

Chapter 2

CHECKPOINT CHARLIE, AMERICAN SECTOR, WEST BERLIN. JUNE 1983.
THE RED EFFECT -13 MONTHS.

The black Range Rover came to a halt on the eastern side of the barrier, which quickly lowered behind them. The barrier had the new vertical struts intermittently spaced along its length, which had been introduced after an escapee had accelerated their car, a low, open-top sports car, beneath it, escaping from the German Democratic Republic to the American Sector of Berlin in the Federal Republic of Germany.

A *Grenztruppen* officer, as usual, stood opposite the passenger door and looked at the two occupants inside. After waiting a few moments, he did a circuit of the vehicle, going through the pretence that he could make the decision to prevent the representatives of the British Government from passing into East Berlin. He came back to the passenger's side window and looked in again. He stood proud in his grey uniform, green piping on his jacket and cap, along with a band around his lower left sleeve declaring him to be *Grenztruppen der DDR*.

"He's new, Jacko," the mission commander said to his driver, a member of the Royal Corps of Transport. He was an experienced driver who knew how to handle the 2,000-kilogram heavyweight vehicle at speed, particularly when the Soviet or East German Army attempted to prevent them carrying out their tasks by ramming them, or attempting to block them in with various vehicles.

"His uniform looks pretty new," responded the driver. "Straight out of officer training school, I reckon."

"He's certainly making a meal of it," chided Bradley who was in command of the operation they were going to conduct today. He too was badged as Royal Corps of Transport, RCT, but was in fact from the 'Section', the specialist unit tasked with intelligence gathering and acquisition in the Eastern Sector of Berlin.

"Here we go," informed Jacko. He put the vehicle into gear, as the border guard raised the barrier and indicated with a flick of his wrist that they were free

to pass through.

Jacko manoeuvred the black, four-wheel drive Range Rover around the chicane of concrete blocks, wire fencing and barbed wire. Once free, he went through the gears as they increased speed leaving Checkpoint Charlie, situated on the junction of Friedrich Strasse, Zimmer Strasse and Mauer Strasse, behind them. "Where are we going?"

"Karlshorst."

"Sneak around their railway sidings, eh?" Jacko changed down and swung right onto Leipziger Strasse, slotting in with the small blue and white Trabants and the occasional Skoda or Moskvich car that were going about their day-to-day business. The occasional Trabant rattled past, its 500cc, air-cooled, two-stroke engine sounding like a demented sewing machine, their occupants peering up at the black vehicle that towered above them; some putting a hand up in a discrete wave.

"Let's hope the bloody dogs aren't out today," responded Bradley.

"I think even the transport police are afraid of them. Just a poke around?"

"Yeah, we've not been for a couple of weeks. Just a quick in and out visit; then I want to try Pankow sidings."

Jacko pulled out and overtook a few cars before slotting back in again, heading east along Spittlemarkt, Gertrauden Strasse, crossing the River Spree, a long barge passing beneath them.

"I'm just going to check in. *Phoo, phoo.*" Bradley blew into the black handset, initiating a signal. "Hello, Three-Zero-Alpha, this is Three-Zero-Bravo, over. Hello, Three-Zero-Alpha, this is Three-Zero-Bravo, over."

"Three-Zero-Bravo, this is Three-Zero-Alpha. Go ahead, over."

"En route. Delta, Hotel, Zulu, Echo; then Papa, Yankee, Kilo, Lima. Roger that, over?"

"Roger that. Go easy. Three-Zero-Alpha, out."

Bradley placed the handset back in its cradle.

"The big cheese, eh?" Asked Jacko.

"Yes. He thinks there's something up."

"He's always had a good nose for the Russkies' tricks. We've got company."

“Where, Jacko?”

“About four cars back. One’s a black Skoda and the other a cream Lada. Two-up in each.”

Bradley peered in the additional mirror he had fixed by the side of his sun visor, giving him a better view of what was behind them. “Got them. They wouldn’t happen to be wearing black leather jackets would they?” He laughed.

“How did you guess?” Jacko grinned. “What do you want to do?”

“Leave them for a while. Let them get a bit slack then we’ll make our move.”

“Karl Marx?”

“Yes.”

Bradley didn’t need to look at the map. He had been operating in East Berlin for over a year now. However, he could always find their position on the map, just in case they had problems and needed assistance from the West. Jacko changed down, passing the ‘House of Teachers’, or the ‘Congress Hall’, on their right, the aluminium-coloured dome distinctive, and shortly after turning right into Karl-Marx-Allee. The dual carriageway was a little busier; East Berlin was starting to wake up.

“Still with us?”

“Yep, still two cars, but they’ve swapped the cream Lada for a white one.”

“Looks like they may have a full team on us today then.”

They shot round a roundabout and past the fountain in Strausberger Platz.

“Keep your speed steady, Jacko.”

Jacko looked to his right with a grin. “Are we taking them up the slope then?”

Bradley returned the smile. “Why not? It’s about time we introduced them to this one. They never learn.”

They continued east, passing ugly, grey concrete blocks of flats. The Section referred to them as Lego. The components for the blocks were brought into the city by train, on flatcars. The pre-fabricated sections appeared to be of three types: one blank, one with a window, and one with a doorway. They were then assembled into ugly concrete towers where eventually some fortunate East German would make one of the flats their home.

