanatical resistance of the Japanese army, for now, and the casualties of the

international force were increasing more and more. After a while, the high command of the GCF was flustered.

Meanwhile, the soldiers killed each in the devastated streets of Wakkanai with bayonets, folding spades and combat knives, when they had no more ammunition. The world had not seen such a barbarian warfare since decades.

Over 100000 GCF soldiers were already fallen during the battle for Wakkanai – and about 50000 Japanese. The defenders had the advantage of operating from well protected positions. Nevertheless, the international media just spoke about great victories and military triumphs, and showed only happy and successful soldiers.

However, the bloody reality looked different. The houses of Wakkanai had already been razed to the ground and the noise of assault rifles, the clatter of heavy tanks and the screams of soldiers still resounded through the apocalyptic landscape.

The Japanese, among them even women, defended every inch of their city with mad fanaticism and were not willing to give up. Not until the GCF artillery bombarded the city with chemical weapons. Only after this murderous hail of shells, the morale of the defenders was slowly fading away. The barrage with chemical bombs was finally the guarantor for the inglorious victory of the GCF.

The international press did not mention the use of chemical weapons with one word and just glorified the slaughter of Wakkanai as a “great success for all peace-loving people”.

General Takeuchi, a tough and stubborn man, who had commanded the defense of Wakkanai, instructed his soldiers, after some more bloody days, to withdraw to the hinterland. Soon after, he was sent to Sapporo by Matsumoto`s high command, in order to strengthen the enormous defense belt around the metropolis. Some of his soldiers had finally comitted harakiri, the ritual suicide in

case of defeat, before their emplacements had fallen. However, only a few soldiers and civilians reached Sapporo alive.

Exhausted and slowly demoralized GCF troops followed them and took Abashiri and Kitami which could not be defended anymore. Shortly afterwards, their advance stopped, because the decimated troops had to be reinforced and new soldiers were brought from the warships.

The stubborn defense of Wakkanai had gained time for the Japanese and the staff of the GCF army had to admit itself, that they could not take Japan with a coup de main, although the operation in the south was still running according to plan.

But Sapporo could not be eluded, because the metropolis was too important and blocked the entrance to the central island of Honshu like an adamant rock. Over one million Japanese soldiers had been positioned here, waiting in endless trenches and emplacements around the strategic aim. Behind them, a large part of the Japanese airforce and several divisions lay in wait, while modern anti-aircraft guns expected the GCF bombers.

If the fight for Wakkanai had already been very bloodily, the attack on Sapporo would still become a much more terrible trench warfare. The metropolis with its 2.5 million inhabitants had to be besieged and starved out.

This was, from the point of view of the invaders, no satisfying initial position, so that they nevertheless thought about the use of nuclear weapons against the densely populated area around Tokyo, in order to demoralize the Japanese. However, president Matsumoto threatened the World Government in a radio speech to reply every atomic bomb on Japan with own nuclear strikes against cities in North America, England or the Near East.

“As long as one single Japanese is still alive to press the red button, we will also defend ourselves with nuclear weapons!”, warned Matsumoto.

But the plan was soon rejected by the World Government, and the land invasion was continued with conventional weapons.

In the more weakly defended south of Japan, the GCF was mostly successful. Kyushu and Shikoku had already been brought under control by the invasion army of general Williams. Only Kumamoto remained as a place of resistance, but in the long run, the Japanese were chanceless.

Williams seemed to be very confident and said in an interview that Matsumoto was almost defeated. Soon after the conquest of the southern islands, the battle for Sapporo could be started. Now it was time to bleed the Japanese slowly to death. When Sapporo would have been taken too, the whole country could be crushed like a nut from both sides.

But meanwhile the World Government had some problems to recruit new soldiers in China. Too many young Chinese had not come back home from the front and an increasing number of them just felt utilized by the GCF.

Even the hate against Japan which had passionately burned after the attack on Hangzhou, had abated now and could not be stimulated anymore, despite of intensive war propaganda on television.

Nevertheless, the armies of the Lodge Brothers were still legion, but now, more and more soldiers from other regions had to be carried to the front.

A worldwide recruiting campaign for the war against the allegedly „fascist regime of Matsumoto“ started. New soldiers were mustered, from North America to Africa.

Thousands of young men were brought to the Asian battlegrounds – to die for the interests of the chosen few. President Matsumoto believed, if the war would continue for years, that there was no chance for his nation to hold the invaders back. But maybe the enemy propaganda which always seemed to be confident had just deceived him, because the casualties of the GCF were substantially higher than expected.

Same was valid for the morale of his people that impressed Matsumoto once more. The 150 million Japanese had soon understood, what a defeat would mean for their country. More and more young men were volunteering for the front and flowed to the recruitment posts of the Japanese army. Perhaps, as the president hoped deep inside, the World Government was still not invincible. Anyhow, the decrease of Chinese volunteers was a first partial success. Matsumoto did not lose his hope, although it was not too big.

The Way to Sapporo

The first half of September had already passed and Frank, Alfred and about 1000 other volunteers were waiting in the military base of Mito for the trip to the front. Meanwhile, the two men from Lithuania were sick of the monotonous life in the camp. Particularly, their desire to fight had noticeably decreased and they did not know, what the future would bring.

The Japanese television showed really atrocious pictures and also continuously war propaganda. The news about the situation on the fronts in the south and the north, were spoken with blaring voices. The Japanese army always seemed to be brave and successful, as the propaganda machine pointed out.

The foreign volunteers, who did not understand anything except for “Matsumoto” and “Nihon”, were tortured every day by the resounding television and radio reports which came from the loudspeakers. Victory here and victory there, victory everywhere! Frank and Alf began to hate it.

This morning, there had been a bigger controversy between some volunteers. A man from India and a Pakistani had tried to stab each other after a longer dispute. Three Japanese officers had restored order by beating them down with some clubs. Frank and Alf still did not know the reason for the quarrel.

Yesterday they had received an unexpected visit. Mr. Taishi and his wife had come to the camp to bring the two Europeans a delicious cake.

The elder Japanese businessman had told them, that his son was meanwhile stationed in Kobe. But the war had not reached the city yet, as Taishi said. Apart from that, the

situation in the south let not much room for optimism. A few hours later, the “Nihon no Yari” unit had been called to the drill ground. A Japanese officer had explained the volunteers, in hardly understandable English, the decision of the high command. Tomorrow, the unit should be brought to Sapporo to strengthen the western defense ring around the city. This did not sound good.

Frank and Alfred called Mr. Wilden in the evening and told him the news. The village boss just congratulated them, because he regarded it as extremely important that Sapporo was not conquered by the GCF – and he was also far away from this war.

However, the two men from Lithuania worried about the fact that the GCF had formed a giant army in front of Sapporo. So the day slowly passed and Frank brooded until he was tired enough to sleep. Finally his nightmares came back again...

Between Frank and the strange, dark shadows on the opposite side was a broad river with deep, black water. From the riverbank, the young rebel could only recognize a cloud of hazy entities that hatefully stared at him. It were the vengeful souls of those who had been killed by his bomb in Paris.

When they recognized Frank, they started to shout: „There is the murderer Frank Kohlhaas!“

The young man became frightened and answered: „Who are you?“

„We are your victims! In our earlier lives, we have been policemen, politicians, journalists...“

Frank was silent for a short moment and winced. „What do you want from me?“

The souls cried: „We want to haunt you! Our faces shall anguish you in your sleep. We will come over you, again

and again, to drive you insane! Murderer! Murderer! Murderer!”

The young man was suddenly seized by anger and he replied: „You call me a murderer? You have killed my father and my sister! You have tortured me and millions of people have already died because of you!”

The souls of Frank`s victims hissed and howled. They did not want to hear that and a malicious murmuring resounded. „You are a murderer, Frank Kohlhaas! Nothing else, only a dirty murderer!”

„It is your fault!“, yelled Frank furiously at them. „You have made me to the man, that I am now!”

„No, the murderer has always been inside you, we have just unlocked the cage which has held it back!”

Kohlhaas clenched his fist and spat on the ground: „No, you are liars, all of you! I was a good person, until my life was destroyed by you! I was good, before you have tortured me!”

The dark cloud of souls began to swell and was screaming like a suffering child. Kohlhaas plugged his ears and closed his eyes.

“You love to kill, and you can not deceive us!“, cried the souls with shrill voices.

„You have started all that bloodshed. I`m not afraid of you! I hope you burn in hell now! This is the place, where you belong!“, he screamed.

„We are here, behind the river, in the realm of the dead. And we will wait for you, Frank! All too soon, we will welcome you here!“, they murmured with gleeful voices.

„Burn in hell!“, shrieked Frank again.

„Murderer! Murderer! Murderer!“, howled the souls.

“Liars! It is your fault!”

“Murderer!”

It continued in this way. The sleeper rolled restlessly on his bed and flailed around. First, Frank did not awake and just whispered incomprehensible things. Suddenly he startled up like a rocket and opened his eyes.

One of the soldiers beside him was woken up by Frank's talking in the sleep and his screams. He got out of his bed and shone Kohlhaas in the face with his flashlight. The German stared at him and stammered: „What? What do you want?“

„Hey, man! What is wrong with you?“, asked the soldier, annoyed about the fact that Frank had robbed his sleep. Kohlhaas blinked and yawned quietly: „Nothing! It's all right!“

„We all want to sleep, man!“, hissed the strong man, whose dark eyes looked threateningly. Probably he was an Arab. „Okay...“, gasped Frank and rolled to the side. It was 3,00 o'clock in the morning. Today, their own war would begin.

Three hours later, the Japanese officers awoke the men in the billet and put on the lights everywhere. Frank hummed confusedly and rubbed his eyes.

„Stand up, soldiers!“, it resounded in Frank's ears.

With a silent grumble the German tumbled up from his bed. Today they would be brought to Sapporo. Where the hell was Alf?

Kohlhaas' friend was already in the wash room and brushed his teeth, around him were about fifty tired men from all countries. Outside they heard the officers roar: „Nihon no Yari unit! In ten minutes!“

Moments later, the soldiers went to the armory and got steel helmets, rifles, grenades and other gear. A short speech of the camp leader followed, in which the Japanese praised the outstanding courage of the foreign volunteers. Finally, all went to the transporters which left Mito at full speed.

The trip to Aomori, in the north of the central island of Honshu, lasted several hours and many of the soldiers used the time to make another nap. The atmosphere in the truck was tired, but full of expectation.

„They send us directly to hell!“, muttered Alfred and nervously chewed the collar of his uniform jacket, while the other soldiers looked at him with a smirk.

„The GCF has conquered Wakkanai, as expected. I have heard it has been a very brutal fight“, said Frank.

Alfred increased his chewing activity, while more and more other volunteers stared at him.

“Sapporo is a real fortress, but the GCF army is about one million soldiers strong. I hope our enemies will have a tough time with us...”

„We will kill the GCF!“, exulted a very young man with Italian accent and raised his forefinger.

„We will see!“, remarked Frank unemotionally.

After a while, the transporters had reached the coast and were brought to the island of Hokkaido by ship. It seemed to last an eternity until all soldiers had been loaded on the cargo boats and had stowed their luggage.

Meanwhile, Frank and Alfred played a card game with three Russians to kill time. The men from Moscow had already heard about that *Freedom Movement of the Rus* too, as they told them. They described themselves as “Russian patriots” and seemed to have some sympathies for the mysterious dissident Artur Tschistokjow. Frank and Alf found the conversation very interesting

From the coast of Hokkaido they drove to Hakodate and finally reached Sapporo. The silhouette of the northern metropolis looked futuristic and impressive.

„It still seems to be quiet here. Thank God!“, said Frank, when the trucks drove through the city center. Bäumer hardly listened to him. He stared at the pretty Japanese

women and girls who welcomed the volunteers with shrill voices and Japan flags.

„Hey, Alf! I`m talking to you!“, shouted Frank and gave Bäumer a nudge.

„I heard it. Wow, look at these nice girls!“, answered the tall man.

“As I have already said, you need a girlfriend, dude! No doubt, Alf. I have heard, the girls in Japan like sexy school uniforms, he, he!“, teased Kohlhaas.

“Good idea! Come to uncle Alf, he will protect you!“, bawled Bäumer over the street.

Now the women threw some flower bouquets at the trucks and the soldiers tried to catch them. Frank did not join the horseplay and just thought of Julia.

„I will call her this evening...“, he promised himself.

The largest city on Hokkaido was an unusual sight. Many of the enormous skyscrapers in the city center were multicolored, what looked strange. Red, brownish and even yellow skyscrapers could be seen here!

The architecture was likewise different from Frank`s rotten hometown Berlin, it just looked modern and partly even futuristic.

Furthermore, beautiful avenues and large parks were here in great numbers. The young man was astonished. Such a clean and tidy city he had never seen before. But it was to be feared that these beautiful streets would soon be covered with corpses and debris.

In the background, grey mountains, wrapped by clouds, could be recognized. Sapporo had each year a traditional snow festival, because the winter here was always very cold. In the year 1972, the olympic winter games had taken place in this city. However, for the volunteers from Europe, Japan was a completely unknown world.

The native mentality was still unusual for Frank. But the different nations, cultures and races on earth were simply different by nature. A truth, the Lodge Brothers avoided like the plague. Nevertheless, it was a fact. The transporter convoy finally stopped in the late afternoon in the northwest part of Sapporo, an outskirts of the city. Now the two young men could see miles-long trenches and emplacements. Tanks were waiting for the enemy and the long gun barrels of some highly technicalised anti-aircraft guns seemed to reach for the sky.

All this did not look peacefully anymore. What a difference to the center of the city. The volunteers who had been transported to Sapporo today, were friendly welcomed by the officers of the Japanese army, and later accommodated in large tents. After a meager dinner most of the soldiers went to bed.

However, Alfred had the idea to go back to the inner city, in order to meet one or two of the pretty Japanese girls, but Frank told him that such things were strictly forbidden by the high command. Finally both men went to bed too. This night remained quiet.

It was 7.00 o'clock in the morning. The "Nihon no Yari" unit had mustered on an asphalted place in the proximity of the trenches, and was listening to the words of general Katsuya Takeuchi who had welcomed the volunteers before.

„In the next days, maybe today or tonight, the GCF will begin their attack on Sapporo!“, he shouted and walked up and down in front of the soldiers.

The Japanese appeared old and had almost white hair, his face looked embittered and at his belt Frank could recognize a samurai sword.

„Brave volunteers, we thank you very, very much that you risk your life in the fight for a free Japan! I'm sure, that one

day, even your homelands will be liberated from the terror of the World Government!", he continued. "We have already lost Wakkani! I'm general Takeuchi, and I swear on my honour, that we will never lose Sapporo! We must not lose Sapporo!"

Some of the men murmured and appeared impressed by the veteran. Takeuchi explained at least that about 300000 GCF soldiers stood opposite to the northwest of Sapporo. He swore the men to hold the line and insured that they would fight together with numerous and well trained Japanese comrades. Frank and Alfred breathed deeply and looked at the sky, which was filling with gray clouds. To bleed for Japan was really a "great" idea.

But the day passed, perfectly quite again, and the most exciting were the strategic instructions of the Japanese officers. However, the soldiers just played cards or tried to challenge their Japanese comrades in a baseball game.

But the locals were clearly superior, because baseball had a long tradition in Japan. Finally, everything was still all right. On that day, there were no quarrels among the volunteers and no enemy appeared.

All Quiet on the Sapporo Front...

Meanwhile, the calendar sheet showed the 3th of October, 2031, and it was still quiet on the Sapporo front. It came down in torrents and the autumn slowly started to show its face. The trees began to carry yellow leaves and the beautiful Odori park in the center of the city discoloured like a big chameleon.

Boredom prevailed in the military camp, but most of the soldiers preferred this to a massive GCF attack. Today, Kohlhaas had talked to Julia Wilden for a long time. She had been glad to hear from him. Furthermore, Julia had asked for Alf and the others, and Frank had insured her that everything was still peaceful and quiet.

It had been wonderful to hear her voice and Kohlhaas had finally returned to the camp with a happy smile. Later, Frank and Alf had also talked to Mr. Taishi who had excitedly told them, that Tokyo had been hit by some missiles again. The situation in the south was becoming worse.

Soon, the shadows of the night came over Sapporo and all soldiers went to bed, except for some guards. However, most of the men always slept with one eye open and this time it should be more necessary than ever before.

Shortly after midnight, over 500 GCF bombers started a large-scale attack on Sapporo, from several directions. The terrifying hissing of their engines could be heard on the horizon, then the murderous assault came with full force over the Japanese population and the soldiers.

Frank and Alfred jumped out of their beds and landed on the dirty ground, while the thunder of explosions came nearer. A moment after, the inner city of Sapporo glowed in an eerie red gleam.

„Alarm! Let`s get the hell out of here!“, roared Bäumer and pulled an overslept Iraqi from his camp bed. Frank grabbed his clothes, took the rifle and ran out of the accommodation to a large meadow, where hundreds of soldiers had already gathered.

Sirens howled and officers screamed orders through the rainy night. Kohlhaas stared at the city center. Enormous, fiery blooms grew between the skyscrapers, accompanied by the deep grumble of detonations.

The Japanese anti-aircraft artillery was shooting with all its might and the dark sky above the city was filled with blazing lightnings and fireballs. The bomb attack of the GCF airforce took about half an hour, then a massive assault of the enemy infantry and numerous tanks followed. All men ran to the trenches and manned the emplacements. Frank and Alfred were assigned to a machine gun post and stayed together. Behind them, a Japanese sergeant screamed in deafening loudness.

„Artillery fire!“, shouted the soldiers beside them and tried to find cover somewhere.

A moment later, a hail of heavy shells pattered on the trenches and hold the soldiers down. They crawled over the muddy ground and pressed their hands on the faces, while all hell broke loose around them.

Explosions shook the ground, cries resounded in every corner and clouds of dirt flew through the air. The GCF cannons unleashed a murderous fire and devastated the entire environment.

Behind Frank, several Japanese soldiers got a direct hit and their death screams still echoed in the head of the young volunteer after a minute. Frank was sure that he had heard the sound of crashing bones and tearing flesh. Meanwhile, Alfred had crept through the mud and stared at his friend with fearful eyes. After half an hour, full of fright and panic,

the bombardment stopped. Palls of smoke left the trench and Frank heard the cries of dying and wounded soldiers from a distance. Now the enemy tanks and the GCF soldiers advanced. Their outlines were hardly to recognize in the blackness of the night and through the obscure fog above the ground.

„Damn!“, hissed Kohlhaas and squatted behind his machine gun. Alfred`s face was full of mud splashes and showed his fear. Frank tried to endure the following, gnawing minutes, while he waited for the enemy that slowly came nearer. Meanwhile, he was drenched and clutched his gun nervously.

“Can you see something?“, whispered Alf.

“No! Because of this fucking fog!“, answered his comrade.

Then the first black points became visible on the dark horizon, it were thousands and thousands. Between them drove tanks which opened the fire with their cannons now. Further explosions and shots followed, then the enemy had already come closer.

Frank lifted his hindering steel helmet that still appeared heavier now, in order to have a better sight. Alfred swallowed and held his breath. The first enemies appeared out of a mixture of darkness and vapor, while the Japanese soldiers around started to shoot.

„Don`t wait, Frank! Fire!“, yelled Bäumer and Kohlhaas sent his first bursts of fire at the enemy. Finally, chaos broke loose.

Frank could spot a group of GCF soldiers, trying to destroy some barbwire barriers. He wildly shot at them and two of the men tumbled over with painful screams. Now, also Alf began to fire.

The machine gun hammered its deadly metallic song and sent several dark shadows to the ground. Meanwhile, the Japanese tanks had moved forward and attacked the fast-

approaching enemies with their automatic cannons. Their projectiles chopped bloody wounds into the broad front of the opposing army, but it were just too many attackers.

Suddenly Skydragons appeared, dashing forward out of the darkness of the night sky, and firing with their heavy machine guns at the Japanese emplacements. Blood sprayed everywhere and dead bodies slipped down the muddy trench walls. The defenders answered with bazookas and rocket launchers.

Some of the Skydragons exploded, others were still mowing down their enemies, speeding away above their heads, and leaving behind a terrible bloodbath.

„Can you estimate their number?“, screamed Bäumer in Frank`s ear.

“Shit! No! Maybe about 5000 men...”, answered Kohlhaas and hid his head behind the wall. “Ten GCF tanks! There!”

Alfred gestured and crept over the ground again. Now the GCF soldiers were close enough to return fire. After they had advanced further hundred meters and had struggled through a great number of barriers, they started to run.

