

The Osenberg List
an original TV Pilot
by
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TEASER

EXT. THURINGIA FOREST, GERMANY -- EVENING

CG: 500km from the German-Polish Border, May 1941

GERMAN SOLDIERS march fiercely across freshly fallen snow.

In the center of the formation - a group of SOVIET SOLDIERS.

As they rise over a ridge, one of the Germans STUMBLES and vanishes into the trees.

He POPS BACK UP, in formation -- but a little **shorter**?

He leans just so slightly towards one of the Soviets --

Whispers in unaccented Russian.

ROTHSCHILD

Vasily Makhnjov?

The Soviet soldier glances over.

His EYES widen with surprise.

MAKHNJOV

An American?

JEREMY ROTHSCCHILD, 30's, barely tips the front of his cap.

His bright, excessively attentive eyes take in everything.

He is, in fact, an American, but as we'll later learn, a third generation Jewish German immigrant.

ROTHSCHILD

Eyes forward. I was sent to rescue you.

General Vasily MAKHNJOV, 40's snaps his head back, chomping on a cigar.

He pins his steely glare forward, his jawline broken by a monstrous MOUSTACHE that seems to wrap around his whole face.

MAKHNJOV

Rescue? No rescue is needed. Our German friends are escorting us to inspect a closed POW camp. Nothing more.

He RAISES his hand to signal--

Rothschild swats it down.

ROTHSCHILD

The Oberstleutnant lied to you. Hitler intends to break your treaty. When he does so, you and your men will become the example.

MAKHNJOV

Example of what?

ROTHSCHILD

The power of the Reich. He will prove he does not fear Stalin by executing a Soviet General as his troops storm the Ukrainian border.

MAKHNJOV

You will save all of us?

ROTHSCHILD

No. I was sent only for you. I will create a distraction. Everyone will scatter. They will be on their own.

MAKHNJOV

On their own? Several hundred kilometers from home in this weather? They will more likely die than make their way back.

ROTHSCHILD

They're going to die anyway, Comrade. At least this gives them a fighting chance.

MAKHNJOV

No.

ROTHSCHILD

What?

MAKHNJOV

I said no.

He spits out the cigar and calls out in broken German.

MAKHNJOV (CONT'D)

Kommandant! Infiltrated you are!
This man is an American spy!

KOMMANDANT

Halt!

The whole group stops marching.

The German KOMMANDANT (40's, blonde) jogs over.

Rothschild begins speaking in flawless German.

ROTHSCHILD

What are you talking about? We are going to see the prisoners in Castle Spangenberg. Now march!

KOMMANDANT

What is the problem here?

MAKHNJOV

This man, he is a spy!

KOMMANDANT

Quiet, General!

The Kommandant looks at Rothschild.

He turns, surveys the other men -- doing mental calculations.

Then swings back, examines Rothschild CLOSER.

KOMMANDANT (CONT'D)

You are not Sergeant Biemiller!

He raises his RIFLE towards Rothschild --

BUT

Rothschild whips out his PISTOL and shoots him in the HEAD.

Everything starts to move in slow motion -- as both missions go to shit.

Rothschild tries to grab Makhnjov's arm and pull him away --

Makhnjov KICKS Rothschild --

Sending him sliding several feet into an embankment of snow.

The other German soldiers snap into action as it finally occurs to them what's going on.

In the confusion, three of the Soviets are shot, along with a couple of Germans.

Makhnjov and half of his group quickly disappear into the lengthening shadows.

From the edge of the treeline, Rothschild watches the Germans form up around the remaining Soviets and begin marching again.

He pulls out a Signal Corps PORTABLE RADIO PHONE.

He cranks it -- again -- and again -- No signal.

He yanks it out of the bag to find a BULLET HOLE clean through the top.

Through it he can see the soldiers marching away.

He pulls a COMPASS out of his pocket.

Orients himself to the Southeast.

A SNOWFLAKE hits the glass and MELTS.

He tucks the compass back in his pocket.

Then looks up to see snow SWARMING down on him.

ROTHSCHILD

Scheisst!

It's gonna be a long walk to the coast.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

INT. ROTHSCHILD TOWNHOUSE -- EVENING

CG: New York City, April 1945

The sounds of a lively DINNER PARTY in full swing. Two dozen family members and friends chat and laugh.

A swinging door opens into the room as

ZELDA, mid 20's, a smartly dressed, slightly younger vision of Hedy Lamarr --

Spins with a casserole dish, loaded with beef brisket.

She sets it down in the middle of the LARGE DINNER TABLE, set for the Passover seder.

The gaggle of women in their mid to late-20's sitting around it ooh and aah appropriately.

Zelda's sister CAROLE (30) leans across the table and straightens the five silver stemmed wine goblets.

CAROLE

That smells wonderful, Zelda!

In the background, several young children play, including DAVID, 6, whip-smart and overly clever for his age.