Karl-Marx turned into Frankfurter Allee as they drove past the Frankfurter Tor.

They crossed the bridge taking them over the S-Bahn railway line which ran north-east to south-west beneath them. They would normally have turned right down Am Tierpark to get to Karlshorst but they needed to shake off their tail first.

So, Jacko turned left into Rhin Strasse, passed the Friedrichsfelde-Ost S-Bahn station, right onto Allee der Kosmonauts, through two long S-bends, forking right down a narrow, hard-packed, dusty road, Elisabeth Strasse, until they came out opposite the Kienberg. The pine mountain, as it was known locally, was in the district of Marzahn-Hellersdorf. Families often went there at weekends or during the school holidays. It was a mere sixty metres high, but it would serve their purpose.

“See them?”

“Just make them out through the dust.” Jacko laughed.

The Range Rover ground to a halt as Jacko expertly applied the dif-lock, locking the front and rear drive shafts together, which would give them better grip for what they were about to do. Foot on the accelerator, the four-litre V8 engine growled and pulled the vehicle forwards, rapidly gaining speed. They crossed the dirt road in front of them, headed straight through the treeline ahead and proceeded to climb at a forty-degree angle up the side of the hill. The jacked-up suspension bounced the cab violently, but gave them better clearance, Jacko gripping the steering wheel tightly for fear of losing control of his charge. The armoured plate beneath, fixed to the underside of the vehicle, ground against the earth and rocks as they passed over them, but it protected the vulnerable chassis from any impact.

“Whose...bloody idea...was...this?”

“If I remember...rightly, Jacko...i...t...was yours.”

Jacko maintained a steady speed, instinct wanting him to slow down, but his training kicking in, and the momentum upwards was maintained. *Crunch*. Both hit their heads on the roof as the Range Rover hit a rut and faltered, but the powerful engine pulled it forward again.

“Shit.”

“Geronimo,” yelled Jacko, enjoying every minute of it.

Bradley clutched the grab handle above him as they weaved around one of the pine trees, crossing tracks that helter-skeltered down from the top. They reached the summit but didn't hesitate as they sped across the crown then careered down the other side. Their bodies shook and their teeth rattled as the vehicle, almost out of control, ran and occasionally surfed down the side of the hill, branches from the trees whipping the sides of the car making both men inside flinch.

Once at the bottom, they clawed their way to a metalled road. The dif-lock was disengaged and, within minutes, they were heading towards their original target.

"That's sorted the buggers." Jacko laughed as he weaved in and out of the traffic.

"Well done, mate." Bradley joined in the laughter. "But I wish I hadn't had such a big breakfast."

They drove through various residential areas, Jacko weaving in and out of traffic, turning down different roads, completing circuits, constantly checking in his rear-view mirror to confirm they had truly lost their tail.

Bradley looked over his shoulder and scanned the cars behind them. "All clear by the looks of it, Jacko."

"For now at least." Jacko heaved a sigh of relief.

They drove past more of the concrete tower blocks that were trying to pass themselves off as flats, and, after about fifteen minutes, found themselves on Langer Weg. Now they they were amongst row upon row of garden plots and summer houses, some simple one-room structures, others more grand with maybe two or three rooms: places where families could escape the hustle and bustle of the city at the weekend, or those retired staying there for a proportion of the summer months.

They were close now, and Jacko slowed down as he turned right onto Balzer Weg, a partially metalled road, but he was glad they were in a four-wheel drive vehicle all the same.

It was still quite early so the road and surrounding area were relatively quiet.

"Take the next left, Jacko."

"Roger." He turned the wheel and the vehicle leant over slightly as he turned into Bahn Weg, the area quite leafy, most of the plants and trees in full bloom.

So, the homes were partly hidden but, more importantly, the two operators were partly hidden from the occupants. They were now travelling south, running parallel with a railway line on their left that ran from north to south. Their target a spur on the far side where the local Russian tank battalion loaded or unloaded their tanks and other equipment if they were going on exercise somewhere outside of the city, or on returning from an exercise.

“Here will do.” Bradley pointed to a gap in the copse that ran alongside hiding the railway line from view, except for the occasional glimpse of the upper embankment. He wound down his passenger window so that he could listen and smell the air as well as look.

Jacko steered off the hard-packed road, and the vehicle disappeared in amongst the trees. The Range Rover snaked through the undergrowth, the occasional low branch of a conifer screeching along the bodywork as they edged closer and closer to the railway line.

“That’s my paintwork buggered,” exclaimed Jacko, proud of the condition he kept his vehicle in.

“Stop moaning. You’ve had worse,” responded Bradley, tapping the dashboard. “This’ll do.”

“Engine on or off?”

“Turn it round so we can make a quick exit; then off.”

Jacko manoeuvred the four-wheel drive until they were facing the way they had entered the copse while Bradley pulled the kit he would need from his bag. He grabbed a pair of binoculars, a pocket tape recorder, Nikon camera and handheld radio, a **Teleport 9**. Jacko switched the engine off and ensured his driver’s door was locked.

“I’ll do a radio check as soon as I’m out.”

“OK.”

Bradley eased the passenger door open and slung the binos and camera over his shoulder, put the recorder in his parka pocket, and eased the door shut with a click. Jacko leant over and closed the window, locking the door after him. Bradley moved away from the vehicle and spoke into his handset in a hushed voice.