Frank fired now like a madman and shot a large gap in the swarm of soldiers in front of him. He clenched his teeth, so that they crunched like a rotten, old sailing boat in a storm. The defenders heard their enemies scream with rage, while they tried to storm the Japanese emplacements. Frank saw some twinkling bayonets and laid his folding spade beside him.

Alfred still huddled behind him in the dirt and fixed his bayonet. From the corner of his eye, Kohlhaas could see that the Japanese had destroyed some GCF tanks. A screaming man climbed out of one of the vehicles, then the tank exploded. Soon the enemy infantry was directly in front of the trench. Hateful faces stared in Frank`s direction and a

swarm of GCF soldiers jumped now into the moat, wildly firing, roaring and cursing.

“Damn! They will overrun us!”, shouted Bäumer who shot an assaulting enemy in the face.

“Get ready!”, Frank grabbed his friend at the sleeve and pulled him to the right, his heart pounded in panic and he thought about nothing in this second.

His face changed to a malicious grimace and looked like that of the GCF soldier beside him who had jumped into the trench to stab a terrified Japanese soldiers with his bayonet. Frank shot at the tall, dark-skinned man and hit his neck. The attacker tumbled down with a short death rattle. A brutal slaughter began now, and the frenzied soldiers were shooting, stabbing and hacking each other down.

Kohlhaas roared and his dirty face let him look like a demon. He brandished his folding spade, loudly screaming, and smashed the face of another enemy. Alfred still shot at the attackers in front of him, then he shouted: “Flamethrowers!”

A GCF soldier with one of these feared weapons approached and held his flame into the trench beside him. An uncanny hissing followed, while Frank heard the loud cries of burning volunteers who jumped out of their emplacement.

Kohlhaas crept among his dead and dying comrades through the morass, and crawled over a young Japanese, whose clothes were soaked with blood. Glassy eyes stared at the German.

Meanwhile, the soldier with the flamethrower continued to burn everyone in sight, but he did not notice Frank who suddenly emerged beside him – then it was too late.

Kohlhaas jumped on him with a loud scream, out of the darkness of the trench, and attacked the GCF soldier with his folding spade. The man turned around, but he was not

fast enough to swerve Frank's brutal cut. Kohlhaas hit his nose which broke with a cracking sound. Immediately, the soldier lost his weapon, lurched back and had to face the raging German volunteer who slayed him with another strike.

„Go away!“, Frank heard behind himself. A Japanese waved him nearer and summoned him to fall back to the next line of trenches. The young man currently scurried backwards. Kohlhaas and the others had to disappear, otherwise the enemies would have overrun them, because they were just too numerous.

„Alf, to the next line!“, shouted Frank and the two volunteers ran over their dead comrades to the trench behind them. Meanwhile, the attackers had won ground and came closer. Now the Japanese opened the fire from the rear emplacements and many opponents were killed.

Shortly afterwards, Frank and Alf were lying in the mud again and tried to decimate the mass of the GCF soldiers. Suddenly several dozens of Japanese tanks attacked the enemy's flank and the GCF soldiers finally backed out. It was over, for this day.

They had survived the first great assault of the Global Control Force in this part of Sapporo, but the casualties were high. Hundreds were fallen, only in this front section. Nevertheless, the enemy had not penetrated the city and had still much more dead soldiers to deplore.

The world had not seen such a form of war since decades. At the beginning of the 21th century, when the USA had still been the only superpower, fighting with its superior technology against the Arabs, the match had always been unequal.

On one side, there had been the hightech army of the USA, while its enemies had often just been farmers with old weapons, trying to fight a guerilla warfare. Here in Japan, it

was different. Both sides, the GCF and the Japanese army, had a considerable and very similar military technology. Nevertheless, the resources of the GCF were much bigger.

„God, I nearly snuffed it...”, said Frank and tried to calm down. Bäumer was silent and stared into space. He got a vicious headache and just wanted to stay in a dark corner, in order to rest. The shock of this first fight sat deeply in the minds of the two volunteers and now they had a small foretaste of the brutality of the Japanese war.

From the 1000 soldiers of the “Nihon no Yari” unit, over 200 men were dead or heavily wounded. Frank crept back to the first trench and saw a picture of horror. Everywhere lay deads which seemed to sink slowly down into the mud.

It was raining again now, but the young man enjoyed the cool water drops on his face at that moment. Beside him, a Japanese struggled for air and clutched his blood-smeared belly.

„Help!”, gasped the man with the last of his strenght and frantically looked at Frank.

„I bring you a physician!“, promised Kohlhaas and tried to find a medical tent. After he had finally found it, the physician just shook his head and showed him dozens of other wounded men who were begging for his help too. Kohlhaas looked for another medic, and finally came back to the wounded Japanese, after half an hour. It was too late, the soldier had already bled to death.

„Everything is just shit...”, hissed Frank and was close to tears.

The Japanese still stared at him, with a deadpan countenance, as if he wanted to ask Frank, why he had forgotten him.

The next days were quiet. No more GCF attacks and no more bombardments of the city. The enemy high command had probably just wanted to test, how strong the defense of the Japanese really was. Nevertheless, there was not much time for sleep or recovery. So the most men just dozed off and were more or less halfawake for days. Frank and Alfred planned to sleep for not less then a whole week, when they were back in Ivas.

Yesterday, they had made a short trip to the center of Sapporo. Many of the exotic houses had been destroyed by the first great bomb attack and the streets of the city were still covered with rubble. Thousands of civilians had already left Sapporo and tried to reach the island of Honshu.

But General Takeuchi had some good news for the “Nihon no Yari” unit: The defense had held on all important fronts. Nowhere, the GCF troops had penetrated the metropolis. Nevertheless, they had meanwhile almost completely encircled the city and had received further reinforcements from overseas. Furthermore, the high command of the northern invasion army had given the order to besiege and starve out Sapporo.

Soon the heavy cannons of the GCF battered the Japanese city with a merciless fire from a safe distance. Countless tons of conventional or chemical bombs came from the sky - to make Sapporo to a giant cemetery.

General Daniel Schwarzer had made the offer to his opponent Takeuchi, before the beginning of the gruelling bombardment, that he would get a safe conduct, after an immediate surrender of Sapporo. Otherwise, the city would be annihilated without mercy.

But Takeuchi had ignored the offer and Sapporo still remained a giant fortress, blocking the way of the GCF invasion army like a mountain chain. Indeed, the old

Japanese general knew that his stubbornness would bring hell on earth to the inhabitants of the city.

Kohlhaas hold his head. Alf and he were waiting here on the front, while the thunder of detonations slowly drove them crazy - since more than a week, day by day. Missile after missile came down on the metropolis, crushing one house after another, piece by piece.

In order to destroy the hostile cannons, some Japanese pilots had made several suicide attacks by charging the artillery emplacements of the enemy, but all in all, it had been nothing but a senseless waste of lives.

Furthermore, the Japanese had no chance for a sally and were just trapped in their own emplacements. General Takeuchi had become grumpy and had every reason for it. Even the courageous defenders of Wakkanai had already been slowly demoralized by the same strategy.

„That slop is just ugly!”, said Frank and spat out an unknown part of a Japanese dish, swearing loudly.

„Well, I like it!”, replied his friend.

“Sometimes, I would really be glad if we could just teleport back to Ivas. Just out of this fucking city”, muttered Kohlhaas.

Alf hesitated. „However, it is important that we are here!”, meant Bäumer.

His comrade was silent for a while. „Important? In the next days, weeks or months, we will croak here. No one of us will leave this fucked up Japsenloch alive, Alf...”, hissed Frank and shook his head.

Alf just munched. „Anyhow, who has always said that he wants to become a rebel? Well, this is real rebellion, no Robin Hood game, just an eternal and desperate fight of us against a superior enemy.”

„I know...“, grumbled Kohlhaas.

„Japan is important, Frank! Important! Important! Important!“

„Really?“

„Yes, for sure! We have already talked about that topic with Wilden, for a million times!“

Frank sat down on an old can and let his fingers crack. “I`m just tired, man. This damn barrage. Boom! Boom! Boom! All day long. I think, I will lose my mind if it goes on in this manner. Do you really believe that we have a chance?“

„My nerves are raw too, Frank. But this is the usual tactic of the GCF. Don` t panic!“

„It is just a illusion to win this war, isn` t it?“, asked Frank and appeared hopelessly.

„Do we have a chance? You ask, if we can really win? What chance did we have in Paris? What do you think, my friend? Did you really believe that the world system would collapse, only because of the fact that we have killed Wechsler?“

Kohlhaas said nothing and stared sadly at the sky. Then he just walked away.

At the end of the camp was a telephone, and Frank thought about calling Julia, but in front of the phone was already a crowd of other soldiers.

The young man muttered a curse and went back to Alf. The friend clapped on Frank`s shoulder and said: “I prefer to stand here with you and all the others, to fight for our freedom. It is so much better than hanging around in that cage called “Central Europe”, living a worthless life. Yes, I prefer to die here as a free man. This is far greater, than just vegetating as a slave with a citizen number.”

“Maybe you are right, Alf!”, answered Frank and sat down.

“Have you heard something from the southern front?“

“Don` t ask, what I`ve heard is not very inspiring. Hofu and Yamaguchi, at the coast of Honshu, have totally been destroyed. And the GCF still marches on, towards Tokyo.”

“Shit!”, hummed Kohlhaas. “What may the others from Ivas do at the moment? Are they still alive?”

“Let’s call Wilden this evening”, decided Alf and slapped on Frank’s shoulder again.

Shortly afterwards, they heard that Thomas Baastfeldt had already been killed in Kagoshima a few weeks ago. But Sven and the others seemed to be still alive. After the village boss had talked about his own “theoretical strategy” to win this war, unnerving Frank again, the young man asked for his daughter.

Julia was overly pleased, when she heard that they were well. Her voice sounded like the chant of a wonderful angel in Frank’s ears, and even drowned the terrible roar of the bomb impacts in Sapporo’s city center for some minutes. Kohlhaas felt inspired again and ended the conversation with the words: „I think of you, Julia! Every single day!”

This was quite a unusual revealing of feelings for a man like him and Frank felt happy for the rest of the day. He was more than proud on himself, that he had finally dared to say these words to Wilden’s daughter.

On the next day, GCF units tried to penetrate the northwest of Sapporo again. This time they came around midday. But the attack was half-hearted and probably just another test of the Japanese defense.

After one hour, the enemies backtracked with great losses of men and several tanks. The food supply of the defenders was still intact, but it would be only a question of the time until the supplies would be exhausted. Nevertheless, the moral of the Japanese and their allies was still high.

While the ruthless bombardment of the metropolis continued, gradually devastating the former beautiful city, the Japanese war propaganda still knew only one watchword: „Holding out! Fight to the last man!”

The first period of the monsoon season had begun, on the jungle-covered islands of Okinawa, and it was raining all day long without ceasing. General David Williams stood in front of a big map of Japan and looked at the other officers in the conference room. Then he pointed at the map and said: „I hope, that my colleague, Mr. Schwarzer, can soon accelerate his advance in the north. So far, the World President is still content with our military successes, but he just expects faster victories. We won't disappoint him and have to reach the south of Honshu in time!“, explained the tall man with the gray temples.

“The Japanese have heavily fortified Kobe, Kyoto and Osaka with many units. What would happen if we find there a similar situation as in the case of Sapporo?“, asked one of the officers.

A murmur went through the room and general Williams seemed to be annoyed, because of this question.

„Nonsens! The situation can't be compared with Sapporo. However, the morale and confidence of the Japanese still rises with every day, on which Sapporo withstands us.

Matsumoto's war propaganda is better and more successful than we have imagined. We probably underestimated his talents in this context. Anyway, this will not save our enemies. Kobe will soon be bombarded as the first metropolis on the Japanese central island, and the industrial plants will be the most important targets for our bombers!”

Michael McBruce, a veteran officer of the GCF, raised his hand and Williams nodded. „What is about the rumors that the Japanese war will probably exceed the costs, that have originally been budgeted by the World Government?“

General Williams harrumphed and some of the other officers stared at the asker. Actually, such questions should not be posed in this conference.

„Well, what do you want to hear? Am I the minister of finance? If no unexpected delays appear, or even military setbacks, then there is no reason to worry about such things.

So far, we could keep the schedule for the most part, and if Sapporo can't be taken by Mr. Schwarzer, we will still overrun the Japanese defense in the south – in the long term. We have enough “human resources” for this war, don't forget that!”

“What is with our great casualties, Mr. Williams?”, McBruce pumped Williams.

„Mr. McBruce...“, replied the general annoyedly. „Our human resources are still big enough! Believe me!”

Shortly afterwards, the critical officer raised his hand again, but general Williams just ignored him. Finally, the meeting continued with some strategic explanations.

At the same time, the presidential palace in Tokyo was abuzz with excitement. Haruto Matsumoto had already a screaming tantrum behind himself, after one of his advisors had revealed him the military situation in the southern part of Honshu. Once again, his foreign minister, Akira Mori, had to help his best friend to calm down. He showed him some facts which the very emotional man had probably ignored.

„I don't want to blandish the situation, Haruto. Because our situation isn't good at all, and I still know that. Nevertheless, Kyushu and Shikoku are not representative for the rest of Japan. Our defense in Sapporo is still strong, furthermore, even in Kobe and Osaka. And these cities will still be in our hands for the next weeks – or even months!”, explained Mori and gave the president a glass of water.

Matsumoto breathed deeply and emptied the water glass with a single sip. Then he walked nervously through the room: “Even if it doesn't look catastrophic in the north so

far, we must do something in the south. A counteroffensive! Otherwise, the GCF will win this war, even if we can persevere in some places!”

“The high command works day and night on a plan to retake the southern regions. But we need more soldiers – and more tanks and more artillery. We will be able to strike back in the next weeks, but I can’t tell you...”, returned Mori.

„The counteroffensive will come? But when, Akria? I hear that since weeks!”, screamed the president, while some of his advisors winced. But Mori remained rational.

Actually, Matsumoto was an emotional, but otherwise balanced and buoyant man. However, the months-long hate campaign against him, and finally this war, had made him to an exhausted and depressive person.

Meanwhile, folds had crept over his face and sleep disturbances seriously attacked his health. The foreign minister brought a second glass of water and answered in his usual, rational manner: „I would say, that about two months will be necessary until we have the military strenght for a counteroffensive...”

“Two months, Akira?”

„Yes! At the minimum...”

„Two damn months?”

„And there is still something, I have already talked about with general Uesugi.”

„What else, Akira?”

„That counteroffensive would be much more effective if the southern GCF army would fall into confusion...”

„What do you mean by that?”

„We should just try it. Let`s talk about this tomorrow, in confidence!”

“To hell with that nonsense! But if you mean...”, growled the president.

Haruto Matsumoto emptied his glass with a single sip again, and finally left the room. He went to his bedroom, drew the curtains and sat down in a dark corner.

„I should have become a little employee, like my father. Yes, this would have been the right way. “The policy”, she is nothing but the scummiest whore of all whores...”, he said quietly to himself.

Some days had passed, and rain and cold weather slowly come over Sapporo. Yesterday, some GCF units had broken through the defense ring in the northeast of the city, and the Japanese had been driven back to the area in front of the university of Hokkaido. However, general Takeuchi`s soldiers had retaken the lost streets in a night attack, and the house-to-house fighting had lasted till daybreak.

At end of the month, the GCF made another great attack with over 400000 men. Frank and Alfred had entrenched themselves, together with other soldiers of the “Nihon no Yari“ unit, in a destroyed house and had repulsed several attack waves of the enemy.

Four Japanese who had defended the emplacement with them, had been killed during the fight. Alf got a graze wound on the arm and had to be doctored, but it was, however, fortunately only a harmless laceration.

Now the constant attacks slowly increased. In the morning hours, the south of Sapporo had been attacked by GCF bombers and many houses were still burning. The two soldiers from Ivas had helped to bring civilians into the bunkers or metro tunnels. And they had seen terrible scenes. Women, who still held their children in their arms, lying charred and mutilated in the ruins of their houses. It had been another morning of terror, and many more should follow. On 26.10.2031, around noon, the sun tried to send a few rays through the gray cloud cover above the city, but

only a few reached the humans down on earth. Somewhere, the enemy cannons thundered again, in order to lay the Japanese metropolis piece by piece in ashes.

Suddenly, the alarm sirens started to howl because the enemy artillery began to shoot at the northwest city. All soldiers immediately ran under cover, while another great assault followed.

Dozens of heavy tanks moved over the line of sight on the horizon and started to fire. Behind the terrifying vehicles a swarm of GCF soldiers was spreading, using the tanks as cover. Their number appeared enormous.

„You, come on!“, roared a Japanese officer and waved Frank and Alf nearer. They scurried into a bombed out house and ran over some concrete stairs to the upper floor. A group of volunteers from Canada and a few Japanese soldiers already huddled there.

Terrible noise came from outside, gunfire, screams and detonations. An incredible din. The Japanese artillery answered and let a hail of shells go down on the tanks and the infantry of the GCF.

Some of the steely beasts exploded, but most of them still rolled unwaveringly forward, spitting their projectiles on the Japanese lines. After half an hour, the enemy infantry attacked with loud yelling and drove the Japanese units out of their emplacements.

General Takeuchi had relocated the front line some hundred meters backwards, that his soldiers could entrench themselves better in the house ruins.

„They will soon be here!“, shouted Bäumer and fired from a window. Meanwhile, the first frontline was already overrun by the enemy. Many Japanese fled or were just shot down in their trenches. Frank turned around and crept under the window. Beside him was a young Japanese who began to

quail, when he recognized the GCF tanks, breaking through mountains of rubble and coming nearer.

„Give me your bazooka!“, screamed Kohlhaas and tore the panzerfaust out of the boy`s hand.

A tank cannon hit the already half destroyed roof of the house and ripped it off. Frank looked out the window and targeted one of the enemy tanks, a next hit could completely destroy the house and no one of the men inside would survive this.

Frank shot at the tank and the missile bored itself through the side of the vehicle. Instantly, the tank turned its gun barrel towards the ruin, from where the shot had come, but then it exploded with a loud bang.

„Die, bastard!“, hissed Frank quietly and crawled back over the dusty ground.

„We must get out here! The next tanks are already coming!“, shouted Bäumer and stared at his comrades. „Come on! We must get out or we will die!“

The men ran down the stairs and hid behind a concrete wall in a side street. Beside them, some houses already blew up and they heard loud screams. More and more enemies appeared and now even the Skydragons came from the sky.

„Brrrrrttt!“ This terrible sound made the men`s blood run cold, because it was the sound of a gatling autocannon. Dozens of military helicopters opened fire on the fleeing Japanese soldiers, and one of the Skydragons tried to target Frank and the others. It shot and his salvo hit the concrete wall, while the horrified soldiers hit the dirt. Then they tried to run to another house.

Above their heads, the Skydragon flew away, turned around and the next volley of gunfire came from the sky. Two young Japanese were perforated by bullets and broke down. Finally, the Skydragon pointed its terrible weapons at another target.

“Hurry up! In there!“, roared Bäumer and jumped into the house ruin. The rest followed him, while more and more tanks could be heard in the proximity.

Frank still carried the bazooka and destroyed another tank with a well-aimed shot. The others fired at a group of enemy soldiers and killed three of them. Then they tried to find a safer place. In the chaos of the battle, Frank had already lost his overview. Meanwhile, his only thought was to survive.

Shortly afterwards, they got the message that the Japanese had given up their emplacements and were on the way to the city center. Now the enemy was already close to the Maruyamapark. Even the camp had totally been destroyed. This day ended with a defeat.

The defenders had fought bravely, but the sheer force of numbers of the GCF soldiers had decided the fight for the benefit of the attackers. Nevertheless, the casualties of the enemy were very high again. However, 46 GCF tanks had been destroyed and thousands of soldiers had fallen.

The strength of the “Nihon no Yari“ was now at 477 men, what meant that over 500 soldiers were already dead or were lying in one of the military hospitals, somewhere in the city. Even at other places, the GCF had won ground. General Takeuchi still mused about the new situation and finally ordered a counterattack – tonight! In his eyes, it was important that the GCF could not use the conquered places as bridgeheads for further attacks on the inner city.

Bäumer smoked one of his cheap cigarettes which he had won in a poker game.

„Counterattack? Tonight?“, he groaned.

„Yes, as officer Kan has already explained it. It's an direct order from the general...“, said Frank and held his growling stomach.

„Counterattack! Deep in the night! Shit! Starving and fighting, that's all they can give us!“, grumbled Alf.