DAVID

When I grow up, I'm going to go to space like Buck Rogers.

SARAI, 7, corrects him.

SARAI

Buck Rogers isn't real.

DAVID

I know **he** isn't real. But he's the closest thing to an astro-naut, which is what I want to be.

MOISHE, 5, drops his Lincoln Logs and looks at David.

MOISHE

What's an astronaut?

DAVID

Someone who goes to space!

MOISHE

Well, then I want to be an astronaut!

DAVID
I said it first.

ZELDA
Hush, boys, you can both be astronauts
someday.

SARAI
What about me?

CAROLE
Don't count on it, Sarai. We barely
got the right to vote. They aren't
about to send women into space. Unless
they need something dusted.

ZELDA
Star dusted?

The ladies all share a laugh.

ROTHSCHILD (O.S.)
It's not so crazy that a woman could
go into space. They're already joining
the military.

The ladies turn to see Rothschild, looking a bit older and
much more tired than he should after three years of
retirement, step out of his office.

It takes a moment for them to realize he's serious.

CAROLE
Those crazy WAC's and WAVES? We
wouldn't need them if more men did
their duty.

ESTHER
Yes, one wonders what **some men** are
thinking, sitting at home while the
world is at war.

Zelda jumps in quickly.

ZELDA
Not everyone serves the same way.
Helping out the war effort from home
is important too.

Carole snorts.

Zelda shoots her a look, then smiles warmly.

ZELDA (CONT'D)

It's just a blessing having Jeremy
home for Pesach.

David grabs a small blue tin box off an end table and holds
it up to Rothschild.

DAVID

We went around the building today.
Almost ten-dollars for the Holy Land!

ROTHSCHILD

Good job, Champ!

MOISHE

I helped!

SARAI

No, you didn't.

ZELDA

Everyone please take your seats.

They all move to the appropriate spots, and Moishe pipes up

MOISHE

Why is tonight different from all
other nights?

David grins and recites:

DAVID

The wolf will dwell with the lamb;
the leopard will lie down with a
young goat.

ESTHER

Very good, boys!

Rothschild nods and everyone bows their head. He prays
silently, then:

ROTHSCHILD

Rayach Nichoach

They all echo him, sip some wine, then begin passing food.

Rothschild spoons some brisket onto his plate.

SARAI (O.S.)

Are you lily-livered, Mr. Rothschild?

His eyes drill Carole, then slowly turn to where Sarai sits.

ROTHSCHILD

Where did you hear that from?

SARAI

My mom says that's why you stay home while everyone else's daddies have go to war. And you're a fil-an-der-er.

DAVID

You take that back!

ZELDA

Children, eat your dinner. Jeremy--

But he's no longer there.

INT. ROTHSCCHILD TOWNHOUSE -- MASTER BEDROOM -- LATER

Zelda pulls pillows off the king size 4-poster bed that dominates the room.

Jeremy stomps into the room, toothbrush clenched in his hand.

ROTHSCHILD

You know, I don't need you to defend me.

She keeps working. They've had this argument before.

ZELDA

Careful you don't drip.

He shoves the toothbrush into his mouth, scrubs furiously.

He storms back into the bathroom, spits, then returns.

ROTHSCHILD

It's not my fault they made me retire. You know I'd go back if I could.

ZELDA

It's nice having you around the house to help out.

ROTHSCHILD

Damnit, woman, you're no--

He's interrupted by the phone ringing in the next room.

ZELDA

Who could that be at this hour?

ROTHSCHILD

Nothing good, I'm sure.

He strides out of the room.

INT. ROTHSCHILD TOWNHOUSE -- HOME OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Rothschild walks up to his desk and snatches the phone receiver out of its cradle.

WILD BILL DONOVAN (O.S.)
Rothschild! How are you, young man?

The man's bombastic voice leaks through the receiver.

ROTHSCHILD
General Donovan?

Behind him, Zelda comes in and watches with interest.

WILD BILL DONOVAN (O.S.)
I thought I told you to call me Bill, son. How are things stateside? You all rested up?

ROTHSCHILD
Rested up? Do you know what time...

WILD BILL DONOVAN (O.S.)
It's time you were back in the field. I'm not gonna mince words. There's a mission. German-Austrian border. The brass wasn't sure, but I told 'em there wasn't anyone better qualified, nobody knows that area like you do.

ROTHSCHILD
Remind me again, WHY I know that area so well...

WILD BILL DONOVAN (O.S.)
Water under the bridge, son.

ROTHSCHILD
Maybe for you, but--

He spots Zelda standing behind him.

ROTHSCHILD (CONT'D)
I have a wife and son, sir.

WILD BILL DONOVAN (O.S.)
So do a lot of men, son.

Rothschild covers the phone receiver with his hand, quietly:

ROTHSCHILD
How can I trust you, after...