"Juliet, Bravo, radio check, over."

"Bravo, Juliet, five and five, over."

"Roger, out."

His driver had informed him that the signal was strong and the clarity perfect. He shivered. Although June, the morning was quite fresh and he was glad of his Bundeswehr, green German Army parka.

Bradley stopped and listened. He could hear a rhythmic clang of metal against metal coming from the direction of the railway line. He knew it was a good sign. He gave the thumbs up, the excited response from Jacko indicating he knew his tour commander had heard something, which could only mean they might get a meaty target today. It also told him to be on his guard as the Soviets would be more alert than usual.

Bradley moved west, making his way through the trees in a half crouch, instinctively keeping his profile as low as possible. He arrived at the edge of the copse, the trees giving way to the railway embankment, some twenty-five metres away, that sloped down towards him. He looked left and right; all was clear, and he jogged over to the embankment scrambling up its shallow sides until he could peer over the top. In front of him were two parallel rail lines and, down in the dip on the other side of the embankment, a thin line of trees. Slowly, he moved across the tracks until he was able to see more and more, conscious that he was also becoming more and more exposed himself the closer he got to the other side. He crouched down, pulled his binos off his shoulder and scanned the area through the trees. Apart from some of the larger trees filling the lens of his binos, he was finally rewarded with a view through the gaps that brought a smile to his face. Tanks!

He quickly ran across the lines, shuffled down the slope on the other side and made his way to the treeline which was only a few paces away. Creeping through the pines, no more than a couple of trees deep, he soon reached the edge on the far side, finding a good-sized trunk to hide behind, next to a small mound covered with a sprinkling of grass and scrub. It was enough to conceal him, he thought.

He leant against the tree. In front of him was a line of heavy-duty flatcars,

some with T-64 tanks still onboard. There were other tanks on the ramp and a few lined up on the track ready to leave the sidings and head for the barracks, less than a quarter of a mile away. The hammering he had heard earlier was the Soviet tank crew releasing the chains so they could offload their main battle tanks.

Bradley grabbed the radio from his pocket. "Juliet, Bravo. Over."

In a matter of seconds, his radio crackled in response. He turned the volume down although he was sure he couldn't be heard.

"Juliet."

"Jackpot, I'll be ten, over."

"Roger, but signal three, three. Out."

The radio went back in Bradley's pocket. The embankment and large amount of metal in the area, from the railway lines, was clearly affecting the signal. There was no need for a long conversation. Jacko was an experienced operator and knew the score. Bradley trusted him. In fact, his life often depended on Jacko's skills and experience. It was only four weeks ago when they had come across a Soviet exercise, and the Soviet soldiers had swarmed around them like flies. They had raced through the wood close by, Jacko's arms a blur as he kept the Range Rover under control, the back wheels sliding in the mud, missing trees by mere millimetres. They had shot out of the wood, climbing up a verge onto a main road where a three-axle Zil 131, a Russian heavy goods vehicle weighing some six and a half tons, accelerated as the military driver caught sight of them. Jacko had pressed his foot to the metal. Sprays of earth and mud splattered the trees behind them as the Rover finally got a grip and careered onto the road, the Zil clipping the rear wing spinning them around, Jacko's arms twisting left and right as he fought to get control. He finally managed to straighten up and headed back into the woods they had just left. It was imperative they escaped as they knew the Soviets would be closing in.

They had finally managed to break out of the area and hide up to lick their wounds. Punctures in two tyres, the back end dented, but they had got away and then burst into nervous laughter. Ever since that day, when Jacko had earned his tour wings, Bradley had felt more confident when they were on operations. He

too had been in a similar situation, driving the Range Rover when being chased, once with three flat tyres. It was a hair-raising experience.

Bradley moved around the trunk and crouched down behind the earthen mound. He pulled himself forward on his elbows and, once comfortable, scanned the area with his binos again. He could now see the spur line, the sidings the Soviets used to load and unload their tanks for shipping out of the city. The tanks were no more than a hundred metres away. He pulled out his pocket recorder, checked there was a fresh tape and it was rewound to the start and switched it on, recording what he could see.

“Kilo Sierra, 0725. Ten T-64As unloading. New to the unit. One sentry, AK74, bayonet fixed, mag on. Patrolling the east side, looking pretty pissed off.”

He zoomed in on the tanks and continued his commentary, his voice sounding more and more excited at having discovered new tanks for this unit.

“Turret numbers: 607, 608, 603, 602, shit!”

He dropped the recorder and clutched his binos with both hands, zooming in on one of the tanks furthest away. He picked up the recorder again.

“Mars-Bars. Three T-64s have Mars-Bars. 613, 615 and 616.”

Binos went down as did the recorder and he pulled the camera off his shoulder. Zooming in with the 300mm lens, he clicked away at the tanks and their turret numbers, partly as a supplementary record but also as part of the intelligence build-up on the Soviet units in East Berlin. He snapped away, two or three shots of each tank, some close-ups of key parts of the main battle tanks, their optics, tracks, main gun and, of course, the Mars-Bars. Further analysis would be done when back at the operations room, and the boffins back at MOD, the Ministry of Defence, would also get copies to pore over. Satisfied he had taken enough pictures for now, at this range anyway, he replaced the lens cap and slung the Nikon back over his shoulder and grabbed the portable radio from his pocket.