„In one hour, we will get emergency provisions, if I have correctly understood that message“, answered Kohlhaas. „I could just eat up the Japanese islands...“

Meanwhile, Alfred made a mental trip to a luxury restaurant, where he solemnly swore to devour everything he could get. „The meal rations have become smaller in the last days“, remarked Frank and his growling stomach seemed to agree. His friend nodded and leaned against a concrete wall.

„It looks terrible in the city center. Everywhere, corpses of civilians, en masse, they already rot. The Japanese burn them as huge piles to prevent epidemics“, said Bäumer quietly.

„I know, I have seen it too!“, answered Frank. „We can't hold the line forever. Soon the big hunger will come over us all, over soldiers and civilians. The leaders of the Japanese army don't say it openly, but meanwhile we are low on everything“, whispered Alf quietly and closed his eyes, in order to make a nap.

„If the GCF will use as many chemical bombs as in the case of Wakkanai, Sapporo will finally become an enormous mass grave“, added Frank. Alf just swallowed and turned his head to the side.

It still became colder and darker. Frank looked at his watch: 22,30 o'clock. Suddenly the radio crackled and general Takeuchi gave new orders to all units. The rest of the „Nihon no Yari“ unit should start their counterattack at 4.00 o'clock in the morning, together with their Japanese comrades. They had to assault the GCF emplacements near the Maruyamapark.

The two volunteers from Ivas and ten further soldiers huddled in the dirty living room of a bombed out house. There had been a little dispute concerning the question, who had the privilege to sleep on a dusty sofa.

Finally, a volunteer from Iran, Nirwan, could succeed and fell immediately asleep. One of the other men made a campfire on the ground of the room which had a collapsed sidewall. It was a strange sight. They lived like rats here. Even Frank and Alfred snoozed for a while, in the cold darkness of the night.

At 3.30 o'clock, the Iranian woke them up and they talked for a short moment. This soldier looked like the picture of an old Persian warrior: He had a brownish beard, bright green eyes and was amazingly tall. Nirwan hated the World Government from the bottom of his heart, because his parents and the rest of his family had died, when the GCF had attacked the rebellious Iranian state with nuclear bombs. It had been in 2019. At that time, Teheran had been devastated by three atom bombs. Nirwan had never been able to forget this horror.

„We must regroup with the other squads at Toroshi Street!“, he explained and Frank and Alfred followed him.

Tired, hungry and freezing, they recognized about 200 comrades who had gathered between the ruins. Some fixed their bayonets, others loaded their weapons or counted their hand grenades. Many of the young men seemed to be scared of the coming fight. It was dark, cold and an icy rain came down from the sky. All lights had been switched off and the soldiers were just silent. At 4.00 o'clock, the unit started moving, slowly, some new orders were whispered, while the soldiers looked around.

“Welcome to Japan!“, said Bäumer cynically and stared nervously in Frank`s direction.

The soldiers crept through the dark streets and walked loudly towards the Maruyamapark - its trees and bushes looked like dead spiders.

Soon they had reached the area which was occupied by the GCF troops and still more Japanese soldiers came out of the dark streets around them. It was silent for a short moment, nothing could be heard. Nothing but the pattering of the rain drops on the roofs of the houses.

From a distance, Frank could see some sandbags and the helmets of GCF soldiers behind them. Finally, general Takeuchi's voice came over the radio again, just ending the sinister stillness. It was 4,00 o'clock: Attack!

„Banzai!“, yelled the Japanese, rushing out of the darkness, wildly firing and screaming. For a short moment the GCF soldiers were surprised, but then they returned fire.

The first Japanese were mowed down by machine-guns. Frank and Alfred charged forward, trying to find cover between the wreckage that was covering the street. Then they shot at the GCF soldiers too.

Soon the enemies were close. They screamed and pointed their weapons at the Japanese and the volunteers. Bäumer shot one of them down, while Frank came from the side to stab another with his bayonet. Meanwhile, the other volunteers killed the GCF soldiers behind the sandbags.

“Go in there! Hurry up!“, hissed Alf and some men followed him into a drab apartment block. Here they discovered a few GCF soldiers who were still drowsy. Some tried to get out of their camp beds, when a hand grenade rolled into the room and detonated immediately. Cries resounded, stabbing and shooting - then the house was finally taken.

From here, they had a good strategic position to open the fire on the next group of GCF soldiers, that ran across the street in front of the house. Now Frank crept to the other men and took his assault rifle. Down on the street, their

comrades ran over the asphalt and came upon some enemies at the next corner. Both groups nearly collided and the men slaughtered each other without hesitation. Frank beheld a Japanese soldier who slayed an enemy with his samurai sword. He raged like a berserk in his fearsome frenzy.

“Okay, the street is ours!”, shouted Kohlhaas and raised his gun. „On the street! Follow us! Go! Go! Go!“

The remaining men ran down the stairs and tried to reach their comrades. Frank took the weapon of a dying GCF soldier and fired at some black shadows in a dark side street. Then he continued to rush forward.

Soon, the killing was out of control and the soldiers could not make out friend or foe. They just fired at every man in front of them without thinking. They finally came to a house, that was brightly illuminated, but the enemies immediately switched off the light, when they saw the Japanese. Then they opened fire on the attackers. Frank dragged Alf to the ground.

„Give me covering fire! Shoot at the windows!”, shouted Kohlhaas and crept towards the house under the veil of darkness.

The other men still shot at the windows and pieces of finery and concrete rained down on the wet asphalt. Kohlhaas was already close to the entrance now and suddely threw a hand grenade through one of the broken windows. A deafening explosion let the house quake and smoke clouds poured out of the upper floor. Then the soldiers jumped into the entrance with a loud roar. The first attackers were hit by a terrible burst of gunfire, but the rest still tried to storm the house.

Frank threw another hand grenade into a side room and jumped away. An explosion let the house shake again, while screams and shots resounded around him. A moment after,

a Japanese with a flamethrower came through the front door and burned every enemy in sight. Suddenly, a wide-eyed GCF soldier with a dirty face staggered over the corridor and fired indiscriminately around. Frank and Alfred jumped sideways, returned fire immediately and finally killed him. Shortly afterwards, the fight for the house was over.

Bäumer illuminated the man with his flashlight. „That was a GCF officer, look at the uniform! Perhaps, this house was something like a command post...“

Frank bent down to the dead soldier and took the identification tag from his neck. „Major General Martin Chirac“ was engraved in it.

„Maybe a bigger number!“, said the young man and grinned proudly. He let the ID tag slide into his pocket and showed it later to a group of Japanese soldiers who admired him for his “kill”.

Alfred finally became angry and meant, that this major could be “his shot” as well, because he had also been on the corridor and both men had fired at the same time.

The counterattack had been a success and the GCF troops had been blind-sided in the most parts of Sapporo. On the next day, the street fights still continued. General Daniel Schwarzer finally gave the command for an ordered retreat and the GCF left Sapporo again.

Now, the Japanese war propaganda made a mountain out of a molehill, because Matsumoto needed news about victories more than anything else.

The Japanese television averred that they had routed the enemy - like the mongols in the battle of Kyushu. They finally prophesied that Sapporo, the “fortress of freedom”, would never fall.

“Sapporo: Great victory over the slave hordes of the Lodge Brothers!”, headlined Matsumoto`s press on the next day. The reality was, however, far less spectacular. The GCF had been driven out of the city – that was all. Nevertheless, Sapporo was still under siege and the hunger slowly came over the whole city. Furthermore, the merciless barrage went on, day by day...

Leaving Hell

The northernmost metropolis of Japan had always been famous for its spectacular snow festival, where talented artists from all over the world had delighted the people with their artworks of ice.

Often, their skillful hands had let the visitors of the city be astonished. They had formed Japanese temples or enormous animals out of the material, what was distinctive for Sapporo during the winter months: Ice.

This year, the snow festival was canceled and the people of Sapporo had other things on their minds, for example the question, where they would bring the countless corpses, covering the streets of the city. Furthermore, how they would save the living from the coming hunger crisis.

For the next days, it was quiet again on the fronts. No attacks of the GCF, no counterattacks of the Japanese. Daniel Schwarzer, the commander-in-chief of the northern invasion army, was just waiting.

Then, it started to snow, became bitterly cold and the food supply finally broke down completely. For some days, the city center was attacked with chemical bombs which were much worse than every infantry offensive. Thereupon, some Japanese pilots tried to destroy the GCF artillery in the hinterland, but they were not very successful and most of them did not return alive.

General Schwarzer planned to burn his enemies out like rats in a dugout. If they would not surrender, Sapporo would become a city of death. Chemical weapons, even poison gas, had always been doomed by the international media and the World President. As „great humanists“, the politicians of the World Union, had nothing to do with such

cruel weapons. But all that was not worth the paper it was written on. However, the media just hushed up the use of these bombs. Only the people of Sapporo knew the truth.

Frank Kohlhaas huddled in a dark corner and pressed the hands before his face. His friend, Alfred, was out to look for a telephone or an Internet access. Otherwise, nobody else was in the cold, destroyed house. The young volunteer withdrew into himself and still mused for some hours.

The hunger tormented him, his neck and head hurt, and in the early morning hours of this bleak day, he had already cried. He missed Julia Wilden so much and had her picture in his mind since days. Yesterday night, his dead mother had visited him in his dreams. She had told him that everything would be good some day.

„You will still live for a long time, my boy!“, she had said to him with her tender voice. And finally, she had hugged him.

Occasionally, a Japanese soldier came into the bombed out house, in order to look for a comrade. Frank tried to behave calmly, and hoped that nobody would see him cry. He was anyway „the hero“ who had killed that GCF major. Meanwhile, even the Japanese talked about him, admired him.

The GCF artillery had already shot poison gas shells at the city center of Sapporo several times, what had caused a giant tragedy. Meanwhile, a yellowish fog had slowly spread out and some quarters had been evacuated. Cold and hunger were distressing the city like Kublai Khan`s hordes, and now there was that terrible barrage with chemical bombs. Soon, it would end. Frank was sure.

He often doubted in these days that Alf and he would ever come out of this hell alive. But their fate had planned another task for them. Frank should experience it in the course of this hopeless day.

It was after 18.00 o'clock, Frank and Alfred had just swallowed another slop, tasting like nothing, when their Japanese platoon leader came to them. The man looked for Frank Kohlhaas, as he explained in broken English.

“You!”, he pointed at Frank. “You will coming with me, understand? General Takeuchi wants talking with you!”

The two volunteers from Lithuanias looked at each other and Frank followed the officer. They went through some devastated streets and finally came to Takeuchi`s provisionally command post.

This was the residence of the Japanese general, that dirty, ruined house. Takeuchi already seemed to wait for his guest. When Frank entered the room, the veteran smiled and fetched a bottle of sake out of a wooden box, then he asked Frank to sit down. The general gave him a sip of Japanese rice wine, still smiling. Both men examined each other.

Some minutes later, Takeuchi began the discussion: „One of the Japanese soldiers has told me that you have killed a high rank officer of the GCF!”

Frank nodded and showed Takeuchi the ID tag which he was carrying in his pocket since days - like a trophy. Kohlhaas put it on the table.

„I have killed this major general of the GCF!”, he said. Takeuchi perked his eyebrows up and regarded the identification tag more exactly, then he grinned and gave Frank a wink.

„Major General Martin Chirac. He was an important man of the northern GCF army. Good work, soldier!”

„Thanks!”, answered Kohlhaas, while the general gave him another glas of sake.

„You are Frank Kohlhaas?”

„Yes, Sir!”

„Where are you from, soldier?”

„Litauen...Lithuania...But I`m German...“

„German? Ah! German soldiers are brave!“

„Thanks!“

„Deutsche Soldaten sind gute Soldaten! Ha, ha!“

„In the olden days...“, Frank smiled.

„Woher sie sind?“

„I`m from Berlin!“

„Berlin, nice city...“, meant the Japanese.

„Not in our days!“, said Frank with a shake of the head.

The third glas of sake followed and both men became even more relaxed. Takeuchi, that embittered veteran, was suddenly garrulous.

„What is your contact person here in Japan?“, he asked.

„Mr. Masaru Taishi from Tokyo!“

„Okay, I will call him and ask him about you. Please come back tomorrow and we will talk again...“

Kohlhaas was more than surprised about that conversation with general Takeuchi. And Alf did not know, what to make of the whole thing too.

Finally, after a longer skat game, they went to bed. This night remained calmly, except for the usual bomb explosions that could be heard from a distance. On the next day, general Takeuchi let the young man call again. He seemed to be very excited and welcomed Frank with a broad grin. Again, he fetched his sake and gave it to his soldier. A moment after, he banged his fist on the table and laughed loudly.

„My God! You have killed Leon-Jack Wechsler?“, he shouted and was all smiles.

Frank winced und just swallowed. Then he tried to grin.

„Yes! My friend Alf, and me!“

„You are Rambo, ha, ha!“, returned Takeuchi. „Do you know Rambo?“

“Eh...no!”, stammered Frank.

The Japanese stopped him with a wave of his hand, grinned even broader and preked his eyebrows up.

„Doesn` t matter! This was only a joke! But who is Aruf?”

“Alfred Bäumer...I call him Alf. He is my best friend and he also fights in the “Nihon no Yari” unit!”

“Oh!”, general Takeuchi seemed to be delighted. „He is also here?”

„Yes, Sir!”

„The men who killed Wechsler in Paris, ha, ha! Nice!”

Shortly afterwards, even Bäumer had to come and the commander-in-chief of the Japanese army of Sapporo bombarded him with questions. Bäumer drank some glasses of sake with the general too. Meanwhile, Takeuchi grinned from ear to ear.

„Ha, ha! Nice! Nice!”, it resounded through his office.

Frank and Alf became a bit thoughtful. How could that Japanese know about the bombing in Paris? Who had told him, that they had killed the governor of „Central Europe”?

„Wilden! It was Wilden!”, it flashed through Frank`s mind.

„He had told it to Masaru Taishi, and Taishi had told it to Takeuchi on the phone!”

After some demands, the general confirmed that he had heard everything from Taishi. At that time, the bombing in Paris had even been on Japanese television.

Wilden had probably bragged with them once again. That was not the exemplary secrecy he always talked about. But Taishi had not said a word about the bombing in Paris. Frank slowly became angry. What had Wilden said to his Japanese friend?

Perhaps: „Hey, Masaru! Ich will send you my little superstars!”

However, that general in Sapporo knew everything and was apparently completely enthusiastic. It would not have taken much for begging them for some autographs.

Takeuchi slowly calmed down, stopped smirking and finally behaved like a real general again.

“The Japanese army wants you for a special mission. You will leave Sapporo and go back to Tokyo!”, explained the commander-in-chief.

“What mission?”, asked Bäumer.

“They will tell you everything in Tokyo. You will leave Sapporo tomorrow! Good luck!”, Takeuchi just said.

Then the conversation was over and the Japanese general looked authoritative again. He shook their hands and bowed out.

The two volunteers went back to the camp. Beyond doubt, they were happy to leave Sapporo, but what meant Takeuchi with “special mission”? Frank mused, scratched his head and looked at Alf.

“That was strange, wasn’t it?”, said Kohlhaas.

“This is true enough...”, answered Alf.

Kohlhaas stopped walking. “Alf?”

“What?”

“Who the hell is Rambo?”

“Rambo?”, Bäumer rejected the question with a shrug of his shoulders. “No idea!”

At this night, Frank walked through the streets of Sapporo for a last time. The soldier nearly reached the inner city. He just wanted to be alone for a while and had told his friend, that he would soon be back in the camp. It was raining and snowflakes already came from the dark night sky, while a cold wind was cutting through his clothes. Nevertheless, Frank always just walked straight ahead. Sapporo, the metropolis with its 2.5 million inhabitants, seemed

meanwhile to be empty. Many of the beautiful houses were totally destroyed and somewhere, far away, he could hear the grumble of detonations. The young volunteer was depressed and wistful, in spite of the praise of general Takeuchi.

„What is the sense of all this?“, he constantly asked himself. „Holding Japan, holding Sapporo, holding any streets?“

At a house entrance, beside him, Frank recognized a Japanese woman who was wrapped in tatters, holding her child in her arms. She sang a beautifully sounding song in her alien language.

Frank stopped for a moment and considered her. The woman smiled, but her face looked sad and sickly. Kohlhaas just smiled back and finally walked away.

When he came to one of the larger shopping streets, he could recognize men who pulled corpses out of the mountains of rubble. They just piled them up like firewood, in order to burn these remains of human life.

The sight was terrible and Frank closed his eyes, hoping, that this horror would spare him. He had seen many dead men in the last weeks, but this sight was a much bigger torture for his soul.

„It is worth it?“, he whispered quietly and went back towards the Maruyamapark.

„Would this world be a better place, if I could rule it?“, it bored in his head.

It was gloomy what had happened to this former beautiful city. Everywhere lay rubble, debris and corpses. And there was no end of this insanity in sight.

„Just because the Japanese wanted their freedom? All that bloodshed, that pain, that destruction for the interests of a small group of greedy devils...“, he mused.

„And I don't know if I really want to stop you anymore. I can't suffer this any longer, I don't want to fight, to kill, any

longer. If I am a hero, then a hero is just pathetic! I would say to my son: Become everything in your life, but never a hero!“

Even the Maruyamapark was lonely. There was nothing here, nothing but dark trees without leaves and rain-soaked meadows. Frank sat down on a bench and stared at the ground.

„This horror eats up my soul. I want to get out...“, he whispered. “Out of this dying city, out of this doomed country.”

A little later he went back to the camp, where Alf was still waiting for him. He said nothing, just crept into his sleeping bag and stared at the concrete wall next to his head.

One hour later, finally, Frank fell asleep. But another weird dream was waiting for him in the depths of his mind...

Frank hoped that it was no dream, because it was great! He rode on a wonderful, white horse, dressed in a noble garb, towards a wonderful shining castle of pure ivory. Around him, the people cheered.

Men, women and children worshipped him and called his name full of joy. The girls, at the side of the road, were beautiful like angels and threw multicolored flowers at him.

„Frank Kohlhaas! You are our deliverer! You are our king! God bless you!“, they shouted.

The young man proudly looked at the people and waved his right hand which was in a fine velvet glove.

„Crown him! Our deliverer, our hero! Frank Kohlhaas!“, shouted the girls and threw more and more flowers at him.

The horse carried Frank nearer to the wondrous castle and dignitaries, wearing velvet and silk, finally opened the gates.

“Come in, great king!”

All bowed to Frank and one of the servants said: „Welcome to your coronation, Sire! Mankind has never seen a greater hero than you!“

Frank grinned and just nodded. The man was right, thought Kohlhaas. Honor to whom honor is due!

Then the young man strutted over some long stairs which led into a splendid throne room.

“You are our redeemer! Let us crown Frank! He shall be the king of the free people!”, he heard the damsels and servants call everywhere.

Finally, he sat down on a golden throne which was adorned with diamonds and ornate images. One of the servants came to him and said: „Noble gentleman, great hero, welcome to this place! Today we will crown you, as you deserve it! You are a true hero, a benefactor and liberator for all human beings!“

Now the others began to cheer again and called his name. Kohlhaas smiled proudly – and a bit arrogant.

Meanwhile, even more dignitaries came from the rear part of the hall, in order to give Frank his regalia. One servant carried a sceptre, wrapped up in a cloth of silk. The other dignitary had something roundish in his hand - probably the orb, but it was also covered with a cloth.

Two other servants followed. One man had a meal tray in his hand, covered with a golden cap, while the other one raised a royal crown.

The servants came to the golden throne, bowed again, and one of them said: „Noble Mr. Frank Kohlhaas, today we want to celebrate your coronation! You will be the king of the free people!“

Then the man beside him added: „You are a liberator of mankind, a heroic warrior, a messenger of the coming, golden age!“

“Now you are the king of the free people, Sire! Are you glad?”

Frank nodded and spoke: „I am happy and I will be a worthy king to you! And now, give me the regalia which are entitled to me and let me taste from the meals which you have prepared for me!“

„As you wish, Sire!“, answered the servants and the first of them came up the stairs. He pulled the sceptre out of the silk cloth and said: „Sire, this shall be your sceptre! It is made of the bones of your unborn children. They could never be born, because you had no time for a family. Only war has ruled your life!“

Then the second man followed: „Sire, here is your orb! It is the skull of Julia Wilden, that woman who has loved you a whole lifetime. Unfortunately, you had never had the time to answer this love, because only the eternal fight has ruled your thoughts!“

Finally the third servant came to Frank and showed him his crown. „Your crown is made of the bones of those who have followed you into battle and have died in your name!“

In a final step, the last dignitary lifted the golden cap from the meal tray. Frank frightened, because a heart and a brain were lying on it.