“Juliet, Bravo, over.”

The call signs for members of the section were the phonetic first letter of their respective first name.

“*Go ahead, over.*” Jacko’s voice crackled in reply.

“We need to get closer, Jacko. Over.”

“North or south? Over.”

“North, so find us a route. See you in ten, out.”

Bradley secured the radio and picked up his pocket tape recorder again and started to recite. “Tanks being unloaded so probably bound for the local unit. Speed they’re working at should take them a couple of hours. This is a new tank type for the unit, so they are probably unsure of them. Maybe more trains arriving, unless this is just a batch for them to train on. Need to keep a close watch to confirm if any T-54/55s or T-62s are sent out at a later date. Moving to get a closer look.”

He placed the recorder back in his pocket and got back up to a crouching position and made his way into the trees again. The clang of hammers being used by the tank crew to strike the chains and release the tanks continued. He reached the edge of the embankment, checked his surroundings; then, at a running crouch, went up the side and over the top, stepping gingerly over the two sets of railway lines and down the other side. He made his way back to the Range Rover, the steady stream of gases coming from the exhaust indicating that Jacko was ready to move out. Opening the door, Bradley slotted into his seat, peeling the camera and binos off his shoulder and placing them back in the bag by his feet.

“T-64s, Jacko.”

“T-64s?”

“Yes.”

“That’s a new bit of kit for this unit then, isn’t it?”

“Yes, and with Mars-Bars,” Bradley responded excitedly.

“What are those things again?” Jacko asked, remembering being briefed about them some time ago.

“I’ll tell you on the way. We need to move.”

“So, we’re going north to get a closer look, yes?”

“The best place.”

“I’ll take us onto Zweieessler Strasse. Remember it?”

“Sure.”

Chapter 12

EAST BERLIN RAIL RING. 9 MAY 1984.

THE RED EFFECT -2 MONTHS.

Jacko handed his tour commander a mug of coffee and then he settled down on the carpet of grass that covered the edge of the railway embankment. It was Jacko's turn to sleep but he had experienced a painful bout of cramp while trying to catch some shut-eye on the back seat of the Range Rover, hidden below them beneath the bridge. This was their second night out on Operation Bloodhound. They were due to be relieved by their second intelligence unit, Three Zero Alpha, later that morning at 0800. Their remaining unit, Three Zero Charlie, would also be out later that day. Intelligence headquarters were clearly worried about something.

They were covering the railway line that came into Berlin from the north-east. Any incoming traffic could either turn south and continue into the southern part of East Berlin, or head north and continue around the rail ring that would take them west, deeper into East Germany, bypassing the centre of the city. This was the likely route for military trains passing through, heading deep into Germany to transfer military equipment between barracks, or upgrade the equipment assigned to the many divisions of the Group of Soviet Forces Germany (GFSG). The worst-case scenario though was military trains passing through the outskirts of Berlin to reinforce the Russian Army already there, should there ever be a war between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Coming from the east, the train's departure point could have been anywhere in Poland or Russia – the Belorussian Military District, for example.

This was their second night and, after shifts of four hours on, four hours off during the day, two hours on and two hours off during the night, waiting for that elusive military train, they were both tired, overtired. They had, so far, managed to stay out of the clutches of the VOPO (*Volkspolizei*) and the *Ministerium für Staatssicherheit*, Ministry for State Security, MFS, nicknamed the Stasi. The

Range Rover had been hidden amongst some trees down below and they hadn't used this site for some time. The occasional civilian snooped around, but the team had remained hidden until the locals went about their daily business.

They were now tired, but in good spirits. However, they were disappointed they had not seen anything yet and concerned that their sister unit would get all the glory of a sighting. They would see a train before they heard it. The steam locomotives had a single white headlight and they would see it well before they heard the train approaching. Any military load requiring movement via the railway network would be moved by the *Deutsches Reichsbahn* and pulled by one of their pre-war, refurbished steam trains. The *Deutsches Reichsbahn*, formally *Deutsches Reich* (German Empire), was founded when the Weimar Republic took national control of the German railways in 1920.

"Can't sleep, Jacko?"

Jacko turned on his side in the knee high grass, sipping at his coffee, staring up at the expanse of stars twinkling above. "No, Sarge, too tired to sleep and too bloody uncomfortable on the back seat."

"Why don't you kip outside? It's warm enough."

"Bloody bugs all over the place. No sooner do I close my eyes, and I can feel them crawling all over me."

"Use a maggot and put your cam scarf over your face, you plonker," Bradley suggested, referring to their green army sleeping bags. He lifted his binoculars and peered into the darkness seeking out that telltale prick of light that meant a target was finally heading their way. Nothing.

They had been watching and waiting for over eighteen hours and, apart from the regular passage of high speed passenger trains and a few civilian goods trains, they had seen nothing. Not a military train in sight. The Berlin rail ring was a major rail junction, and military traffic had to pass through the outskirts of East Berlin if it was to make a quick passage to the western part of East Germany. The two operators were at a location they called 'Newcastle Bridge', a rail bridge that crossed over a 'B' road near the district of Karow. The rail line ran in from the east, turning south-west into Berlin, passing their current location before heading north-west to track around the north of the city. Although trains

could turn south, generally military trains wanting to head into the centre or to the south of the city would come in from the east further south of the city, running into Friedrichsfelde and Biesdorf; sometimes carrying cargoes of military equipment and troops to the various Soviet units in and around the eastern part of the city. Often, the troop trains would stop over at Pankow, Marzahn or Karlshorst sidings to let the priority passenger trains overtake. The section regularly did a tour of these railway sidings looking for a prize, a fully laden Russian military train.