The servant smiled and explained: „Eat these tasty meals, because they have already been a part of you, Sire! You have given them to us, many years ago, so that we can crown you today!“

The young man jumped up from his throne and called: „What is that? What’s about all these terrible things you show me here? I thought, that I would become the king of the free people...“

A loud murmur went through the spectators of the ceremony and many of them looked at Frank with a lack of understanding.

The dignitaries finally chorused: „Sire, did you really believe that you could become a king without making sacrifices?” Kohlhaas woke up, startled and looked around. Nobody was there, except for Alf and some snoring soldiers. The young man left the tent and ran through the cold night. It was still raining and Frank felt alone...

Grief and Doubts

On the next day, Frank and Alfred were brought from Sapporo back to Tokyo with a transport aircraft. The flight was smooth and nothing happened. The airplane flew over one of the few places in the south of the Sapporo which were, more or less, still safe.

The two men had a last look at the destroyed city and were just glad to leave this hell alive. General Takeuchi had finally said goodbye to them, as well as many other comrades. Furthermore, Takeuchi had thanked them for their valor in the fights for Sapporo.

Bravery medals decked their uniforms now. Both men were just silent and thanked God that they were allowed to leave Hokkaido behind them. Frank was so tired that he snoozed during the flight and only woke up, when they were near Tokyo.

The Japanese high command had arranged that they could stay again at the Taishis for the next month. Afterwards, that so called "special mission" was planned, but the whole thing was still top secret and they got no further informations.

The former businessman picked them up in the city center of Tokyo, shook their hands and drove home with them. But Masaru was taciturn and appeared depressed.

„Are you all right, Mr. Taishi?“, asked Frank.

„No!“, returned Taishi and quietly stared at the street.

The Japanese accompanied his guests into the house, briefly explained the fact that they could stay from now on in two rooms on the upper floor, and just walked off.

Frank and Alfred went up the stairs and didn't see Mr. Taishi for the rest of the day. Taishi's wife had also just

briefly welcomed them, and had finally disappeared too. Something was wrong.

On the next morning, their host hardly said a word during the breakfast and also his wife and his daughter were silent. They wished the two volunteers a nice day and drove away with their car. About noon, they came back again.

Frank asked Alfred to stay in his room, because the Taishis obviously wanted to have their peace. They behaved very strangely. Frank furthermore assumed, that Mrs. Taishi had cried before the breakfast. She was, like the rest of the family, apathetic and depressive.

Frank and Alf did not ask, but already had a bad boding. The former child's room of Kazuko, the son, was directly next to Frank's bedroom and in the evening hours, the German heard a quiet sobbing, when he was on the way to the toilet.

Kohlhaas had a short look at the room and finally saw Mrs. Taishi, drowned in tears, in front of a photo of her son. Now everything was clear. Kazuko was dead. She noticed his presence and looked up at him.

„Come in, Frank!“ she sobbed. „He is dead. My son Kazuko is dead!“

Kohlhaas had no words, her voice sounded like a swarm of wasps, jabbing into his ears.

„I feel sorry for you, Mrs. Taishi!“, said Frank and tried to find a better answer.

„Okay! It is not your fault!“, whispered the mother. „Please leave me alone, my friend!“

He crept again back into his bedroom and quietly locked the door behind him. Now he knew it. Alfred had already anticipated the harm yesterday.

In the next days, Frank and Alfred tried to help the family where they could. They washed up, vacuumed the living room and did a lot of other things. That was probably their

way to show something like condolence. However, it helped not very much. The house was still filled with an enormous cloud of mourning and depression, and all their help could not change the cruel fate of this family.

Mr. Taishi had gotten the message of the death of his son one week ago. It had been inconceivably terrible and the Japanese family had almost lost the nerves.

Mrs. Taishi had broken down and since this terrible day, she took countless tranquilizers and pills, in order to get along. Sometimes, Frank and Alf heard the three Japanese argue, on other days Mrs. Taishi just screamed hysterically.

Even an emergency ambulance had to come once, because the woman had collapsed. This whole situation was worse than the Saporro front for the two Germans. Finally, Mr. Taishi asked them if they would prefer a hotel, but Frank told him that they could deal with all this.

Often Mr. Taishi said to himself that his son had fallen for a better Japan, but these slogans, even if they were true, could not take the pain from his soul.

„He was one of best students of Mathematics in university!”, he told Frank, completely whacked and always crying.

“I just have no words...”, answered Kohlhaas quietly.

“Okay!”, Mr. Taishi wiped off the tears form his face and tried to hold his nerves. „Today we all go to Tama zoo of Tokyo. The whole family Taishi and their guests Frank and Arufred!”

Alfred nodded and gave the man another handkerchief. Perhaps, it was no bad idea to concentrate the thoughts on that. The grief would still come to the Taishis - often enough. Frank Kohlhaas knew this feeling all too well. The holo cell and the following liquidation of his father and his sister had given this feeling to him a million times.

„These rats, they just force this madness upon these good people. Just for money and power...”, he hissed quietly. Bäumer agreed.

“Do you think that dead people are still living in another form? You understand?”, asked Taishi with a tearful smile.

“Well, I hope so. I hope that we will live on somehow after our death”, returned Alfred. “Basically, I`m sure!”

„Then Kazuko is still here. He will also go with us to Tama zoo!”, said Taishi, embracing Bäumer with tears in his eyes.

The visit of the zoo brought them some kind of „fun“. At least, it drove the sadness back, for a short moment, and gave them some diversion.

Nevertheless, Mrs. Taishi still looked like a corpse, pale, with a bloated face, always close to another breakdown. Occasionally, Masaru Taishi had to give her some pills.

Nanami Taishi, the daughter, was silent and, so far, Frank and Alfred hadn` t seen her all too often. Except for a short welcome, when they had arrived, they had never talked to each other.

Meanwhile, she had become totally quiet and just looked around with her sad eyes. Actually, she was a pretty woman and probably about 20 years old. But now she appeared, as if all the pain of the world was lying on her shoulders.

Nanami was often at her boyfriend in the neighboring district, so that the two guests had nothing to do with her. If they had understood Mr. Taishi correctly, she also studied in Tokyo. Today, however, she was joining that strange trip to the zoo.

„Elephants!”

Mr. Taishi pointed at a group of gray giants behind a high fence. One of the animals, probably a bull, roared in deafening loudness and the other elephants went out of its way. Perhaps, this elephant was some kind of „World

President“ in this compound. Shortly afterwards, they walked away and only Mr. Taishi talked to Frank and Alf. His wife and his daughter just trudged behind him, never saying anything. Sometimes Frank heard them cry quietly.

The Tama zoo was gigantic and impressive, all animal species of the world, at least those which had not yet been exterminated, could be found here.

Fishes, reptiles, mammals and multicolored birds en masse. The wolves with their shining white fur pleased Frank particularly well. He had never seen so many animals in his whole life before.

In his hometown Berlin were primarily rats which dwelled the garbage cans and the canalization. Those disliked creatures had followed the great decay of Germany's former capital in the last decades.

After a while, they came to a terrarium full of little rodents, lying everywhere behind the pane. The animals had large, yellow teeth and a rough brown fur. They dozily looked at the visitors, giving them not too much attention.

How relaxed these little things were, as if there would be nothing evil in the world! The rodents looked just nice, and even Nanami had to smile for a short moment.

Subsequently, they went to a cafe in the center of the zoo and tried to relax too. Mr. Taishi brought Frank and Alf a hot cocoa.

„Will Sapporo be conquered by the GCF?“, he asked Kohlhaas after they had drunk up.

„Things look black... “, remarked Bäumer, while he was hit by the venomous look of Mrs. Taishi.

She said something to her husband in Japanese and was again close to tears. Masaru stared at his German dictionary and was silent for a second.

„Please, say nothing more about this war, okay?“, he whispered. Afterwards, Mr. Taishi tried to direct the attention

on other things, the Tama zoo was big and there was still a lot to see. They stood up silently and walked to an enormous hall full of colorful, loudly screaming birds. And there were insects too: Ants, hairy spiders, millipedes in considerable sizes and so on.

Thereupon, they went into an enormous complex with large aquariums. Sharks stared at them through the thick panes and swarms of multicolored fishes passed by. Mr. Taishi told Alf something about fish species and tried to find the right German words.

„When I was a child, I have fish with my father often. Understand?“, said the Japanese

„Fished... You have fished...“, said Frank.

“Fished!”, explained Taishi. „Japanese fish much!“

“Something like that...”, Kohlhaas smiled.

A moment after, Avaka took her husband to the side and walked away with him. She was crying again and her husband embraced her. „We must go now home. Avaka does not feel well!“, said Masaru and waved his guests nearer.

A new week began and a officer of the Japanese army asked the Taishis about Frank and Alf. The man explained that the two men should be brought to an army base in Chiba till the middle of December. But he still didn` t talk about that “special mission”.

In the evening, they all got a good message, that even pulled Mr. Taishi out of his state of mourning and lethargy for a short moment. Another revolt against the World Government had started on the Philippines. In the most important city of the country, Manila, a large crowd had besieged and finally attacked the seat of government.

Police and military could just barely quell the riot. Even some GCF units, had to be withdrawn from the south of

Japan, in order to restore order on the Philippines. Apparently, the population was also there no longer content with the policy of the World Government. The Japanese media spoke of an “open rebellion against the slave owners” and declared their solidarity with the rebels.

In the following weeks, there was even a bombing at a GCF base in Manila, with several dead. The Japanese television glorified the revolt to a “great victory”, while the international press spoke of “terrorism” and “fanatics”.

However, it was a fact that the GCF had big problems to find new recruits in China and Korea. Meanwhile, the World Government pressurized the sub-governors of the Asian regions more and more. Finally, a forced recruitment was commanded, what led to public protests in some parts of Asia.

“This rebellion is a great success, even for Japan!”, called Mr. Taishi and stared at the TV screen. His wife hissed something in Japanese and left the living room. The two guests didn’t say anything.

Then, Masaru looked at them and turned the television off: „Avaka says, it is my fault that Kazuko has gone into war! But it is not true! I did not want that!“

„Which mother ever wanted that?“, answered Frank quietly. Mr. Taishi started to cry and brought a bottle of sake from the kitchen. “Perhaps, my wife is correct. However, my son Kazuko wanted to go to the army!”

Masaru’s wife finally returned and started a loud controversy with her husband. She seemed to be close to another emotional outbreak and was still streaming in tears. Avaka Taishi had not understood anything of the conversation in German, but she just knew that the had talked about this bloody war again.

Frank and Alfred went out of the room and left Masaru and his wife alone. Shortly afterwards, they heard the couple

screaming and crying below. The two volunteers stayed for the rest of this day in their rooms. While the hours passed in depression and hopelessness, and Frank also mused about the sense of all this, the GCF started another great attack on the meanwhile flared out and tired Japanese soldiers in Sapporo.

Hardly 200 men of the “Niho no Yari” unit were still fit for action, the rest was dead or was lying heavily injured in the overcrowded military hospital barracks of the destroyed city. Frank and Alfred were glad that they had escaped the hell of Sapporo. Nevertheless, this war had already prepared the next bloody nightmare for them.

It was on 14.12.2031, when hundreds of thousands of GCF soldiers overran the outlying districts of Sapporo, and drove the defenders back to the inner city. It was a disaster. Now the Japanese entrenched themselves in the ruins and were waiting for the end.

Meanwhile, the food supply had completely broken down and an icy winter tormented the soldiers, while the shadow of death came slowly over them. Parts of the civilian population tried to flee to Honshu, through the few gaps in the circumvallation of the GCF. But they were massacred in great numbers by general Schwarzer`s soldiers.

Those who had still remained in the city, had to stay in cold house ruins or had fled into the endless metro tunnels, which were soon overcrowded with freezing and hungry people. Now the high command of the GCF had arranged, that all life in Sapporo should be wiped out with more and more chemical bombs. General Takeuchi already knew that the end was near.

He thought about hara-kiri and said to himself, that he had lived long enough. There was no more hope for him and the rest of his army. His old samurai sword which he had once gotten from his father, was always lying at hand, beside his

bed. And it was only a question of the time until he had to use it.

„Frank, nice to hear you! How are you?“, Wilden was beside himself with joy, when he heard Frank`s voice on the phone. „I`m not dead – so far!“, answered Kohlhaas soberly.

„What`s up with Sapporo? Things look black, right? I have seen a report on television...“, said Wilden, but he was interrupted.

“Things look black! Right!”, returned Frank. “But Alf and me are back in Tokyo. Thank God! That was like hell, and it is even worse now. All are hungry and freezing. The city will fall – soon!”

“You are at Masaru?”

“Yes!”

“How`s he doing?”

“How? He feels like shit, his son is dead!”

The older gentleman at the other end of the phone line was quiet for a short moment, Frank heard him inhale.

„That`s terrible. I don`t know, what to say...“

„Another fallen hero!“, said Frank cynically. “Anyhow, Taishi`s son is but one of many. Now, I`m waiting, when death finds me...”

“Don`t say such things, Frank! God, I`m so happy to hear your voice, boy!”

“What`s about the rest of our men from Ivas? Have you heard something, Thorsten?”

The village boss was silent again. This augured ill. „After Baastfeldt, also Dennis Müller has been killed. His brother got a shot in the shoulder and lies in a hospital in Matsue. His wound became inflamed, but he will probably pull through. The others are still alive. Sven wrote me that his unit has withdrawn to Honshu and is in Hiroshima now. There are still heavy fights, as he says!”

„Dennis Müller is dead too?“, inquired Frank again.

„Yes, unfortunately... “

„Hugenfeldt?“

„He also wrote me! Rolf was evacuated from Abashiri and is now in Morioka!“

„Okay! Now tell me, Thorsten, how could Taishi know about that bombing in Paris?“

Wilden hesitated and seemed to look for an answer. “Well, Frank...I just told him some...I'm sorry!“

„Pah! You have probably boasted with Alf and me, haven't you?“

„I'm sorry!“, returned Wilden, somehow embarrassed.

“Shit, but we can't change it anymore. In the future, I expect a bit more discretion from you!“

“Okay! Sorry again...”

Frank said nothing for half a minute and looked around in the dark living room of the Taishis. The family was not at home on this evening, because Mr. Taishi had suggested a trip to the cinema, hoping that his wife and his daughter would get some more diversion.

„Thorsten, now explain to me again, what we do here in Japan! But in an understandable way please!“

At the other end, Wilden brooded and looked for a suitable answer. „Why do you ask me that now, Frank?“

“Why? Because I'm only surrounded by death and pain, since weeks. We kill them or they kill us. We defended any streets in Sapporo, in a city...Shit! I have hardly heard of this fucking city before all this insanity. Now tell me! What is the sense of all that fucking killing in that fucking doomed country, Wilden?“

The village boss paused and listened to Frank's silent wheeze. „Do you like to live a free life in Ivas?“, he finally asked.

„What has Japan to do with Ivas?“, grumbled Frank nervously.

„Well, just think, if you defend the street „X“ in Sapporo, Tokyo or somewhere else in Japan, you would fight for Ivas, for Berlin and for the whole world!”

“I shall think that? I shall think that, when I`m surrounded by dying women and children? When I shoot, stab and slay people? When I look into the glassy eyes of my comrades who got some bullets in their heads?”

“Frank, Japan is not “any” country, it is “that” country! It is the only country on earth which has freed itself from the World Government. It is that bulwark of freedom. If Japan falls then all our hope falls too.

All people who are pursued and tormented by the henchmen of the World Government look at Matsumoto and Japan in these days.

They think to themselves: „The Lodge Brothers are strong and have all the power in their hands, but they will fail against Japan. Japan will defeat them, because they are no gods, they can also bleed, fail and die!“

Frank gasped and pressed the receiver against his ear, while Wilden continued: „Japan is like a single viewer in a fully occupied cinema hall, during a propaganda film. This viewer suddenly jumps up in the last row and screams: „This films doesn` t show the truth! It shows us lies! Don` t believe them! They lie!”

All the other viewers are just silent and believe everything they tell them, but this single man shouts out the truth.

Do you really think that we will be safe forever? In our nice, little Ivas? Do you really believe this? “

The young man remained silent and Wilden explained: “If Japan will be crushed by the Lodge Brothers, the most important fortress of rebellion will be destroyed too. Japan is a world power, it has a high technology and can achieve a

lot. It points the way for others, it is our light, our hope! Never forget that!”

“But I can’t stand it anymore. My nerves...“, said Frank.

„I wish, that I could help you, my friend. But it is your task to carry this burden – and I know, you will not break down!”

“I`m no hero, Thorsten. No, I`m just an ordinary, little human with a wasted life. From where shall I take the strenght for this eternal fight? Maybe I`m driven by hate, but hate is not the right motivation. The world system has murdered my father and my sister, and it has destroyed my own existence, but I`m full of doubts, Thorsten...”

Wilden tried to calm him. “My boy, we all have our hate. With good reason! But not the hate shall guide you, Frank. The faith shall be your leader!

But mind, Japan is our burning torch of hope. Soon our enemies will even come to Ivas, and they will strangle all free life under the sun in the long term.

What they plan for the future, is still more terrible than our present. They will increase the surveillance and the oppression, everywhere! And finally, they will come to Ivas to destroy it too.

Those devils plan to brand humans like animals, with implanted chips. They plan to kill billions of people with hunger and epidemics, so that they can control and enslave the rest much easier.

Do you want that? If we don`t stop them, there will be no tomorrow for no one! I have told you, who they are, Frank. They are the children of satan! Just look, what they have done to Germany, and Europe, and the rest of the world. But this is just the beginning of that hell on earth the want to bring upon us!”

Kohlhaas groaned and said: “I just want to come back home. Maybe you are right, Thorsten, but Sapporo was a nightmare!”

„Today, the battle is fought in Japan, and tomorrow perhaps at another place, but we must fight it. There is no other way”, answered Wilden.

„How`s Julia doing?”, asked Kohlhaas now.

„Well, she is already standing behind me and is waiting for you”, said the village boss laughing. „Now talk to my daughter, Frank! I`m more than proud of you, bye!”

The young man still talked to Julia for almost one hour and her voice was like balsam for his maltreated soul. Julia told him, that they all already looked forward to Christmas.

They were baking cookies and even a Christmas tree stood in their living room now. For a short moment, Kohlhaas imagined to be at home, far away from this terrible war. But then he remembered that he was still in Japan – and here was no Christmas. And the only one who gave gifts here, was the Grim Reaper.

Special Mission

After breakfast, Frank and Alfred left the house of the Taishi family. Some soldiers of the Japanese army picked them up and brought them to an outlying district of Tokyo. Here, in an underground command post, they should receive the next informations concerning their special mission.

An officer with a scary face welcomed the two volunteers at the entrance of the base, led them through a weakly illuminated tunnel, opened a steel door and said: „Come on! Go in there!“

The soldier closed the door again from the outside, and the two Germans looked around in the half-dark chamber. Frank hated rooms with solid steel doors since his time in the holo cell.

In front of them was an empty desk, behind it was a map, which showed a group of small islands. Suddenly they heard steps and the door was opened again. A Japanese in the uniform of a general entered the room.

„I`m general Sasuke Tatemono from the army of Japan!“, said the Asian and distrustfully examined the two foreigners.

„Frank Kohlhaas!“

„Alfred Bäumer!“

After they had introduced themselves, the Japanese sat down behind his desk.

„You are here to take part in a very important special mission! Do you understand?“ he explained and browsed in some documents.

„What did he say?“, asked Bäumer.

„Er sagt, dass wir an einer Spezialmission teilnehmen sollen. Sehr wichtig!“, translated Frank quietly.

„The Japanese army command is looking for brave soldiers all over the country. We have chosen you, Frank Kohruhaas and Arufred Baumer!”

„Sie haben uns als tapfere Soldaten ausgewählt...”, explained Frank and Alf nodded.

Kohlhaas inquired: „Why did you choose us?”

The general just smiled. „You have made the bomb attempt on governor Wechsler and general Takeuchi has told us that one of you has killed a high rank GCF officer!”

„They even know us here!”, said Frank to his friend.

„The special mission is very important in this war. You will go with 500 other men to the islands of Okinawa...”

„To Okinawa?”, Alf was surprised.

„Yes, to Okinawa!”, repeated general Tatemono und pointed at the map behind him.

„Why shall we go to...”, Frank was just disturbed, but the Japanese cut in.

„On Okinawa is the headquarter of the southern GCF army. Your mission is to attack this headquarter and to kill general David Williams.”

„What?”, Bäumer gaped.

„Yes! You and 500 very brave soldiers of the Japanese army will do this special mission! Have you understand?”

The Germans nodded, and Tatemono slowly became more exact. He explained that the front in the south of the central island of Honshu was at the point of collapse. Hiroshima had been conquered by the GCF and soon probably Kobe would be besieged.

Matsumoto`s high command planned to start a counterattack in the next weeks. At present, more soldiers were recruited and the Japanese arm industry worked at full speed.

The counteroffensive in the south of Japan had to be a success, as the Japanese explained, because a failure

could lead to a military disaster. Shortly before the start of the counterattack, the commander-in-chief of the southern GCF invasion army should be eliminated by a special unit. The Japanese hoped to bring thereby confusion into the chain of command of their enemies.

“This mission is very, very important!“, stressed Tatemono and stared at the two Germans with a serious look.

Shortly afterwards, he explained that time was pressing and extensive bomb raids of the GCF, on the densely populated area around Tokyo and Yokohama, would destroy the most important armament factories in the long term.

So far, the GCF had just attacked this region with their missiles from the warships and apparently the enemy had planned to start the great land invasion on Honshu with massive airstrikes.

Furthermore, Sapporo was close to capitulation and in the south were Kyoto and Osaka, likewise important centers of the Japanese armament industry, the next targets of the aggressors. Frank and Alfred just listened. That mission seemed to be, more or less, a suicide command, but „Kamikaze“ had already a long tradition in Japan.

„My men will bring you to the military camp Toyohashi! Good luck!“, said the general before he left them alone again.

Frank and Alf got into a jeep and were brought to Toyohashi. Their Japanese driver immediately started a conversation.

„Are you from Germany?“, he asked.

„Yes!“, answered Alf.

„Don`t worry. Toyohashi is a more or less safe place. Not many GCF bombers there“, said the soldier, turned around for a second and smiled.

„I hope so!“, whispered Kohlhaas.

„My name is Gosho, ha, ha...“, said the Japanese. Now the two volunteers from Ivas introduced themselves too.

„Gosho, from Hitachi. Do you know where Hitachi is?“

„No!“, responded Alfred irritatedly.

„North of Tokyo. North. I live there with my wife Yumi. She is very beautiful.“

„Why can't this guy just shut up?“, muttered Bäumer and nudged his partner.

„What is the name of your wife?“, Gosho turned around.

Frank hesitated for a short moment, giving Alf a wink and answered: „Julia! She is blonde and very nice!“

„Ah! Blonde! Good!“, said Gosho from Hitachi.

„And your wife?“ Now he talked to Alf.

„Eh...“ Bäumer pondered. „Steffi, she is also very nice and has huge tits!“

The Japanese was puzzled: „Huge? What is huge?“

„Big! It means „big“!“, explained Frank and grinned.

Gosho looked at the driving mirror and perked his eyebrows up, then he laughed loudly and the vehicle nearly span out of control.

„Steffi!“, whispered Frank and clapped Bäumer on the back. „Idiot!“

The little smalltalk about various futilenesses lasted the entire trip, and after a while they reached the military base. The garrulous Gosho laughed for a last time and finally said goodbye to the two Germans.

Now they had to report to commander Saito. The Japanese officer was very friendly and looked like an old samurai. His skin was fair and his face extremely thin. He just looked somehow European. Probably he even had some European blood, nevertheless, 3500 years ago, some tribes from

Europe had migrated to Eastern Asia and had in fact reached Japan.

“He has Sakian ancestors!”, joked Frank and examined the Japanese.

„Sakian what?“, muttered Alf.

“A long time ago, several Indo-Germanic tribes came to Eastern Asia. The most important tribes of that group were the Sakians and the Tocharians. They were of European heritage and many of the nobles and kings in ancient China, Korea and Japan were Sakians or Tocharians. Even in old Mongolia. I have read it in one of Wilden`s books”, explained Kohlhaas.

“You know a lot...”, returned Alf and looked surprised.

The commander harrumphed and tried to listen to the conversation of Frank and Alf. But they talked German and so he could not understand anything.

Now he smiled and said: „Welcome here! I`m Isamu Kaito, the commander of this army base! From this place we will bring you to the special mission on Okinawa islands!”

“Okay!”, returned the two volunteers. Then the talk was over and the Germans were brought to the barracks. About a dozen other soldiers were also there. They just nodded briefly and ignored the two new ones.

The next day, they were woken up, together with 498 other elite soldiers, by loud screams which came from the drill ground. Most of the men were Japanese, some of them looked like dangerous criminals, staring at everyone with a sinister eye.

These soldiers were another kind of men, as the Japanese in Sapporo. Now an officer ran over the drill ground, positioned himself in front of the unit and roared something in Japanese. Finally, the English translation for the 20 foreign soldiers followed: „You are now a soldier in the Hukushuu-unit! Follow me!”

The soldiers were brought to another part of the large military base. Shortly afterwards, the men sat down on in a big hall and saw an enormous screen in front of them. The officer immediately began with some strategic instructions, first always in his own language which could be understood by over 90% of the unit.

Then briefly in English: „Hukushuu-unit! We give you now the orders for the special mission!“

A map appeared on the screen and the officer explained: “This is Okinawa!”, he said. “Our Okinawa!”

The Japanese shouted something like a battlecry, the officer nodded and smiled defiantly. Now he spoke Japanese again, and forgot to translate it. But it must have been no important things, as Frank thought.

“How shall we come to those islands?”, whispered Frank.

“Search me!”, hissed Bäumer back and tried to understand something.

„This is the headquarter of the Southern army of the GCF!“ The officer pointed at a red point on the screen. Then he continued with his explanations.

„What did he say?“, asked Alf after a while.

„He said that our unit will be divided in five smaller platoons of always 100 men. Moreover, every platoon will be brought to another place of Okinawa“, told Frank, while the Japanese in front of him turned around and signaled that the whisper went on his nerves. So the two Germans were just silent and listened.

„There are a lot of small GCF camps all over the main island, so be careful!“, they heard.

Meanwhile, Kohlhaas examined the other soldiers. This unit seemed to be more than weird. Maybe some of the guys here were the best soldiers of the Japanese army, but others just looked totally desperate. One or two appeared even psychopathic.

„We will bring you to Okinawa with submarines!“, elucidated the officer now.

“With submarines?”, Frank was astonished.

After that lecture which had lasted about one hour, the Hukushuu-unit was finally divided in five platoons.

Frank and Alfred were now a part of „Hukushuu II“, that should destroy an important radio communication system, apart from the attack on the military base. The two men looked at each other, when the lecture was over. This all sounded extremely dangerous. And it would be another trip to hell. Frank was sure about that.

Only a weakly shining office lamp sent some light through the conference room, where the World President was waiting for his guests, otherwise it was dark. The leader of the World Union sat behind his desk and played with a gold-plated ballpen. Sometimes he briefly looked out the window of his splendidly equipped mansion in the south of Washington, just counting the minutes.

For this evening, the *Council of the Elders* had cited him to a discussion – about the Japanese war. The politician was also one of the 13 members of the highest committee of the hierarchically structured worldwide organization, but today, he had to explain himself in front of the 11 other gray eminences, whose names the publicity had hardly ever heard.

In the reason, only 12 persons were present at these meetings, and were “real” persons, because one chair always remained free for „him“, the symbolic and spiritual master of the organization.

However, the World President waited and became more and more nervous. What would the other Elders want to hear from him today? Were they still content with his work? He played the serene man, when the door finally opened

and his guests entered the large conference room, welcoming him submissively. As usual, he just showed them his cold smile.

These men brought the newest messages from Japan. They took place and Ben Sandler, the boss of the GSA, finally started the conversation: „Mr. World President, I would like to begin with the official casualties of our armies!”

The World President interrupted him immediately. „Well, Mr. Sandler, please don't waste my time with this stuff. I'm not interested in that, and the *Council of the Elders* isn't interested in that too. So just tell me the important things!”

Sandler looked up, opened a briefcase and fetched some documents, then he continued: „Hiroshima could be taken this morning. General David Williams assured me that also Kobe will fall in the next two weeks. Subsequently, our troops will besiege Kyoto and Osaka.

Osaka will be completely destroyed, not only the numerous factories of the Japanese armament industry, but also the rest of the city. Moreover, general Williams plans a similar destruction as in the case of Kagoshima.“

„Nice!“, muttered the World President.

„I would like to add something...“, remarked Theodor Newman, one of the most powerful bankers of the sector “North America”.

„We already exceeded the budget for this war with nearly 20 billion Globes, three weeks ago. I ask to consider this!“

The World President sullenly declined and looked again at the GSA boss: „Mr. Sandler please!“

„In the north of Japan, Sapporo stands shortly before the fall. They can't resist us any longer, and when this important city is taken, our armies will march on to Honshu, Sir!”

„How is the morale among the soldiers?“, asked the World President now.

Sandler took another document out of his briefcase, then he waited for some seconds.

„Well, internal GSA studies unfortunately speak of a sinking morale. The forced recruitments in China and Korea don't bring us much sympathies in these regions. Furthermore, the new troops which we have recruited in Africa and Russia are quite undisciplined and their fighting spirit isn't very high too.”

“Despite our daily war propaganda?”, asked the World President with surprise and narrowed his eyes to slits.

Shortly afterwards, the media tycoon Zacutoni from Italy tried to describe the situation more exactly: „Mr. World President, it is not easy to induce men from Africa to die for us in Japan? Or also men from Russia? Why should they give their lives on the Japanese battlefields for our interests? We can't do more, than sending war propaganda all day long...”

“Increase the propaganda!”, hissed the World President and banged on the table. “Make a great victory out of everything! Preach them that Matsumoto wants to destroy the whole world, including fucking Africa and everything else!”

„However, many people just don't believe our propaganda anymore. No matter how often...”, answered Zacutoni.

„Bullshit! These animals believe everything if we scream it into their ears. We just have to scream it often enough!”, grumbled the leader of World Union and slowly became angry. “What shall I tell the other members of the *Council of the Elders*, Mr. Zacutoni? That the masses don't believe us anymore?”

“It seems to me that some mistakes have been made during the preparation of this war”, remarked a subordinated Lodge Brother now.

The World President stood up from his place and his face became a malicious grimace. He stared at the man with

growing anger, while the Brother winced and immediately became silent.

“Mistakes? Are you serious?”, he inquired spitefully.

“Well...”, returned the man, but he was interrupted.

„Mistakes were made? Do you really want to say that the *Council of the Elders* is able to make mistakes? What do you think, brother?“, hissed the World President, being close to a tantrum.

The subordinated fellow started to sweat and asked his master for forgiveness, but the World President was still staring at him with an evil eye, and finally chucked the man out. The other guests were silent now. After a while, the GSA boss was requested to continue with his report.

„If no unexpected incidents appear, Japan will be smashed in a few months. Nevertheless, there are signs of a counterattack in the south of the archipelago“, said Sandler.

„Counterattack?“, asked the World President doubtfully.

“Well, it seems to be so. If the informations of our agents in Japan are right. But we don’t know anymore details yet...”

Now GCF general James Bright added some informations:

„In the next days we will start with our bomb attacks on the region around Tokyo. Furthermore, our fleet will bombard this area with missiles. It is only a question of time until Japan will be defeated. Don’t worry, Mr. World President!”

“I hope so!“, murmured the man behind the desk. “I give you the order to destroy the Japanese armament industry as fast as possible!”

“Thus, many arsenals are already subterranean. It is just a fact that Matsumoto’s preparations for war are better than we have thought in the beginning. But Japan will fall, there is no doubt about it.”

The World President closed his eyes and breathed deeply, then he said: „We won’t take prisoners anymore! Liquidate

every Japs! All you can get! Everyone - even civilians! If necessary, we will exterminate that damn folk!“

„As you please, Sir!“, answered the general baffledly.

“Yes, as I please, general! We won` t play games anymore. I don` t have to tell you the consequences if Matsumoto really wins this war. We have said to the world, that we will make an example of Japan – and now, we have to make it! You got that?”

“Why do we still avoid the use of nuclear weapons?”, asked one of the other guests.

“Not because of any - humaneness!“, snarled the leader of the World Union. “But we have to make the next important step of the Great Plan, and the use of nuclear weapons just doesn` t fit to this step. The next step will be the implementation of the implanted Scanchip. We have an image problem and nuclear weapons are just not the right thing to solve it!”

„In addition, Matsumoto has nuclear weapons too!“, said Scott Cohen, the banker from Miami.

„Pah! I just wish that Matsumoto would be that stupid to attack us with some atomic bombs! This would be great! Then we could make some nice compassion propaganda out of all this. Crying children, the whole program.

Yes, I wish that he would be stupid enough to do us such a favor. That would be outstanding, because then, we could finally say to the people: “Look at this evil dictator! He is a danger for all of us!”

But Matsumoto is not naive, he is no little idiot, who would ever make such a strategic mistake. No, he is waiting for us. Nevertheless, even if he would drop his few atomic bombs, he wouldn` t have a chance against our arsenal of nuclear weaponry...”

The World President turned away from his guests and showed them the back. The meeting of the *Council of the*

Elders was scheduled for 20.00 o'clock, and it would probably become very unpleasant for the leader of the World Union.

After a while, the guests left the room and only the World President remained in the dimness of the conference room, staring ruminatively into space.

„In not later than three months, I want Matsumoto`s head!“, had been the last, his visitors had heard before they had left the conference room behind them.

Frank and Alfred had found an interlocutor. Carsten Madsen, one of the three foreign volunteers who had been assigned to the „Hukushuu II“ platoon. Madsen was accommodated in the neighboring billet and the two Germans visited him this evening to play chess. The soldier brought a small chessboard and had already defeated Alf for the second time. Now he was waiting for Frank, as his new opponent.

Madsen was a very tall, strawberry blond Dane from Varde. The former farmer who probably was around forty, was a little expert of the chess game, and also Kohlhaas had no greater chance against his skills. The Dane could speak German fluently.

„I have already been in Berlin many years ago“, said Madsen to Frank and smiled.

“It`s a shithole, isn`t it?“, answered Frank.

„Well, Denmark is a shithole too, like the rest of Western Europe!“, returned the Dane and his bright eyes sparkled thoughtfully. „Once, I have been a farmer in Denmark, but I had to sell my manor some years ago...”

“What has happened?“, asked Alf and stared still brooding at the chessboard. Madsen scratched his head, then he returned: „The politicians have the land economy...What is the German word?“

„Agriculture!”, explained Kohlhaas.

„They made the agriculture broken. You understand? My family became indebted and finally we lost everything. I couldn't survive any longer as a farmer. So I sold the house of my father and all my property”, described the Dane. „You understand?”

“Yes! And then?”

„Well, my wife left me and my daughter came into a house for children without parents, because I was too poor...”, told Madsen and seemed to fume with rage.

„Orphanage! Such a house is called orphanage, my nephew is in an orphanage too“, explained Frank.

“Orphanage...okay...”, said the Dane. “When this war started, I have immediately joined the Japanese army. I don't have to lose anything, understand it?”

“Yes, sure!”, returned Kohlhaas.

„These fucking bureaucrats made me finished! Laws against the farmers they have made!”, vociferated Madsen.

While they talked, some of the Japanese soldiers examined them with distrust. Frank looked around and could recognize a man, who was playing with a knife, trying to cut himself on the arm.

“What's up with that guy?”, Kohlhaas pointed at the Japanese who was huddling in a corner.

Perhaps he is gaga!”, said Madsen.

Now the Japanese started to hum a song and continued to cut himself on the lower arm, while blood flowed in thin threads down to the ground.

„I'll have a look“, remarked Alf and went to the soldier.

“What do you do with that knife, buddy?”, he asked.

Suddenly the Japanese glared at him and muttered something in Japanese.

„Don't hurt yourself, my friend!”, said Alf, but the strange guy ignored him, still humming a song. Meanwhile, he had

carved some characters in his lower arm. Then he jumped up, staring at Bäumer.

„Kore wa watashi no ai desu!“ The Japanese showed him a photo of a woman.

„Watashi no ai!“, he shouted again. Finally he started to grin insanely and brandished his knife.

Madsen came from behind and Frank followed him, the other Japanese soldiers were silent.

„The photo, I think it is his wife, his love. Whoever! Maybe she has been killed“, said the Dane and asked the two Germans to leave the man alone. “We can’t help him...”

„Kore wa watashi no ai desu!“, screamed the Japanese and kicked against the wall. Then he jostled Bäumer away, left the billet and howled loudly. Some drops of his blood had come on Alf’s uniform jacket. Bäumer shook his head.

“This guy is freaked out. I hope that he won’t attack us one day...”

Madsen tried to calm his comrades and Frank finally asked him: „You know some Japanese words, isn’t it?“

„Only a few...“, answered the Dane.

„Do you know what „Hukushuu“ means?“, inquired Kohlhaas.

Now the Dane took a small dictionary and looked for “Hukushuu”.

Shortly afterwards, he explained: „It means „revenge” or even “retaliation”...”

„Heavens! Then we are in the “revenge unit“. It becomes better and better“, said Frank sardonically and Alfred shook his head again. The three soldiers still played another chess game, then Madsen went to bed. Alf fell asleep fastly – and snored loudly, as always. But Frank was not able to find sleep in this night. “Revenge unit” – this did not sound good...

The Jungle Calls

Firing practices and a revitalization of hand-to-hand combat skills determined the next four days in the military base, then the 500 soldiers were brought to the port. In this last night, before the beginning of the important mission, Frank had slept very badly again and had dreamed of all kinds of unpleasant things. So he was still bleary-eyed, when the trip started. Five smaller submarines of the Japanese navy which had had heavy casualties in the last weeks and months, during the sea-battles against the GCF in the Pacific, expected the elite soldiers at 6.30 o'clock in the morning, at the port of Toyohashi.

It was raining and a cold wind was coming from the sea, roaring over the coast. Meanwhile, the submarines were actually too old for the regular army and had only a transportation function. In the last months, they had brought food by the ton to regions that were blocked by the GCF fleet.

Now they should bring 500 soldiers to a highly dangerous mission on Okinawa. Frank and Alfred felt not very well, when they recognized the submarines in the harbor basin. Above all, since his captivity in the holo cell, Frank suffered under claustrophobia.

“Shit! No, I won’t go into that can!”, whispered Kohlhaas and stared at the submarine in front of him, frozen in terror. Shortly afterwards, a hatch was opened.

“Get a grip, Frank! This mission will be much worse. Just keep cool”, answered him Alf. A Japanese soldier crawled out of the submarine and waved the soldiers nearer. Meanwhile, Kohlhaas thought of running away for a second. He imagined to be in that narrow sardine can, surrounded

by a bunch of crazy, aggressive Japanese with innumerable cubic meters of water above him. The young man broke out in a cold sweat and looked at Alf, seeking help. Then the first soldiers already flowed into the steel bellies of the submarines. Frank tried to switch off his mind and simply followed the other men. Finally he came in, sat down and held his breath. Now there was no more possibility to get out and the hatches were closed again.

Here they sat now, over 100 soldiers who hardly knew each other. Deep inside the guts of that terrible steel thing. Compressed, like cockroaches in a long pipe. The air was stifling, the light faint, Frank felt like in a coffin.

However, Alf seemed to be much more calm, although he also could not hide all signs of tension and nervousness. Furthermore, the most Japanese soldiers felt the same. Some of them were ashen or even vomited.

It was strange, they all were on the way to a deadly mission, perhaps a suicide command, but the most soldiers here seemed to prefer a bloody fight at the surface to a trip through the dark depths of the Pacific. Shortly afterwards, Frank heard the engines hum and the submarine slowly started to move.

“From one pile of shit to the next...”, moaned Alf and tried to make a nap.

“How can you think of sleeping – in such a situation? Are you not nervous?”, whispered his friend with surprise.

At this moment, Frank had loved nothing better than smacking that tall guy from Dortmund in the puss.

„Well, I can nevertheless try to snooze. Why not?“, said Bäumer and crossed his arms in front of his chest. Frank was baffled.

„You would even snooze on the way to your own execution, right?“, came from Kohlhaas. “Ignorance is bliss...”

Frank fumbled with the buttons of his uniform jacket and examined the Japanese full of sorrow. In situations like this, he just admired partner. The submarines were not the newest anymore, but they had nevertheless some kind of “cloaking device”, that made it difficult to locate them underwater.

Hours passed and Frank believed that he would lose his head during the trip. He bit in his arm and tried to concentrate on nothing but the pain, in order to forget that he was in a submarine, somewhere in the depth. This almost drove him insane. Around him, the Japanese also became more and more nervous. Where were they now? Through which wet darkness did this submarine slide in this minute?

„That steel thing is like the holo cell. I am trapped here – forever! Want to get out, out, out, out!”, he whispered quietly and stared at the hatch next to him. “Getting out! Hell! My arm hurts...bite in my arm...Shit!”