Bradley suddenly stood up from his kneeling position, Jacko joining him, recognising the signs that something was about to happen. "Well?"

"A single light. It has to be one."

He handed Jacko the binos and he confirmed that he too could see the single white light indicating a potential troop train. "It has to be," he said handing back the binos, his voice excited, the need for sleep forgotten.

They both watched patiently as the light, growing stronger by the minute, crept slowly towards them as it approached the railway junction and the traffic signals. Eventually, they could hear the hiss of the steam engine, the puff of smoke ejected from the black smokestack, and the clanking of the coupling and connecting rods, driven by the steam-powered piston, as they rotated the four large driving wheels. Bradley's plan was to watch the train pass by, enabling him to check the cargo it was hauling. Then they would scramble down the gently sloping bank, climb back into the Range Rover and race to the next junction further along the line where they could confirm its final direction of travel. The silhouette of the black steam locomotive, the clanking of its rods and wheels, the rhythmic ejection of smoke and steam from its stack as it powered the train slowly towards them. The train started to lose way. As it got closer, they could pick out the two distinctive, familiar, bowed, black-plated shields that stood proud, curved around each side of the boiler near the front of the train. A sudden blast of steam and smoke burst from the stack as the engine slowed down to a walking pace, but still creeping towards their location. Towed behind the steam engine, of World War Two vintage, they could just make out a line of flatcars laden with tarpaulin-covered vehicles whose shape looked familiar, yet

unfamiliar, to Bradley as he peered at them, in what little light the moon gave them.

“What are those?” whispered Jacko. “FROG-7s?”

Bradley remained silent, his eyes flickering over the steadily growing line of tarpaulin-sheeted vehicles whose shape grew ever more familiar. “No, they’re not FROGs,” he responded finally. “They’re too big.”

“But look at the spacing.”

The large road wheels could just be seen below the tarpaulin cover.

“Look at the wheels, Jacko. They’re evenly spaced apart. The FROG’s two centremost wheels are closer together.”

The sound from the locomotive steadily increased as it got closer, slowly crawling past them as they ducked down not wanting to be seen by the engine’s driver or the fireman, the smell of smokey hot steam wafting over them. The rhythm slowed down further, becoming more erratic as it came close to stopping completely. Ten metres further on, with an explosion of smoke and steam, it came to a halt, clouds billowing into the early morning air, the clang of the flatcar buffers striking against each other concertinaed down the line as they too came to a complete stop. The noise settled down to a gentle hiss as the locomotive’s crew stoked the fire, keeping the steam pressure up as they waited for the signals to change, giving them permission to continue their journey. Once stopped, likely as a consequence of priority traffic elsewhere on the circuit, they would wait before they either headed straight into the city, which was unlikely, went south, possibly, or turned north. This was the direction the section anticipated this train would go. Bradley scooted towards the flatcar opposite, Jacko remaining behind, keeping watch. Towering above Bradley was a SCUD-B, a ballistic missile and launch system. He looked along the line of flatcars but could see no further than the fourth one. He suspected there would probably be over twenty of them. Eighteen would be carrying the SCUD TELs (Transporter Erector Launcher vehicles); the rest would have either SCUD resupply or supporting vehicles. There was bound to be a goods wagon or two mixed in with the flatcars, carrying accompanying Soviet troops. They certainly didn’t want to get mixed up with them. They would respond aggressively if they saw Bradley

and Jacko examining their precious cargo. Looking back, Bradley held up his right hand and signalled, in a circular motion with his finger pointing upwards, indicating Jacko should move to their vehicle and get it ready for a quick getaway. He continued to move along the line, looking for the plate that would likely be attached to one of the flatcars and where, behind a perforated, sprung-metal grill, he would find the paperwork, the distinctive DR ticket indicating the destination of the load. Bradley smiled to himself: Soviet secrecy overcome by the Deutsches Reichsbahn's efficiency.

Looking up, the foreboding missile launchers towering some five metres above him, the TEL itself over two metres, gave him a sense of awe. The launcher vehicle was nearly fifteen metres in length. Called a 9P117MV, it was based on an improved MAZ-S43 chassis, with an uprated 650hp D12AN-650 engine to power its thirty-five-ton weight. Bradley touched one of the eye-level rear road wheels, capable of taking its cargo on roads or across country at speeds of up to thirty miles per hour. He arrived at the middle of the vehicle where he could just make out the bottom of the door of the combat cabin that dipped down in between the two central road wheels. Behind that door, a crew of two or three would sit at the main console that would control the launch of the missile that was positioned above. Bradley knew there was a crew of seven, but was unsure as to how many of them would actually be at the controls at the time of the launch; some would probably be situated in the shielded cabin upfront. The missile it carried was just under forty feet in length, almost as long as the TEL itself. Powered by the Sayev 1KBkh M9D21, liquid-fuelled rocket engine, it had a range of up to 350 kilometres, a perfect delivery means for a tactical nuclear missile that could potentially be used on a European battlefield. Bradley continued to move forward, slightly nervous now, constantly looking about him for an unseen civilian, the Stasi, engine driver, or one of the escorting soldiers. He also felt a shiver when he contemplated the power of the weapons that were within an arm's reach of him. Never mind the power of the conventional chemical or nuclear warheads it could carry, he knew that the propellant, that would speed the missile to its target at over 1,600 kilometres an hour, consisted of nitric acid, nitrogen tetroxide and kerosene – an extremely volatile mixture in

its own right. Should a war break out between the Warsaw Pact and NATO, and should it turn into a tactical nuclear exchange, these very missiles would most likely be aimed at NATO targets in West Germany.