Now his friend prodded him. Frank turned around and his face was as white as limestone.

“I don` t feel...feel cooped up...”

„No problem, Alter!“, said Bäumer quietly. „Just try to calm down!“

“I will walk...walk around...must move and walk...That damn sardine can, holo cell, coffin...”

The young man gasped loudly and struggled through a group of Japanese soldiers, while the Asians grumbled something in Japanese behind his back. It was all the same to him. Frank just had to walk, had to move his body.

It was so damn tight, narrow, cruel in this submarine. How long did this trip already last? Two hours? Three hours?

Now, Kohlhaas went into another part of the submarine and could recognize Madsen behind a steel ladder. Next to the Dane stood a Japanese officer who googled at Frank and

the young man seemed to give him the creeps. No wonder, because Kohlhaas was walking around like a zombie, still with an ashen face.

“Madsen, are you okay?”, stammered the claustrophobic volunteer. The Dane tried to smile and clapped Frank on the back.

“You look like dead, man. What’s up?”, asked Madsen.

“I just...hate places like that...”, complained Kohlhaas.

„I understand you. I also don’t like submarines. But we will get out here – soon!”, explained the Dane.

Suddenly the submarine stopped and the light was immediately switched off. Even the monotonous noise of the engines abruptly became silent .

„What the hell is happening now ?”, asked Kohlhaas and panic crept into his guts like a worm.

„I don’t know!“, said the Dane. Some of the soldiers around Frank whispered secretly in the darkness, while a Japanese officer quietly snarled at them.

„Damn! Shut up!“, he hissed.

This was a terrible moment. Kohlhaas believed to hear the quiet swoosh of the sea, but this could not be. Probably they had been located by an enemy warship, because now the submarine just slid through the water. Suddenly, they heard a loud bang while the submarine tried to reach a greater depth. At a single blow, it was perfectly quiet – and pitch-dark!

Only a few soldiers could still be heard somewhere, they were whispering something in Japanese. Alf came along the dark corridor and touched Frank’s shoulder. “Be calm!”

It lasted about twenty minutes and Kohlhaas felt, as if he would be strangled by this horror. He could hardly breathe and just huddled somewhere on the cold ground.

Shortly afterwards, another explosion let the submarine quake and Frank fell on his back. Some of the Japanese

soldiers cried up and were thrown over the dark corridor. And the fright continued.

“Boom!”

A further detonation shook the water at some distance and the submarine slowly crept deeper and deeper. Silence ruled again. The hull of the submarine began to creak and suddenly the scared face of a Japanese came out of the darkness, right before Frank’s eyes.

“They got us!”, whispered the Asian, Kohlhaas winced.

“Depth bombs...”, said Alf quietly and wiped off the sweat from his brow.

Another explosion resounded in greater distance, while the submarine increased its speed and seemed to rise upward. However, the light was not switched on yet.

Then it accelerated and Frank heard a loud crunch. Then the light came back and the soldiers exhaled. Frank thought that he had already been devoured by a terrible kraken, to be spit out again. It was over, as he hoped.

“We are still alive, my friend!”, said Madsen and smiled.

They finally crept through the narrow corridor back to their places and were totally exhausted. Around them, some Japanese had already vomited and an ugly stench stung into Frank’s nose.

It was more than unpleasant, down there in the deep sea. One of the GCF destroyers had briefly located them and had finally tried to hit them with depth bombs. What had happened to the other three submarines, they did not know at that moment. Nevertheless, Neptune had saved their asses this time.

The two men from Ivas could not remember, how many hours the submarine was already diving through the Pacific. Maybe it was late afternoon, at the surface. Meanwhile, the submarine had come closer to Okinawa in the greatest

possible depth, and it was still underwater. Furthermore, it was possible that the GCF destroyers were still there – searching for them. But the biggest part of the GCF fleet was in the east and south of the Japanese islands, while there were only a few warships in the proximity of Okinawa. However, endless hours in this submarine followed and the soldiers slowly became nervous and panicky. One of the men, already close to insanity, was beaten down by a Japanese officer, because he had attacked his comrades. Who cried loudly or hammered against the steel walls in panic, got very hard punishments by the troop leaders. Kohlhaas pinched in his flesh until it hurt, or just bit in his arm if the fear threatened to explode. Alf tried to care for him and urged his friend to behave disciplined. Finally, an officer came along, passing the nervous and sweating soldiers, and explained: „We will leave the submarine in two hours!“ All men groaned. Still two more hours in that damn sardine can. Subsequently, the soldiers of the „Hukushuu II“ platoon should swim to the beach with rubber dinghies, at dead of night. Meanwhile, the time seemed to pass slower than ever before. At 2.00 o'clock in the morning, the submarine finally emerged and a wave of gladness seized the men inside.

The soldiers packed their bags, took their weapons and made themselves ready for the mission. The hatches of the submarine opened squeaking, while a beautiful starlit night sky appeared above the heads of the men. Frank and Alf were overjoyed, like the rest of the soldiers, when they could draw the fresh sea air into their lungs. It was like a rebirth. The dark coast could hardly be recognized and was still a few hundred meters away. Now the soldiers jumped into the dinghies and paddled as fast as they could. Soon

they had reached the beach and finally felt firm ground under their feet. They were more than happy at that moment. No matter, what would expect them in the next days. The men who had reached the mainland at first, hopped over the beach, full of joy, and dug their fingers deeply into the damp, salty smelling sand.

Frank and Alfred did the same and lay on their backs for some minutes to look at the beautiful sky. It was just great! Countless shining stars could be seen at the firmament above the Pacific. Frank started to dream for a short moment.

The platoon leader finally came and restored silence and order. Whisper or even whoops were strictly forbidden, in order to save the operation from any enemy attention. A Japanese soldier who had uttered a loud cry, because of his ebullient joy, was beaten down by the furious veteran.

Then the officer waved the soldiers nearer and let them hide the dinghies in the thicket of the nearby jungle. Shortly afterwards, everything was calm again. The submarine had meanwhile disappeared in the dark water.

„The submarine that has transported the „Hukushuu IV“ platoon has been hit by depth bombs, they had to return to Toyohashi!“, told a Japanese. “Now we are only 400 men on this island!”

Bäumer scratched his head and growled: “Okay, one of the submarines has been hit! More than hundred men less! Shit!”

„I hope for them, that they will make it to Toyohashi“, said Frank.

The soldiers quietly followed the officer into the undergrowth of the jungle which covered this part of the coast. It was calm, nobody seemed to have noticed them. Only some birds could be heard in the distance. The platoon was now in the north of the main island of Okinawa, and advanced

slowly into the deep jungle. After approximately one hour, they rested and ate. The platoon leader came to his soldiers and introduced himself to them.

„I'm Takeo Oda, your officier!“, he told Frank and Alf, smiling coldly.

No one of the soldiers made a sound, most of the men just tried to sleep. Frank thought about all the little creatures which were crawling through the undergrowth in this jungle. After a while, he became nauseated. Nevertheless, he also made a short nap.

A few hours later, they continued their march. Platoon leader Oda sent out some scouts who told him in the early morning hours that Oku, a small town near the coast, was close to them. Again they rested in the thicket, while platoon leader Oda huddled under a big tree with a DC-stick in his hand.

The three other platoons of the “Hukushuu unit” had meanwhile also gone ashore and had disappeared into the jungle. „Hukushuu I“ and „Hukushuu III“ had come out of their submarines near the town of Bise. The „Hukushuu V“ platoon had entered the jungle of Okinawa near Kayo. The most important military base of the GCF was in the south of the island, therefore, Frank and Alfred had the longest way to go – directly through a large sea of trees and leaves.

The other platoons should wait for them and had to hide somewhere in the thicket until their comrades appeared. Many of the old U.S. military bases had been given up in the year 2015, and the jungle had already retaken these places. Creepers were slowly growing over concrete walls and billets, covering everything with a green carpet.

Nevertheless, the GCF had built new bases elsewhere, that had to be vacated after Matsumoto`s takeover. Meanwhile, they were in the hands of the World Government again.

The current headquarter of the southern invasion army had been called „Camp Foster“ in former times, and had already been used by the U.S. army. The most important communication center of the enemy was just north of the main base, at the coast near the town of Kadena.

This target had to be destroyed at first. Over 60 kilometers of impenetrable jungles still lay before the men of the “Hukushuu II” platoon, however, they were relatively safe here, because the presence of GCF soldiers was small in this region.

In former times, there had been a wide training area of the U.S. army, where the soldiers had learned jungle warfare, but today, only a small GCF outpost had remained.

The scouts came back and were already quite dirty. Platoon leader Oda looked nervously at the thicket around him and tried to contact the other platoons with a coded radiogram. Finally, the soldiers crept on through the deepest jungle and disappeared.

It was relatively cool and it started to rain, but the muggy tropical heat of the summer months was not missed by the soldiers. Again the troop had a longer break and the soldiers made another nap. When it slowly became dark, they continued to march southward.

Frank was angry about the fact, that the platoon leader had forbidden them to make a little campfire. He crept back to Alf and waited again, while some Japanese sat down beside them.

„I`m Saburo!“, said one of them and gave Alf a cigarette. Bäumer smiled and was more than pleased because of this gift.

„This jungle is fucked up!“, remarked Frank.

„Yes, in the Second World War, there was a great battle on Okinawa“, told the man.

“I know!”, answered Bäumer and took another pull on his cigarette.

„How many GCF-soldiers are on this island?“, asked Frank the Japanese.

The Asian cocked his eyebrows. „I think about 30000 men!“

„What?“, Kohlhaas seemed to be shocked. „30000 GCF-soldiers?“

„Commander Oda has told me that!“, said the Japanese and sorrowfully looked at Frank.

“If the whole thing ends in a disaster, we can try to swim back to Lithuania with a damn hooker!“, muttered Alf cynically.

„After the operation, the survivors shall immediately return to Arume at the east coast. They will pick us up there!“, said Frank. „The Japanese have explained it in the camp...“

„I failed to hear that. Anyhow...“, whispered Bäumer.

The slit-eyed man listened to them with great interest, although he did not understand anything. Now he looked astonished and asked: „Are you German?“

„Yes!“

„What are you doing here in Japan?“

“Fighting for a free world! What else?“, Frank grinned and showed the Japanese a victory sign.

Saburo began to laugh. „In this force are the bravest or most insane soldiers of the Japanese army“, said the man and pointed at some of his comrades. „Do you know, what I mean?“

“Yes! I see that!“, joked Bäumer and looked around.

Indeed, some of the men here seemed to be the right personal for a suicide squad. Suddenly the officer returned and made a hand gesture. The platoon had to march on.

After a while, they stopped and waited again for the darkness. Officer Oda had contacted the other platoons and Frank heard his whisper somewhere under a bush.

„I hope they haven't discovered our comrades yet. But if they creep through the thicket like swamp rats, as we do it, that whole operation should sail smoothly”, said Frank to himself.

The advance was very slow and quiet. The soldiers cautiously moved forward and only the clamor of a swarm of birds resounded through the twilight. Mosquitoes buzzed around their heads, otherwise it was just dark and quiet. Shortly afterwards, they heard a quiet splatter in the distance, it was a river. The scouts had already talked about it.

„Damn! And now?”, grumbled Bäumer.

A black watercourse blocked their way. The other soldiers cursed in the worst Japanese.

„We will have to swim!“, said Frank and threw his backpack on the ground.

Oda talked with some of the men and they slid into the dirty water and reached the opposite side of the river just barely. One of the Japanese was almost torn away by the stream, but his comrades could hold him.

“I don't want to know, what ugly critters live in that swill!”, remarked Frank and Bäumer nodded.

Then they waded through the water too. A few minutes later, they reached the other side. The river had stopped the platoon for a long time, but finally all soldiers crossed the obstacle safe and sound. Now they were soaked to the bone. Meanwhile, the scouts had run ahead and came back to the platoon a little later. They were nervous.

„There is a small enemy outpost, one kilometer southward!”, they told the foreign volunteers.

The platoon leader ordered his men to wait here at the river, while he studied a digital map. Then he said that they should bypass the outpost and creep along the river. The two men from Ivas ranted and Madsen came to them. They had marched for a while, when Bäumer suddely felt a stinging on his lower leg. Immediately he pulled up his pant leg and Madsen borrowed him a flashlight.

„Igit!“, exclaimed Alf and saw a fat, black leech.

„I will do that...“, said the Dane, took his knife and cut off the parasite. Alf shook his leg and was disgusted, while the blond man started to grin.

„Sapporo, submarines, jungles! What is next?“, muttered Bäumer.

Madsen laughed. „Leeches always look for the sweetest humans...”

„Very funny!“, replied Alf and plodded through the night. An hour later, they had bypassed the outpost and entered the deepest jungle again. About 15 to 20 miles still lay before them. Time passed and the monotonous march through a sea of bushes, leaves and trees began to debilitate them.

In the periphery of several kilometers, there was only wild nature, untouched and free from any civilization. Japanese settlements existed only at the seacoasts. The probability to be discovered by the enemy, under a close roof of leaves, was small, here in the north of Okinawa.

Nevertheless, they could not be careful enough. Meanwhile, many Japanese had rubbed their faces with black mud and looked like demons, lurking in the darkness of the jungle. Their clothes were still wet and they were sticking on their skin like the tongue of a slimy bullfrog. Fortunately, it was pleasantly cool and not like that sticky as in the hot season of the year.

After the soldiers had waited under some giant, old trees, they finally came to a glade. The jungle had probably been

cleared here some years ago. Now they looked at a few barracks which were covered with creepers. A torn and rusty fence surrounded the rotten buildings. This camp had been a part of the test area of the U.S. army in former times, and served them now as some kind of landmark in the deep jungle of northern Okinawa.

Meanwhile, the other platoons of the "Hukushuu unit" had made their way to a near area, still waiting for their comrades who were wading through an endless appearing sea of plants.

„We are now near Higashi, the town is in the West!" explained Oda. "At Higashi there is a bigger GCF base. We must be careful!"

They waited for the dusk. From now on, as the platoon leader had decreed, they would only march in the blackness of the night. They finally reached a broad, muddy road which interconnected Ogimi and Higashi. The scouts disappeared between the leaves of the jungle plants and the rest of the platoon waited. After half an hour, the scouts returned and excitedly reported that the road was flanked by several watchtowers, which were posed in the distance of some hundred meters. Oda told the soldiers to crawl quietly forward.

„There are two men on that tower over there!“, whispered Alf and pushed some leaves to the side.

„We must somehow cross this road, without being noticed“, said Frank nervously.

Madsen came from behind and stared at the watchtower. Officer Oda finally instructed three Japanese to kill the guards on the nearest sentry tower. The soldiers immediately crept away and stalked up on the enemy.

“Shit! There are a lot of these damn towers. If we use our guns, we will warn the whole GCF in the periphery of

several kilometers”, hissed Kohlhaas and clenched his teeth.

From the corner of his eye, he could see the three Japanese comrades as dark points between the bushes. They carefully crawled forward and crossed the road, about fifty meters behind the watchtower.

It was quiet now, only the distant roar of some jungle animals could be heard. The platoon remained nervously in the wet thicket, between bushes and trunks. The sentry tower was about fifteen meters high and under its roof, Kohlhaas could recognize two GCF soldiers. One of them was smoking and his cigarette glowed as a tiny reddish point in his dark face. Smoke clouds blew away under the roof.

“They climb up the ladder. I hope that they make no mistakes”, whispered Madsen quietly. Like creeping cats, the three Japanese came out of the forest behind the watchtower and started to climb up the ladder with supple movements. They made no sound. All the men stared unstrungly at the scenery.

„The first one is already there...“, said Bäumer silently.

Frank held his head and felt the excited pounding of his heart. The three Japanese had also rubbed their faces with black mud, what made them look even more scary. Now they had finally reached the top of the sentry tower. Knives were twinkling between their teeth, otherwise their faces were as black as the night. There was no more room for mistakes at that point. They crept nearer, nearer – and attacked.

The first GCF soldier was torn backwards and got a stab in the neck, his comrade turned around with a loud cry and tried to pull his gun. One of the Japanese shot him in the head and the GCF soldier tumbled over – that was not planned. Platoon leader Oda swore quietly. The operation

had been much too loud and he had actually forbidden the use of guns.

Shortly afterwards, the three Japanese threw the two GCF soldiers from the tower, climbed downward and pulled them into the jungle. Then they disappeared again.

„Fuck! Just stay down!“, hissed Frank at the other men.

Some minutes later, a light cone could be seen, accompanied by the hum of an engine. Finally a jeep approached and calls resounded from a distance. The vehicle stopped and five GCF soldier jumped out of it, then they looked up at the sentry tower.

„Hey, guys! Are you shooting at birds? Are you okay?“, shouted one of the soldiers.

Some of the Japanese got ready to attack even these soldiers, while platoon leader Oda brandished his gun and tried to stop them. He was close to a tantrum.

„lie! lie!“, he whispered and pointed his pistol at the group of undisciplined men.

„Where are you?“, came from another GCF soldier who fetched his flashlight and entered the nearby jungle. The silent hissing and whispering in the bushes had made him wary.

„Maybe some animals. Where are the others?“

Now they looked for their two comrades. The soldiers still talked for a while, after they had unsuccessfully tried to establish a radio contact to the two men from the sentry tower. Frank and Alfred could only understand, that they probably assumed, the men from the tower had gone somewhere into the forest. They finally talked about reporting the incident and drove away.

Takeo Oda breathed again, strained his brawny body and told his men to cross the muddy road, quietly and carefully. The platoon crept slowly forward and the three Japanese joined the group again.

„God! That was close! I hope that the other GCF soldiers hadn't smelt a rat”, said Alf silently, following the rest of his comrades. Frank and Madsen nodded. The platoon disappeared again into the dark forest.

On the Warpath

The other platoons of the “Hukushuu unit” were already waiting in the thicket since over one day. A bright, thick moon had illuminated the jungle above the elite soldiers till dawn, now she slowly vanished to make room for the coming day.

The „Hukushuu II” platoon was still in the deep jungle and after a laborious creeping through the undergrowth, it had finally reached Arume. Now the fighters were lurking in a safe place in the thicket, while platoon leader Oda tried to contact „Hukushuu V“ that was hiding in a small forest south of them. After a while, the connection was established and Oda was informed that also the other two platoons had reached the center of the island.

The Japanese high command had arranged that every single platoon had to advance to the main base on its own. So far, this tactic had been successful.

Accordingly, Frank and Alfred were already exhausted and grateful, when they finally got the permission to make a longer rest.

„This damn jungle drives me insane“, groaned Frank, unrolled a dirty cover and crept under a bush.

Some ants had been startled because of his unheralded visit and ran confusedly over the sandy ground. Bäumer followed his friend and said. „Thank God, that we have officer Oda, otherwise we would get lost in that jungle. Everything looks similar here...”

One of the Japanese googled at them and showed Frank a little bottle. „No, thanks!“, gasped Kohlhaas. He just wanted to rest for a while. Meanwhile, Takeo Oda instructed his men to stay at this place for the next hours. Many of them

were totally exhausted, because of the eternal march through the jungle. They slept half of the day in the protection of the large trees and bushes. Not even the drizzle which came from the sky, could awake them. Some of the Asians played some board games which Frank and Alf did not understand.

The platoon leader announced that they would soon reach the communication station of the GCF and the southern part of Okinawa, which was much more sentineled. Meanwhile, the tension started to rise.

When the shadows of the night took the island under their safe wings again, the soldiers continued their march through the jungle. Once, Frank would almost have shot an animal, that had come out of the thicket next to him. He became more and more nervous.

Enemies were not in the proximity, just the other Hukushuu platoons, that followed them quietly at some distance. They always crept straightforward through the thicket for several hours. Finally, the platoon stopped and hid between the trees, till the dusk came again.

“Have you heard something from the others? Where are they now?”, asked Frank his comrade Madsen.

„Oda has said nothing. But I think, that the other soldiers are somewhere in the jungle around us”, returned the tall man from Varde.

„The radio station is still ten or fifteen kilometers away from us. Dawn is breaking, we should sleep now“, meant Alf.

After some nervous hours, the morning sun rose up above the trees. A further marching was too dangerous now, because the hostile presence increased here, in the south of the island, slowly and constantly.

„We must do it all in one go! At first, we must destroy that radio station, and then we must attack the military base and kill general Williams”, groaned Kohlhaas and yawned.

Madsen still wanted to play another chess game, but Frank and Alfred rejected.

They were too tired to be able to concentrate anymore and just wanted to rest. Meanwhile, the glaring sunbeams got on their nerves and they tried to find a dark corner, somewhere in the undergrowth.

„Buah!“, Bäumer startled up and put his head to the side. Between some plants a large, twinkling millipede was crawling through the sand, refusing Alf a sleeping-place under its bush.

“These fucking insects are everywhere! Hell!“, growled the man.

“This place is full of them“, ranted Frank and stood up too. Beside them some Japanese whispered and volatily looked at them. Tonight, the bloody and dangerous part of this mission would start.

The enemy was already close. Now it was valid, to attack fastly and to end the operation in the early morning hours. The other men made a nap or talked quietly, killing time till noontime. Finally, the scouts returned from the south. They told officer Oda that they had counted about fifty GCF soldiers around the radio station.

The platoon leader looked nervously around, took a silencer out of his backpack and stared thoughtfully at his MP5. Subsequently, he crept to his men and gave instructions.

„The radio station isn't very well guarded, if I had understood that Japanese correctly. This sounds good to me. Nevertheless, there is a high fence which must be destroyed at first“, explained Kohlhaas after he had spoken with the platoon leader.

“Yes, we will see, buddy“, answered Alf and closed his eyes. Meanwhile, he had a headache, because of the sustained marching and the lack of sleep.

The soldiers tried to kill time. Many of them knew that these hours would be the last of their life. Death was waiting for them, deep in the woods.

Frank regarded his Japanese comrades. Most of them appeared tense and aggressive. But they tried to calm down. Some drank a few sips of sake which they had transported in small bottles in their backpacks.

Actually, alcohol was strictly forbidden and who was caught drinking, got a very hard punishment. But now, this order was ignored by many of the Japanese. Kohlhaas had also observed one of the Japanese who had emptied a bottle of sake, but he did not tell it to the platoon leader. No, he was just silent.

„Fuck it all!“, he thought and looked at the cloudy sky which was filled by the afterglow. It was a strange horde of men that had been recruited for this special mission.

Next to Frank and Alf were some Japanese who quietly hummed like in trance, tying scraps of cloth, which were painted with characters, round their heads.

Others murmured prayers in their alien language, while they rubbed their faces with dirt and mud, staring with hate-filled eyes into the jungle. A soldier came to them and grinned maliciously. He hissed something in Japanese and clapped Alf on the back. That sight, these 100 men, who lay in wait here in the thicket, gearing up for the fight, was really weird. Anger and despair ruled their minds.

The Japanese high command had selected a lot of men who had lost their relatives and friends during the bomb attacks of the GCF, beside the particularly courageous soldiers, who had been noticeable in the last battles. About 40 men were from Kagoshima. And these soldiers had only one thing on their minds: Revenge!

They had obviously already arranged with death. At that moment, Frank thought that he was not really different from

these warriors, who were driven by hate and vengefulness. He was just one of them. A lost soul in a lost age.

„Here!“, Kohlhaas pointed at a puddle in front of him and dug his hands deeply into the dark mud. Alfred bent down as well and began to rub his face with mud too.

After a few minutes, they looked like orcs, with scary faces and watchful eyes. The platoon still waited for a while until Oda gave the order to sally. Frank tried to heat up himself.

He remembered his father and his sister who had been executed by the rulers of this world, and he thought about his captivity in the holo cell. Slowly, he piled up his inner hate, piece by piece.

When he crept through the walls of leaves of the jungle, he blustered himself into anger. He had to do it, because without rage he was not able to fight.

Kohlhaas drowned his mind in all the bad thoughts and pushed his lower jaw forward, while his teeth twinkled like the tusks of a predator between the bushes.

„Faster! Come on!“, platoon leader Oda propelled his men.

The scouts had told him about a small outpost behind the next piece of woodlands.

„Silencer!“, whispered the Japanese officer, while Frank, Alfred and the other foreigners nodded and screwed their silencers on their weapons.

Shortly afterwards, they recognized the outpost. About a dozen GCF soldiers stood next to a few sandbags. Behind the emplacement, a small piece of jungle had been cleared and a narrow road was leading into the forest. The soldiers paused for a short moment. Oda gave further orders and his men swarmed out like a wolf pack, encircling the outpost within a few minutes. Frank gritted his teeth and waited.

„Uiek! Uiek! Uiek!“

What sounded like the call of a jungle bird, was the signal to attack. The elite soldiers jumped out of the dark thicket and

pounced within seconds on their enemies. Completely surprised, the GCF soldiers emitted only some cries, then they were already perforated by bullets. They did not have a chance against the 100 men who attacked them in the rear. One or two Japanese took their knives to stab all those, who were not immediately dead.

Frank and Alf crept forward and saw a Japanese who tried to cut off the head of a GCF soldier with his machete, while he was snickering insanely.

This guy looked like an Uruk-hai, driven by bloodlust. Officer Oda finally kicked the man in the back and shouted at him. The soldier finally threw his machete away.

„What a psychopath...”, commented Madsen the scenery. They pulled the bodies of the dead GCF soldiers into the undergrowth of the jungle and continued to rush forward. It lasted not very long until they could see the radio station.

High steel masts rose up into the night sky and the dark silhouettes of some guards appeared in the distance. The platoon stalked up on the complex and stopped then.

Officer Takeo Oda crawled behind a tree and whispered something into his radio. „Hukushuu V” probably lay in wait some hundred meters away in another part of the jungle. The attack had to be coordinated again, because it had to be fast, quiet and effective.

After a while, the assault started. Three men from every platoon crawled towards the enemy camp from different sides, in order to cut some holes into the high fence. They made no sound and soon the work was done. Frank believed to hear a quiet clicking in the darkness. A moment later, two big holes were cut into the protection fence.

„Move!”, hissed Oda and shooed his men out of the jungle. Like slowly creeping shadows, they encircled the communication station. Suddenly a cry resounded.

Some soldiers of the “Hukushuu V” platoon had probably been discovered by a guard. Several shots followed.

„Shit!”, whispered Bäumer and scurried with the others through the hole in the fence.

Now the outlines of buildings could be recognized in the darkness and the guards also discovered the other platoon.

„Hey, there!“, screamed a GCF soldier and fired nervously around. Officer Oda shouted something in Japanese, while his soldiers returned fire.

„Pttt! Pttt! Pttt!”

The improved silencers which had been developed by the Japanese, swallowed the noise of the fire hail to a great extent. Some enemies tumbled over, while the attackers rushed forward towards the buildings. The headlights of two watchtowers danced among them, then the enemy fired again. A friendly platoon had already reached the buildings and stormed inside. Frank heard cries and some of the men fell to the ground.

„We must reach the hall!”, Frank jumped behind some barrels and shot an enemy in the back. Alf, Madsen and some Japanese followed him and the firefight increased.

Soon the main building of the radio station was in front of Frank and his comrades. They moved down a group of surprised GCF soldiers with their assault rifles, while the Japanese threw some hand grenades.

Several explosions followed, cries resounded and further men came out of the smoke, in order to be shot down in the next second. A bullet just missed Frank`s head and hit the chest of a comrade. The Japanese screamed and staggered against some barrels. Kohlhaas looked back in a blink of an eye, but the man was already dead.

„In there!“, screamed Frank and shot at the entrance of the building. They killed the last GCF soldiers in front of the hall and finally recognized their comrades of the “Hukushuu V”

platoon. Meanwhile, the remaining enemies had entrenched themselves in the rooms of the main building. The men of the “Hukushuu unit” swarmed out between the barracks in the protection of darkness and crawled forward.

Some of them were hit and broke down crying. Shortly afterwards, another volley of gunfire let the windows burst and the GCF soldiers in the main building hit the dirt.

The Japanese finally destroyed the front door and hurled hand grenades into the entrance hall. Now also the rest of the unit rushed forward.

A short fight followed, then the central complex was taken. The Japanese searched the building for enemies and killed everyone to leave no witnesses.

“I hope, that nobody had escaped us. Otherwise the main base in the south will be warned”, imagined Frank and looked out a broken window.

Officer Oda and the leader of the „Hukushuu V” platoon conferred in a corner, then they went into the room with the computer systems for the radio station. They destroyed everything and came out again after some minutes.

„We have 30 dead men in both units!“, explained Oda with concern.

Some of the soldiers who were already pronounced dead by him, were just heavily injured. But here, in the middle of the jungle, nobody could help them anymore. Time pressed and they had to reach the main base as fast as possible. So the poor soldiers were just left alone – dying. Officer Oda uttered a curse under his breath and finally gave the order to march off.

Frank and Alfred gasped, totally exhausted, and listened to the desperate wailing of a comrade who was lying badly wounded on the ground. There was no more help for him, he would soon be dead – as Frank hoped.

Meanwhile, Kohlhaas tried to think about nothing, because the really bloody part of this operation would start now. He tried to switch off his mind like Oda had done it with the computer system of this radio station. But it did not work...

Hukushuu

„Hukushuu II“ and „Hukushuu V“ left the radio station, leaving their dead and wounded comrades behind. Meanwhile, the strategic main base of the southern invasion army of the GCF was only five kilometers distant. Everything had to go fast. The two platoons rushed forward and tried to hide as good as they could. „Hukushuu I“ and „Hukushuu III“ had already followed them.

„A large GCF airport is nearby the radio station. I'm sure that they have heard us“, worried Bäumer.

„We are surrounded by outposts and camps. This is nothing but a fucking suicide command, Alf!“, whispered Frank and continued to creep forward.

They entered a narrow piece of woodlands, while they heard a helicopter roaring above their heads. From a distance, they heard some screams too. Platoon leader Oda had meanwhile become ashen and appeared very nervous. Nevertheless, they steadfastly groped forward through the jungle. Madsen came from behind now and clapped Frank on the back.

„We can still play another last chess game. Maybe you will win this time...“, he tried to joke.

Kohlhaas just gave him a tormented smile. They needed two further hours to reach the big military base. Finally they could recognize a true fortress.

„Look at this! Killing general Williams? What a nonsense!“, ranted Bäumer and crawled behind a bush.

„How shall we get in there? And how – get out again?“, growled Frank.

They huddled in the morass and it started to rain heavily. Bäumer pushed a few leaves to the side and examined the

military camp. His heart missed a beat, when he saw all the fences, gates and sentry towers in front of him.

“The Japanese high command doesn’t care, if we survive that mission. They just want us to kill general Williams, so we don’t need to get out of this camp again”, said the tall man from Dortmund.

Frank had to admit himself that Alf was probably right. The military base was surrounded by a high fence which was additionally secured with barbed wire. Furthermore, it was an electrified perimeter fence with an infrared scan zone of 100 meters. Whoever came into this zone from the outside, caused immediately alarm.

Nevertheless, most of the soldiers in this camp seemed to sleep and only a few guards were outside the large barracks. Apparently, the GCF calculated on its hightech security system.

In the meantime, platoon leader Oda was talking with another officer and appeared quite helpless. It was 3,38 o'clock in the morning and still dark.

But what should they do now? Just jump out of the jungle and shoot?

That was no good plan. So they just waited in the thicket, while more and more soldiers started to become nervous. Behind them, officer Oda slowly became louder and tried to explain something to a group of Japanese.

„The main building, where general David Williams is sleeping, is in the center of the camp - according to Oda”, said Frank and scratched his head.

„The planning of that operation is nevertheless fucked up. What’s up now? “, whispered Bäumer angrily.

Shortly afterwards, the Japanese platoon leader came to the foreign volunteers and examined them. Then he said: „We need non Japanese soldiers to infiltrate the military

base. One of you must get in there and get a GCF uniform. Then you must open one of the gates!”

Kohlhaas and Bäumer did not trust their ears. He actually wanted that one of them crept somehow into the camp and opened a gate! Oda showed them a layout of the base and pointed at a red spot.

„Someone has to open it! Understand?”

„Damn! What is with that infrared scan zone?“, hissed Kohlhaas.

The officer tried to explain it. He talked about a small stream which was supplying the military camp with fresh water from the outside. It was at the other end of the camp and the electrical fence was not charged up there.

Someone had to dive through the water to destroy the underwater barrier. The infrared system could not function under the water surface, as Oda assured. Meanwhile, also Madsen and four other foreigners had gathered around the officer.

„We need a foreign soldier, who does not look Japanese!“, explained the platoon leader. Alf groaned and let his head sink downward. The Japanese sharply looked at him and finally pointed at Frank.

„You must do this job!“, he ordered.

Frank winced and was not delighted by this idea at all. He stared at Oda and asked: “Why me?”

„Because you are the hero of Paris. I know about you!” answered Oda vigorously. “This is an order! Kill a GCF soldier and take the uniform. Then open this fucking gate!”

“Hero of Paris...”, whispered Kohlhaas to himself and cursed quietly.

But he could not ignore this instruction. Moreover, Oda held a gun in his hand and seemed to be ready for everything.

„This is an order, soldier! You must obey! You are part of the Japanese army, understand?“, hissed the officer and gave Frank a bolt cutter. “Follow me! Now!”

Takeo Oda crawled away, huddled briefly behind a tree and finally crept through the jungle. Frank followed him.

The rest of the unit slowly moved afterwards and hid in the deep thicket. Time pressed now, because the enemy soldiers were still in their beds, except for some guards. But all this could change from one minute to the next.

After half an hour, they had reached the small river which flowed under the fence into the camp. On the way they encountered another platoon, that was already waiting tensely for the attack. Now they had to improvise.

„Demnächst plant ihr eure Aktionen besser, ihr dämlichen Reisfresser!“, scolded Frank quietly.

Oda turned around: „What?“

„Nothing! It`s all good!“, returned Frank and rolled his eyes.

His heart hammered and the inner tension increased with each step. Now they stood beside the stream which gurgled between some big jungle plants. It was pitch-dark here.

Frank took the bolt cutter and the flashlight and finally jumped into the water. His weapons, except for a knife, he had given to Oda.

„Good luck!“, he still heard from his platoon leader, then the Japanese disappeared again.

„Hero of Paris? Fuck you!“, thought Frank and swam towards it.

The electrical fence was still over hundred meters away, enemy soldiers seemed not to be in the proximity of the small river, which was surrounded by high plants and trees. This part of the large military camp was probably an “outlying district” and was not sentineled all too well. Frank took a deep breath, dived and was totally desperate. Only the glow of his flashlight could betray him now under the

water surface, but he had not yet seen any watchtowers or guards in this area.

Kohlhaas recognized dirt and rotted pieces of wood before his eyes, otherwise the water was just a brown swill. He was careful and tried to stay underwater, because at some places the dirty water was hardly a meter deep.

The current helped him to get faster into the proximity of the fence. But then it was necessary to take breath. Frank pushed his mouth only a few centimeters out of the water and drew the cool air into his lungs. At this moment, he was close to lose his nerves.

“Control yourself!”, he thought and dived again.

The infrared scan system did not react on him. So he moved forward and finally reached the barrier, which was covered with creepers and mud. Again, he briefly cut surface, in order to breathe, while he hoped that nobody would see the glow of his flashlight underwater. But the jungle plants protected him with their broad, green roof of leaves which was expanding till the electrical fence.

It took some minutes, then he had cut a hole into the barrier and dived to the other side of the fence. Now he was inside the military camp and crawled out of the river. His head pounded and Frank felt dazed.

Shortly afterwards, he heard voices. Two GCF soldiers approached and walked toward the fence. A tall, dark-skinned man called something at his comrade, then they disappeared again.

Now he had reached the outermost part of the camp and hoped that nobody had seen or heard him. He did not know it and became more and more nervous.

„Where can I get a GCF uniform?“, he asked himself, whereby the answer was already clear. He had to kill someone. Oda had meant nothing but that. So he crawled under a big wooden pallet with some crates on it. Frank felt

that an insect was crawling over his face and tried to shake it off somehow. Finally, the two soldiers came back and were still talking. They spoke a strange language which Frank couldn't understand, although, it was actually only allowed to speak English in the GCF army.

The young volunteer waited. He had no gun anymore and felt quite helpless under the wooden pallet. Kohlhaas just cursed the whole situation.

The two men stopped and one of them laughed loudly, then they came still nearer to the pallet and started to smoke. Frank confessed himself, that this opportunity was not too bad and crawled loudlessly out of his hiding place. He looked around, carefully, like a predator, otherwise he could not see any other enemy soldiers somewhere.

Meanwhile, the two men, probably Africans, chatted ever louder, while the German took his knife and jumped out of the shadows.

The first soldier got a stab in the neck and roared out loudly. His comrade was paralysed with horror, and the cigarette just fell out of his mouth. A few seconds later, Frank attacked the other soldier.

A hard strike hit the second man under the chin and he tumbled back. Kohlhaas kicked his opponent in the head with all his might and the soldier became silent. Meanwhile, his comrade tried to pull a gun, but Kohlhaas jumped at him like a panther, ramming his blade deeply into his chest. Finally the GCF soldier collapsed. The young man cut his throat and the dark-skinned man gasped quietly.

A moment later, Frank's face petrified, because he heard further men, shouting from a distance. He pulled the two motionless enemies into a dark corner, whereby he suddenly heard a quiet, painful moaning. His first victim was still moving and tried to grab his leg with his bloody hand.

Kohlhaas stabbed again in his neck until the man made no more sound.

Once again, soldiers came along and crossed the place, where Frank had attacked their comrades. But they did not notice the blood-soaked grass under their boots. They had probably heard wrongly or one of the guards had just made a joke by crying through the night, he heard them say in English. Finally the voices vanished, and Frank breathed again.

“Sorry guys...”, he said softly as he took one of the uniforms and a gun. “What have you done here in Japan? These rats of the World Government have just wasted you...”

After several minutes, he left his hiding place in the clothing of the international forces. Now he had to find the gate in the northern part of the camp.

Some soldiers passed him and greeted him in bad English, Frank just nodded and tried to smile. His heart pounded and he clutched the Scanchip of the dead GCF soldier in his pocket which would allow him to open the gate.

The military base was really large, two tanks and several jeeps stood a few meters away from him in the shadow of a big building. Soon, huge billets surrounded him and Frank felt safe for a few minutes. From afar, he saw the main building of the military camp, where general David Williams was probably sleeping.

“All hell will breake loose – in some minutes...”, he said quietly to himself.

Frank finally reached the northern entrance of the camp, where about a dozen soldiers were standing in front of a gate. He walked quickly in their direction and said gently: „We must open this gate! It’s an order of the leading officier!“

The soldiers hesitated and looked at him: „From which unit you are, soldier? What order?“

„I'm from the...“, he paused. “A jeep has to leave this camp...through this gate. Open it!”

Without thinking, he went to the gate and pulled the Scanchip of the dead soldier through the laser scanner. The gate opened immediately. At that moment, two of the soldiers came to him.

„What order? We don't know anything about such an order!“

„An order from general Williams himself! He has sent me!“, murmured Kohlhaas, becoming increasingly nervous.

Frank thought about running to the nearby forest, but the soldiers had already surrounded him and one of them quickly grabbed him at the shoulder.

„What jeep? What order?“, asked the man, still staring at Kohlhaas. „Give me your personal number!“

Frank's anxiety grew more and more. Presumably he was mentally disturbed, in the eyes of the guards, who stood around him. Meanwhile, one of the soldiers had gone to the gate and wanted to shut it again. But he still hesitated, turned around and looked at Frank, waiting what would happen next.

“Give me your personal number, soldier Mgabel!“, growled his comrade and pointed at the nameplate on Frank's uniform. Another soldier stared puzzledly at the traces of blood on the collar of his uniform jacket.

Kohlhaas reacted within seconds. Like a flash, he pulled his gun and shot the men in front of him in the head, then he fired wildly around. The GCF soldiers jumped screaming to the side and tried to find cover. Frank ran toward the jungle, while some bullets flew after him.

„It is open!“, he roared at the top of his lungs.

A moment later, he saw many dark shadows, jumping out of the thicket and running towards the gate that was still open. The Japanese came and immediately opened fire on the group of GCF soldiers in front of them.

„Pttt! Pttt! Pttt!“, it hissed through the night, while the first GCF soldiers were hit by bullets. This was the start of the attack.

The “Hukushuu unit” stormed through the open gate and killed the small group of enemy guards within seconds. Kohlhaas could recognize Oda’s black face in the distance. The 370 men swarmed out and infested the still sleeping camp like birds of prey.

However, they had triggered the infrared alarm and a loud howling tore the silence of the night. The order of the Japanese high command was clear: The elite unit had to move straight towards the main building to kill general Williams, every other enemy should be ignored.

Now the lights were switched on in the barracks, while Frank tried to follow his comrades. Bäumer recognized him and waved him nearer.

Within minutes, a wild chaos broke loose. The Japanese fired at everyone in their way and killed numerous enemies. The searchlights of the surrounding guard towers were turned towards to the mass of the attackers and the first bursts of fire came from above.