Bradley jumped as the wagons jerked, the connecting chains between the flatcars rattling, the entire length of the train shuddered as the powerful locomotive at the front snatched them forwards.

“Shit,” he hissed under his breath and immediately focused on the task in hand. The train could move off at any minute now. At the end of the flatcar, he could see the paler colour of the route ticket behind its protective cage and rushed towards it. He lifted the sprung-meshed grid that held the ticket in place and extracted it, stuffed it in his pocket and headed back towards the Range Rover on the other side of the embankment just as the train jerked again as if impatient to be on the move.

Another jerk. This time the wheels of the wagons started to turn as the train slowly gathered pace, moving faster and faster. Bradley got to the top of the bank and watched until he was sure he knew which direction it would take. It took the track that curved to the right, taking its load onto the rail ring, heading north. Now certain, Bradley scrambled down the side of the bank and could just make out the puffs of exhaust from the rear of the Range Rover and hear the engine gently ticking over. Jacko was ready. He made one last scan of the area and jumped into the front passenger seat.

“Let’s go, Jacko. It’s north.”

“London?”

“Yes.”

The Range Rover crept away from ‘Newcastle’, the code name for their present location, and headed for ‘London’, the code name for their next destination. The vehicle steadily gathered speed, no aggressive motoring or lights to advertise their presence. Once they were away from the habited area though, Jacko put his foot down and raced down Pankgrafen Strasse. He weaved the vehicle around the corners of the narrow road, occasionally tilting over if he took one too fast; doing over eighty kilometres an hour at times, and without lights, as he took them north-west, running parallel with the rail ring. Speed was of the

essence if they were to meet up with the train again.

Bradley peered ahead through the windscreen looking for the turning on the left, the narrow, partially hidden lane that would take them south-west where the train might well stop again before continuing its journey north-west; then turning west to head deeper in country.

“There, Jacko!”

Bradley was thrown forwards as Jacko slammed on the brakes before turning violently left, the low-lying branches smacking the Range Rover’s windows as they bounced down the narrow, weaving track. Bradley hit the button of the sunroof and the large hatch whined as it steadily slid back.

“Can’t see a fucking thing,” Jacko moaned.

Bradley climbed up onto his seat and hoisted his head and shoulders through the large cavity, gripping the front edge of the hatch as the vehicle ground and bounced its way along the track, heading towards the railway line that was now directly opposite them. He shouted down through the hatch, “I can hear it. Keep going.”

Smack! A large branch struck Jacko’s window. “Shit, shit, shit.”

“Keep going!” Bradley ducked as a low-hanging branch nearly took his head off, some of the thicker twigs painfully scraping across the top of his head. He was suddenly thrown forwards as Jacko brought the tour car to a violent halt. “Fuck, Jacko!”

“Sorry, it was either that or we’d be sat on the rails in front of the bloody train. Can you hear it still?”

“I might if you’d turn the bloody engine off.”

“Sorry.” Jacko turned the key, and the Range Rover shuddered into silence.

“Nothing.” Bradley slid down into his seat, opened the door and ran towards the railway line that crossed directly in front of them. He stepped onto the tracks and made his way into the centre, in between the two sets of lines. He peered south, looking for the solitary light that would indicate the steam engine was coming towards them. He cursed under his breath. They couldn’t have missed it, surely. He crouched down then lay down next to one of the steel lines, placing his ear flat against its cold surface. He put the palm of his hand over the other ear

and listened. At first, all he could hear was the muffled white noise inside his own head. But then, a deeper rumble was being transmitted down the line: faint at first, but growing steadily louder, the vibrations of the wheels turning on the track, the distinctive *click* as it passed over a joint. It had to be the one. Often it was touch and go. An impatient engine driver might anticipate the lights, keen to keep to his schedule and move slowly ahead, while another may be distracted, chatting to the fireman and not as fast off the mark. But tonight they had struck lucky: it was on its way.

Bradley picked himself up off the rails, suddenly conscious of how vulnerable and exposed he was, concentrating on his target and not his environment. He laughed to himself; struck by a train would be his epitaph. He ran over to Jacko. "It's on its way. You do the count and I'll do the flash."

Then he ran to the Rover and hauled out the a sports holdall, where the camera was, and placed it on the bonnet. Dipping in, he pulled out the Nikon F3, its chunky MD-4 motor drive attached, followed by the Metz flash attachment which he quickly connected. He plugged the lead of the oblong battery pack into the flash, switched it on then slung the battery pack, held by a leather strap, over his neck and shoulder. He was ready. The ASA rating was set for 1600. Although the pictures would be slightly grainy, it was good enough for what they needed tonight: evidence and clarification of their sighting. While Bradley moved up to the railway line to be in position and ready, Jacko turned the vehicle around so it was in the right location, should they need to make a quick getaway, before joining his tour commander.

"Can you see the light yet?"

"Yes. Seems to be nice and slow," responded Bradley, a tremor of excitement in his voice. "Get ready."

Bradley was on Jacko's left, angling himself so he faced the side of the oncoming train, and Jacko was on the right, his pocket memo recorder in his hand ready. Two minutes later, the train crept past them, steadily gathering speed. The flash lit up the area as Bradley took photographs of each piece of equipment as the wagons travelled past them. *Clack...clack. Clack...clack.* The tarpaulin-covered missile launchers looked menacing as they towered above the two

intelligence operators. *Clack...clack. Clack...clack.* The high-pitched whine of the flash recharging could be heard in between the sound of the wheels on the rails, the occasional squeal of tortured metal against tortured metal.

Clack...clack. Clack...clack. “Launcher, launcher, launcher, launcher, resupply, resupply, goods wagon, Zil 131 box body, Gaz 66...” Jacko’s voice could be heard amongst the mishmash of sound as he recorded on the hand-held tape recorder what he was seeing pass by in front of him.

Clack, clack, clack, clack. Phutt, whine, phutt, whine. Bradley took as many photographs as he was able, quickly making his way through the rest of the 72-frame film. Its purpose was not to provide detailed technical photography, but to provide a record and pick up on anything that the two operatives may have missed. All this information would be fed back to their sister intelligence unit in West Germany, a specialist unit highly experienced in imagery analysis – not just ground photography but also images from the air and even satellites. The train sped past faster and faster until the brake car shot past them, and the train slowly dwindled into the distance, disappearing into the darkness.

“How many?”

“I reckon eighteen launchers and half a dozen resupply.”

Bradley didn’t respond.

“Did you get that? Eighteen?”

“Yes, thanks.”

“What’s up?”

“Doesn’t make sense.”

“What doesn’t? Spit it out.”

Bradley rubbed the side of his face. “They’re headed for Magdeburg.”

“How do you know that?”

“The rail ticket.”

“So?”

“Three Shock Army already have a Scud-B Brigade. These belong to a different unit.”

“Could they be for another GSFG unit?”

“I’m not aware of any Scud Brigade from GSFG being out of barracks. I’ll

check when we get back. Come on, let's get out of here."

They headed back to the vehicle, stowed their kit and made their way back to Newcastle where they would continue their watch; perhaps treat themselves to a lukewarm cup of coffee. After remaining alert for the sight of more military trains, at 0745, their stag finally over, they headed back towards Checkpoint Charlie. The replacement tour had contacted them to say they were infiltrating from the south, so they went west, leading any potential tail away from the location.

There comes a time when a simple, spontaneous decision can have significant, unforeseen consequences. Had Bradley known the outcome of his next decision, he would more than likely have headed back home without any detours. They were both weary, having had perhaps two or three hours' sleep between them, rubbing tired eyes as they sped along Alt-Biesdorf, looking forward to passing through Checkpoint Charlie, a quick debrief, then home for the three Ss: shit, shave and shower; a fourth S, if they had the energy for sex afterwards.

"Head for Karlshorst, Jacko."

"What?" Jacko turned to look at his commander in bewilderment. "Why?"

"Just a quick look."

"I knew something was bugging you. Ever since we saw that bloody train."

"Just do it, Jacko," Bradley responded sharply.

Jacko turned off the main route that would have eventually taken them to West Berlin, and headed for the outskirts of the Soviet military camp in Karlshorst. They weaved through the various unnamed roads, lined either side by a patchwork of single- and double-roomed summer homes; somewhere for the wealthier population of this communist capital to escape from their pokey flat in the dull inner city.

"Towards the wall."

"What are you up to?"

"I want to look over the wall."

"What about the other side of the barracks? It's quieter."

"You can see bugger all from there."

A two to three-metre wall surrounded the entire Soviet camp; the camp shape

an uneven rectangle with two of the sides being over a kilometre long. The patchwork wall was a strange sight. Made up of sections of wall taken from German homes after the end of World War Two, it was a mosaic. Some sections had a window frame or doorway bricked up, some were a mishmash of different brick types and colours, and some sections still had bathroom tiles adhered to their surface. On the opposite side of their current position, the wall was partially hidden by a thin screen of trees, but this side was fairly unprotected. There were many cracks in its poor structure, and it was Bradley's intention to walk along the wall peering through those cracks to look for...He didn't know what he was looking for; just something out of the ordinary, something that would satisfy the inkling he had that something wasn't quite right. He leaned down into the foot well and took a smaller auto-focus camera from a small pack he kept there and cracked the door open...

Everything happened in a flash, yet almost appeared to happen in slow motion.

As he pushed the door open, he heard Jacko shout, "Fuck, look out!"

At the same time that Jacko shouted, a white Lada cut across the front of the Range Rover and a second across the back. They were MFS (*Ministerium für Staatssicherheit*), the East German Ministry for State Security. The door was wrenched back sharply on its hinges, pulling Bradley with it. He felt his arms being grabbed along with someone pulling at his jumper, dragging him down as another went to snatch his camera. As he lost his balance and slowly collapsed to the ground, he peered up into the faces of Soviet soldiers, the epaulettes of one identifying him as belonging to a tank unit.