Frank, Alfred and a little later even Madsen stayed together as a group and hurried from one cover to the next. Some GCF soldiers in front of them jumped into a jeep and tried to start the engine, but Bäumer’s MG mowed them down.

Meanwhile, a great number of enemies returned fire from the watchtowers and billets. More and more Japanese were killed, but the rest of them still charged towards the main building, driven by fanatical hatred

Now the first GCF soldiers ran to their emplacements which were protected by sandbags, and started to shoot back. A Japanese officer shouted something behind Frank and a group of his soldiers attacked the opponents with machetes and bayonets.

“The main building!”, roared Madsen and dodged a grenade.

A brutal shooting and stabbing broke out everywhere. Frank heard the war cries of some Japanese who slaughtered a group of enemies, dozily tottering out of their billet, with samurai swords. Meanwhile, they had to hurry up, because more and more enemies came out of the barracks and took arms.

The main building was already in sight and a terrible burst of gunfire came from the upper floor. The Japanese continue to rush forward, while many of them were torn by bullets. Officer Oda hurled a hand grenade through a window and a loud bang followed. Rubble and splinters rained down.

Frank and Alfred closed up to the others, firing wildly. Then they ran zigzag through the shadows between the houses to escape the hail of bullets, coming out of the main building.

Some of the Japanese ran fearlessly to the main entrance of the house and attached an limpet mine at the front door. Shots from all directions hit them and only a few of them survived this suicide action. Suddenly a loud explosion tore the entrance door and with it a part of the exterior wall of the house.

The Japanese stormed into the building and the first of them were shot down. Their comrades answered with an angry backfire and killed a few soldiers and a GCF officer.

Frank, Alfred and Madsen followed them and threw some hand grenades into the adjoining rooms.

“Where the hell is Williams?”, shouted Kohlhaas and clutched his gun nervously.

“I don` t know!”, screamed Madsen.

Meanwhile, the Japanese had reached the upper floor and suffered heavy casualties. Outside the main building their remaining comrades were massacred by an increasing number of GCF soldiers. Finally Frank came to the upper

floor too. Officer Oda had been shot in the stomach and was screaming in pain, while the German tried to find general Williams.

The young man from Ivas ran through a cloud of smoke to a broken window and looked down. Below him, a group of officers tried to escape from the building and bolted towards an army jeep.

"I will get you!", yelled the volunteer and mowed them down with his assault rifle. Frank fired until he had no more ammunition. Then he left the room with a triumphant scream.

A moment later, a Japanese soldier jumped into the room, uttered a curse in his language, and also shoot at the already dead enemies.

"Have you hit them?", called Alf from behind.

"I don't know, if it was Williams. But I think he was one of them!", answered Frank, pushing him aside. "We have to get out. The whole camp is awake now. If we don't hurry up, nobody will survive this!"

The GCF soldiers had meanwhile killed almost all attackers, who had reached the main building, and now, they were in the majority. Some of the Japanese had already escaped, hoping to make it to the jungle alive.

"We can no longer get out through the main entrance. Follow me!", called Frank and jumped out of the window on a porch. Bäumer, Madsen and some Japanese looked nervously after him. Finally they jumped too.

They ran with all their might. Behind them, the men heard the sound of rifle fire, while numerous searchlights tried to catch them. Alf got a shot in the upper leg and three Japanese were hit in the back. They did not return fire anymore and just ran with the last of their strenght. After a few minutes, the gate appeared in front of them. It was still

open and nobody had closed it during the bloodbath, that was finally over now.

“The Jeep!”, shouted Alf, pointing at a vehicle which was behind a hut near the exit.

They jumped into the jeep, and luckily the ignition key still stuck. Five Japanese followed them and climbed fastly into the rear end of the army vehicle to find cover.

Frank started the car and hurtled off towards the exit. Several bullets rattled against the rear and a Japanese was hit in the shoulder. The onrushing GCF soldiers who had already killed all the Japanese around the main building, did not get them anymore.

Frank raced with murderous speed over the muddy access road and after about two kilometers, they jumped into the thicket of the jungle. Meanwhile, countless enemies and even helicopters were upon their heels, while the sound of gunfire could still be heard in the background for a while.

Bäumer limped with his bleeding leg and his friend tried to help him as good as he could. The Japanese spurred the two Germans to follow them faster into the dark undergrowth to escape the GCF soldiers.

One of the freedom fighters moaned quietly, clutching his shoulder. Who had survived the perilous assault on the military base and had left the scenario alive, Frank and Alf could not say at that time. Madsen seemed to be dead too.

The sun rose slowly on the horizon behind them and sent some of his rays through the treetops. Around them, they heard the animals of the jungle wake up, chirping, screaming and hissing everywhere. This night had been a true horror and they just thanked God to be still alive.

“We have to make it to Arume! I hope that they really wait for us there”, gasped Kohlhaas and ran through the thicket.

He wished that at least the five surviving Japanese would know, where they were now at all.

There and Back Again

In the next hours, the seven men hid again, when the voices of GCF searchparties could be heard from a distance. Even one of the helicopters had flown above their heads and had tried to discover them in the jungle.

The Japanese soldier was still bleeding and already deathly pale. In broken English, or even with hands and feet, the two volunteers from Ivas communicated with their Japanese comrades, who told them that they should march along the east coast northward, to reach Arume.

Alfred had snapped a thick branch from a tree and used it as a crutch. He contorted his face with pain and was moaning quietly. Frank tried to perk up his friend, and told him that they would immediatley return to Ivas, when all this was over.

“What’s about the officers of the platoons?”, asked Frank one of the Japanese.

“I think they are all dead”, replied the Asian, and seemed to be sure.

“We should pray, that the submarines are really waiting for us in Arume. This is our only chance to get away from this fucking jungle island!”, cursed Frank and Alf nodded.

They waded through a small river, and finally reached the deep jungle of the central part of Okinawa. Here they felt safer. Meanwhile, the heavily wounded Japanese had lost a lot of blood.

He bit on a piece of wood in his pain and was at the end of his rope. His shoulder was already bandaged with a blood-soaked piece of his uniform. Eventually, they reached the coast and had something like an orientation.

Slowly the dusk returned, but they had no time to rest. So they trudged almost the entire night through the jungle until they were totally exhausted. Finally, the wounded Japanese collapsed and sat down under a tree. He told his countrymen that they should leave him alone and said goodbye to them for the last time.

Meanwhile, Alf was also weakened and limped over the muddy ground of the jungle. Sometimes, Frank had to trail him. But the young man tried to help his best friend with all his might. Without Bäumer and the rebels from Ivas, he would have already died a long time ago. Frank knew that, and now he had to help Alf.

“One hand washes the other!”, he said quietly to himself and heaved up the tall, hulking Bäumer. Occasionally, he also helped one of the Japanese.

After a short nap in the morning hours, they finally struggled through to Arume and arrived at the meeting point. They were just in time and about two dozen Japanese welcomed them enthusiastically. But Madsen, the Dane, however, was not among the men.

“Even the Viking has been killed...”, snorted Frank. “And I was already looking forward to another chess game.”

“I just feel sorry for him, he was a great guy. Fuck it all!”, added Alf and looked sadly across the sea.

Some small boats were waiting for them in the jungle, under some big plants at the beach. Far too many, for that little bunch here, because Frank counted 32 men who had survived the operation.

“It was all in vain! Perhaps we haven’t killed general Williams, just a few unimportant officers”, wailed Bäumer, clutching his bloody leg.

“To hell with all this!”, hissed Frank and sat down.

“I just want to go home. I won’t lift a finger for the Japs army anymore, or for the fucking freedom of the world or whatever...”, muttered Alf resignedly.

They went to the boats and swam a few hundred meters out on the open sea. Then they waited for half an hour and trembled. Meanwhile, it had become dark again and the sea looked like a scary, impenetrable abyss.

“How long shall we still float around on the open sea like a target?”, growled Bäumer, staring at the sky.

“Don’t worry, Alf! The submarines will come! But I hope, that some GCF helicopters doesn’t find us before them...”, said Frank full of sorrow.

Suddenly they saw flashing lights below them. They breathed again, because it was a Japanese submarine. It rose slowly upwards and came out of the water with a loud splash. The Japanese cheered.

Shortly afterwards, two more submarines appeared in the distance. The soldiers crawled into the iron vessel and this time, Frank was not afraid of claustrophobia anymore. He was just too exhausted for it.

The young German fell asleep, after he had sent a prayer to heaven. A Japanese medic doctored Alf’s injured leg and finally gave him some painkillers. Maybe, that whole mission had been a flop, but they were still alive and this was not nothing.

The two other submarines disappeared in the depths of the Pacific again, without taking any elite soldiers on board. One submarine was enough to transport the pathetic rest of the “Hukushuu unit” back to Japan.

The hours-long diving trip was peaceful and without any incidents. The submarine dived down to a greater depth and evaded the enemy warships, which still plagued Tokyo and the other major cities in central Japan with massive missile

attacks. Frank just let the time pass and slept. They finally reached the port of Toyohashi and were afterwards brought to Tokyo.

Two days later, a cheer went through the headquarter of the Japanese high command. The international media had reported that general David Williams had fallen victim to a terrorist attack.

Matsumoto`s war propaganda spoke day and night of the “heroic attack on the fortress of the international mass murderer David Williams” and preached the Japanese, that the war had already reached a turning point.

“Now, the world sees the true heroism of Japan, and now, our entire nation shall rise to drive the slave hordes of the World Government back into the sea!”, said the propaganda.

The campaign had been a tremendous success, and most Japanese started to believe that a victory was possible now. Schools, kindergartens and even universities should be named after the “Hukushuu unit” in the following years. The Japanese propaganda knew no more limits and it was quite successful - on the psychological front.

Meanwhile, Frank and Alfred had been brought back to the Taishis. But it was just some kind of furlough, because after a month, they should return to the Japanese army as soldiers to support the counteroffensive in the south. The Taishis were more than proud of them, but the veil of mourning for their son was still under the surface.

„The Japanese high command can kiss my ass!“, Frank was lying on his bed and was sipping a cold beer.

Alf grinned. “Tomorrow we will disappear. Forever! No southern or norther front will see me again – never!”

“We have fulfilled our mission. And it was not in vain. Thank God! And I'm sure, that I have shot Williams”, said Kohlhaas proudly.

“Ha! I think it has been the Japanese soldier, you have already talked about. He has also fired at that group of fleeing officers, right?”, teased him Alf.

”No, I'm sure! They already lay in the mud, when the Japanese shot at them!” , returned Frank.

“Anyhow, then carve another notch in your rifle butt, superman!”, answered Bäumer and laughed.

“Never mind. The main thing is that we are still alive...”, said Kohlhaas and fetched another bottle of beer.

“Wilden is overjoyed because of that “Hukushuu thing”. Now he jumps through his house, all day long - like a kangaroo. What do you think?”, remarked Alf and smirked.

”He bounces from Lithuania to Siberia!”, laughed Frank.

“And I will bounce too – when I see Julia again!”

They packed their bags and watched TV or played cards for the rest of the day. Tomorrow they would leave this country forever. The Japanese army could look for other heroes now.

While the two men enjoyed their rest, the southern invasion army of the GCF descended into chaos, just as the Japanese high command had hoped it.

The multinational army was totally confused for several days and its soldiers on the battlefields were often confronted with contradictory commands. Suddenly the successful advance in the south of Japan stopped.

Furthermore, president Matsumoto proclaimed the “great counterattack” on national television and masses of young Japanese marched to the southern front to drive the wavering GCF troops back. New tank divisions and aircrafts supported the huge assault of the Asians, while the war

propaganda stylized everything to a “Japanese awakening”. Within just two weeks, the defenders repulsed the GCF in the south of the central island of Honshu and drove their enemies out of the most cities. Finally, the highly motivated and self-conscious Japanese soldiers defeated the GCF in a great battle near Hagi and took Honshu back. Shortly afterwards, the Japanese counterattack reached the two southern islands of Kyushu and Shikoku - with great success.

Hundreds of thousands of Japanese soldiers flowed to the fronts and a wave of euphoria seized the whole country. Meanwhile, Sapporo was fallen and most of the defenders had been killed or had died of hunger, like the biggest part of the civilian population too.

Nevertheless, the brave city which had held out for so long, became a national symbol of resistance against the World Government and was transfigured to a “monument of Japanese heroism” by Matsumoto's propaganda.

In the end, the willingness to make sacrifices of the defenders of Sapporo inspired the Japanese soldiers that much that they even started a second counterattack in the north.

In return, the GCF tried to break the Japanese morale with several air raids which devastated large parts of Tokyo and Yokohama, but that was not enough anymore.

At the end of March 2032, the World Government had to admit that the invasion of Matsumoto's Japan had failed. Nevertheless, the battles in the bombed out cities of southern Japan and on Hokkaido went on for several months – and countless soldiers still died.

Frank and Alfred still burst with pride when somebody talked about the operation on Okinawa. But now, the others should fight. They were sick and tired of the endless killing and

dying. So they just left the Taishi family and thanked them for everything. Shortly afterwards, they disappeared from Japan - with a foreign trading ship. Frank and Alf were brought to the Philippines and flew back to Vilnius as harmless tourists. John Throphy finally picked them up at the airport.

"Holy shit!", said Frank, when he recognized the Irishman at the main entrance. At that moment, Frank realized that they had survived hell...

New Plans

If Wilden had a great talent, apart from explaining world politics, then it was to get on the nerves of other people. He bombarded Frank and Alf with questions, again and again. They had to tell him everything about the Japanese war. After a while, they just hid from him. The other villagers were also proud of them and overwhelmed the two volunteers with praise and gifts.

Meanwhile, it was April and the Japanese war was slowly coming to an end. While the international media still reported about some minor victories of the GCF, the armies of the World Government left Japan piece by piece.

But the newscasters did not talk about casualties or dead civilians. Nevertheless, the number of them was high. It must have been millions and the war still raged in some regions. All in all, the Japanese were on the way to win.

Like Kublai Khan's Mongols, who had ruled over a giant empire for centuries and had finally failed against Japan, the endless armies of the World Government had also been defeated by the stubborn island people.

That all was a real disaster for the Lodge Brothers who controlled the world. The sole and unchallengeable authority on earth, as they believed, had accepted defeat.

And for a world power which saw itself as invincible, there was nothing worse than a defeat, that destroyed the nimbus of invincibility before the eyes of mankind.

It had been the same with the mighty Persian Empire, when the Greeks had stopped them at Marathon and Thermopylae. And also the nimbus of invincible Rome had crumbled after the defeat against the Teutons in the Teutoburg forest. And there were still more examples in

world history. Japan's survival was a great success, without doubt. And the aftereffects of this war were much more important. However, even the best propaganda of the international media had not the power to change the facts: The attack on Matsumoto's Japan had ended with a defeat of the Lodge Brothers.

But the successful defense of the only state which had openly defied the rulers of the world, was accompanied by endless suffering and an never-ending procession of the dead.

Even in Ivas, there was not just cheering among the inhabitants. The Müllers had lost one of their sons in the Far East and the same fate had overtaken the Dutch family Baastfeldt. Their Thomas did not return too.

And Sven Weber? Frank and Alfred had not heard anything from him since months. His war fever had been the greatest, at the beginning of this conflict.

Sven returned to his home village not until May 2032, and was no longer the same man. The young man had fought in many battles on the southern front and had also taken part in the great counteroffensive.

One day, he had been hit by a grenade which had mangled a part of his face and had mutilated his forearm. Thereafter, he had been in a hospital in Kyoto for several weeks.

Ultimately, the medics had just patched up his face as good as they could, but he had finally lost his left eye and an ear. Furthermore, three of his fingers had to be amputated on his left hand. The proud, young volunteer finally came back to Lithuania, disfigured and crippled. Frank and Alfred tried to care for him during the first weeks after his return. Rolf Hugenthal had been stabbed in the stomach with a bayonet, but he had survived the surgery. The other son of the

Müllers remained unharmed. The Far East had given him back to his lamenting family.

"I'm sorry, that I've come so rarely in the last days, but your father is getting on my nerves", said Frank.

Julia walked beside him on this sunny April day and just nodded approvingly.

"He lives only for his politics", she said. "So he is, but he means no harm."

"I know that. I like him too, but sometimes he just sees it all too theoretically. It was horrible in Japan. Certainly necessary and meaningful, and whatever. But I didn't want to stay just one day longer in this hell", answered Kohlhaas and sat down on the grass. Julia followed him.

"I have really missed you, Frank. And I was full of sorrow...", she remarked quietly.

"Oh, I'm the hero of Paris...and now...of Sapporo and Okinawa. I'm just hard to kill...", joked Frank and smiled.

"Idiot!", Julia smiled back.

"I have thought of you too - every day", whispered the young man and looked shyly at the treetops.

"But now you will stay here, okay?", she said.

"Maybe, but if another oppressed nation calls for me, I will have to go. Anyhow, or your father sends me to the next battlefield, ha, ha!", teased Frank the young woman.

"Then I will beat him with his favorite weighty tome about world politics!", said Julia.

"You were always my brightest star...eh...in the sky", murmured Frank quietly. Then he tried to behave like a real war hero again.

Julia blushed and smiled at him. Suddenly she put her arm around his shoulder and gave him a gentle kiss on the cheek. Frank cleared his throat and smiled to himself. Finally he got a grip on himself and kissed her too. This kind

of “counteroffensive” had become strange to him in the last years, but now he just felt well and thanked God to be still alive. They stayed in the woods for a while and walked off then. Frank had missed her so incredible much and now he was with her. That was great!

The chairman of the *Council of the Elders* stared at him with penetrating eyes and his face changed to a mask of malevolence. The World President coughed slightly, trying to ignore the steely glance of his master. But he was not able to escape his look.

Some months ago, he had demanded Matsumoto's head, and now, his brothers in the *Council of the Wise* seemed to demand his own.

“There will be no nuclear strike against Japan. Our troops will just leave the islands in the coming months. A victory against Matsumoto is no longer possible in the present circumstances.

We won't forget Japan and in the next years, we will start another, still greater assault. But at present, this war endangeres our further steps”, said the chairman, while the World President frowned.

“And if the media just make a victory out of it all?”, he asked then.

“Nonsense!”, grumbled another member of the Council. “Our lies are good, but not that perfect that they can accomplish this. Japan is still independent and Matsumoto rules over the country. Well, these facts will remain. No matter, what we tell the masses...”

“Is the Great Plan in danger?”, enquired a Lodge Brother with concern. “What do you think?”

The Chairman shook his head and replied with obvious anger: “No! Of course not! This defeat won't influence the Great Plan. We will just go on as before!”

“We should focus on the implanted Scanchips! This is the most important step of all. Japan will remain isolated, for now. This is all we can do at the moment!”, remarked a gray-haired man at the end of the large table.

“I agree...”, muttered another.

“And we should just accept this defeat? Why don’t we conscript another, greater army?”, asked the World President who was getting angry.

“No! The war is over! Our new strategy should be to ignore Japan basically. We won’t mention this country or Matsumoto in our media again. Now, it would just be foolish to call this state back to the minds of the people.

If we can’t destroy it, then we pretend that this state has never existed. In a few years, we will prepare another attack”, explained the chairman and straightened his tie.

His cold eyes stared out of his old face, fazing the World President again.

“Our perseverance has brought us global dominance, and also in the case of Japan, we will prevail in the long run”, he assured.

“Nevertheless, it doesn’t alter the fact that our brother has made a lot of mistakes in the last months. He has harmed our image and we have to talk about that!”, hissed a bald gentleman in a fine suit and pointed at the World President. His fellow gave him an angry look, but he swallowed his rude answer like a sip of poison.

Then he twisted his mouth and said: “Well, I would like to come to the next item on the agenda.”

The chairman of the *Council of Wise* nodded and looked around. Then he played with the golden ring on his finger and waited for the reaction of the others.

“We will still talk about some things, brother!”, snarled one of the councilors and gazed at the World President.

“That`s enough!”, said the chairman and banged on the table.

The head of the World Government was seething inside, still staring at the documents before him. His hand gripped some of the papers, while he tried to suppress a tantrum.

This conference was more than unpleasant for him and he cursed the Japanese in his mind with all his malice. The secret meeting continued, because there was still much to discuss. The next steps for the total enslavement of mankind had to be well prepared.

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One day, he gets into a conflict with the tyrannical system, because of an unfortunate accident. An automated trial convicts him to five years of imprisonment and Frank disappears in a detention centre, where he suffers under a cruel system of brainwashing and reeducation. After eight months of pain, the authorities decide to transfer him to another prison. On the way there, something unexpected happens. Suddenly everything changes and the young man finds himself caught between the fronts...

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