Bradley was dragged along the ground as more and more Russian soldiers joined in the one-sided fray. He struggled frantically to break their grip, desperately trying to push himself back up off the ground. He was off the floor, in a crouch, when a boot swung towards him, striking him in the chest, the crack of his rib audible, a groan escaping his lips as he folded over. As he went down for a second time, wrenching his camera hand free, pulling it underneath him, he caught sight of a different sleeve patch, one that caused his stomach to knot even tighter. The shield-shaped badge didn't have the shape of a tank beneath a star but had the red Russian star, edged with gold, surrounded by a golden laurel

wreath set on a black background with the Russian Cyrillic above it: *КГБ СССР*: the military section of the KGB, the Third Directorate.

Bradley twisted his head so he could see in the direction of the Range Rover and shouted, “Red Rag! Red Rag!”

Jacko, the driver’s door still locked, was about to leave the vehicle and come to his tour commander’s aid when he heard the call. He hesitated for a moment, never thinking he would ever hear that call – but only for a second, knowing they were in serious trouble. He grabbed the **Teleport 9**, unlocked the door and pushed it open, now clear of Soviet soldiers after their failed attempt to get in. The soldiers had a better target, their main victim who they were swarming around. He ran – ran for his life. His boots thumped on the hard-packed road as he sped in between the summer houses. Looking back over his shoulder, he could see that two soldiers had seen him and were now running after him. He increased his speed and lengthened his stride, his lungs burning as he forced air in and out of his lungs. He looked again, but they had given up the chase. He turned left, hurdling a low fence, and ran between two of the garden homes, ran round the back and stopped, bent double, his hands on his trembling knees, breath rasping. He held the radio close to his mouth. “This is Three-Zero-Bravo, any...shit!” He realised it was not turned on. He turned the switch and tried again.

“This is Three-Zero-Bravo, any Three-Zero call sign, over.”

Silence...

“This is Three-Zero-Bravo, any Three-Zero call sign in the Karlshorst area, over.”

He was still panting and bent over again, attempting to gain some control over his still laboured breathing. This short-range radio would not reach Section Intelligence Headquarters. His only hope was that the third unit was in the area.

“Any Three-Zero call sign, over.”

Silence...

“Any fucking Three-Zero call sign in the area? We’re in deep shit here, over.”

His radio finally crackled a response. “*Three-Zero-Bravo, this is Three-Zero-Charlie. With you in figures five. Sitrep, over.*”

The second boot struck Bradley in the stomach making him fold up, pulling his body into a foetal position, desperate to protect the vulnerable parts of his anatomy. He felt a boot striking the side of his head, just above his right eye, making him yelp involuntarily. He pulled his arms and legs in even more tightly, fear now making him retch as the Soviet soldiers continued with their punches and kicks desperately attempting to drag his arms out and get hold of the camera he was protecting beneath him. His biggest fear was not the pummelling he was experiencing, although he was concerned about receiving a major injury, but a fear of being dragged into the Soviet camp, lost to political bargaining. While they fought over his release, he would be at the mercy of the Russian intelligence department. He wasn't sure why he was bothering. The film was blank, a fresh one he had put in earlier in the day. Routine, so they were ready for any troop movement they came across. Bradley always put the used film canisters in a small pull-string bag beneath his seat. It was safe for the moment. He had clocked at least three KGB uniformed troops amongst the throng of motor rifle and tank troops.

A boot struck his thigh, a numbing pain flowing down his leg before it froze, deadened. They clawed at his arms, desperate to pull them free of his body, releasing the camera he had been holding when they had dragged him from the vehicle. He pulled it in even tighter as another boot struck his chest, the pain unbearable as the boot rode up his broken rib, causing Bradley to move his free hand to the new source of pain. This was the opening the dozen or so attackers had been waiting for. Getting a better grip on his arms, they yanked them out, jolting his right shoulder painfully. They clawed at the camera, eventually pulling it free with a cry of victory, and the babble of guttural voices increased. Looking into their leering faces, the occasional gold-cap toothed smile, Bradley could see other military onlookers. He couldn't estimate the numbers at the time, but he would learn later that up to twenty Soviet soldiers, including a number of KGB, had been involved in the assault.

Suddenly, the surrounding troops moved apart. Jacko with his skinny frame found the strength to thrust them aside. A Soviet officer was seen sidling away, heading in the direction of the Soviet camp.

“Fuck. You OK?” Jacko reached down to help Bradley up.

“Yes, but they got the camera.”

“I know. I saw them ripping the film out. No good to them though.” Jacko smiled. “I saw you change the film.” He steadied Bradley, pulling his arm over his shoulder as he could see he was unsteady on his feet.

“How about the Rover?”

“It’s fine. The Sovs didn’t bother with it. They were more interested in you. God, you’ll have a nice shiner on your left eye tomorrow.”

Bradley looked about him and could see a second Range Rover parked behind the white Lada and a Gaz-66 behind that. He suddenly crumpled and groaned.

“You OK? Stupid question, I know.”

“Just hurts like hell.”

As Jacko helped Bradley who was still unsteady on his feet, his body shaking, shock setting in, towards the second Range Rover, they saw the red beret of a Royal Military Police officer and an accompanying interpreter.

“Thank God,” uttered Bradley. “Thank God.”