SPEAR OF DESTINY

 U.S. Army Major Warren Philips was surprised when he was summoned to the White House by President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

 Presenting himself at the East Entrance Gate, the Major was saluted and escorted by a security sentry to a waiting room for his 10:00 a.m. appointment. It was a cloudy and chilly Friday morning on November 15, 1940.

 At the hour, the secretary in the waiting room --Marguerite 'Missy' LeHand -- told Philips that "The Boss" was ready to see him. Warren entered the Oval Office. It was his first visit there, and his first time seeing FDR in person.

 "Warren, nice to see you!" the President boomed, the voice familiar to his guest from those many 'fireside chat' radio speeches. He was seated behind the executive Hoover Desk. The Major noted that FDR was not sitting in a wheelchair. One would never suspect that this impressive man had been crippled by polio. Roosevelt extended his hand in welcome, but did not rise in the greeting. The men formally shook hands.

 "Thank you, Mr. President. I am very honored to meet you. And congratulations on winning an unprecedented third term."

 "Well, we really gave Wilkie a shell-lacking at the ballot box, didn't we! May I offer you some coffee or tea?" FDR took a Camel cigarette from a pack on the desk and lit it. His customary cigarette holder was also on the desk, but the President didn't use it. He caught the Major's eye looking at it. "I only use that holder as a prop for public appearances. Makes me look jaunty and optimistic, so they tell me. That's off the record, of course." FDR smiled his famous, winning smile. "As is everything we will be discussing together this morning," he added, with a more serious expression.

 "I understand, Mr. President. And I'll skip the coffee if you don't mind, thank you." Philips also passed on an offer of a cigarette or a cigar, being a non-smoker.

 Roosevelt then removed his pince-nez from the bridge of his nose and briefly rubbed his eyes with his fingers. "Didn't get much sleep last night, Warren. A lot on my plate, you can imagine. France fallen to the Nazis. Churchill admitting that England is almost broke, and will soon no longer to able to pay us for our 'cash and carry' war material agreement. We have to figure out another way to help his country without the United States entering the war directly, or Europe will be in even more dire danger."

 Major Philips listened with rapt attention to his Commander-in-Chief. He realized that this meeting was an eyewitness glimpse of history in the making.

 "Meanwhile at home," the President continued, "we have Charles Lindbergh going around the country making non-intervention pleas to large rallies, like that one last August at Soldier Field in Chicago. He is subtly accusing Britain, the Jews, and even me of pushing our nation into the European conflict. It causes me another huge problem at the very time we need our country united for whatever lies ahead." FDR sighed, and reached for another Camel, having finished the earlier one.

 "Well, Major, let's get down to business. You are probably wondering why I summoned you here. I see by looking at your service file that you live in Falls Church and are happily married with two young sons. You are a West Point graduate, and you have an advanced degree in military history. You also taught a few semesters at the university level in comparative religions at Princeton prior to your enlisting in the Army. Now specifically, Warren, I need to know a lot more about Adolf Hitler -- his inner personality, any unusual habits he has, his secret aspirations. He is obviously a very dangerous man, but can he be reasoned with, or is he an insane megalomaniac, as some claim? We may need to fight the Nazis someday soon, Warren, and I want to know as much as I can about their leader, this so-called Fuhrer. For example, it has come to my attention that the man is fascinated -- and is indeed obsessed -- with the bizarre subject of the Occult. Black Magic, Dark spells and rituals, Aryan prophecies, Satanic cults...you know, that sort of thing. For example, Warren, have you ever heard of the 'Spear of Longinus,'?" FDR's blue eyes bore into Warren's.

 "Yes, Mr. President. As a matter of fact, I have. Longinus was the Roman centurion who pierced the side of Christ with a lance when Jesus was nailed on the cross during the Crucifixion, so as to prove that the Lord was dead. It was also said that Longinus suffered from a serious eye infection at this time, which was slowly rendering him blind. But when some of the blood and water from Christ's fresh side wound splashed into the centurion's eyes, the man was instantly cured, according to legend. He then exclaimed, "Truly, this man was the Son of God!" according to the Gospel of Mark. Longinus soon left the military and became a monk. He was later martyred for his faith and was ultimately named a saint. This Holy Lance was also known as the Spear of Longinus, or the Spear of Destiny."

 "Why was it also called the Spear of Destiny?" Roosevelt wanted to know.

 "Because anyone who possessed it could control the destiny of the world -- for good or for evil. But once the Spear left one's possession, that person would soon die -- because all of its special powers vanished. After Longinus, the Spear passed down through several owners, until the early 4th century, when Constantine the Great acquired it. You may recall that it was he who decreed Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire. After him, the Holy Lance passed through the hands of many famous men of history, such as Emperor Theodosius, Alaric the Goth, and Charles 'The Hammer' Martel. Charlemagne carried it into battle through forty-seven successive victories, and even slept with it by his bedside. But he accidentally dropped it one day and died soon afterward. Likewise, Frederick Barbarossa died within minutes after he accidently dropped it while crossing a stream during a military campaign. The House of the Hapsburgs then acquired the rare holy relic. Napoleon attempted to obtain the Spear of Destiny after the Battle of Austerlitz, but it was smuggled out of Vienna to safety. By 1912, however, the Spear became an official part of the Imperial Treasure collection in the Hofburg Museum, back in the Austrian capitol. It has rested there ever since. That's about all I can remember, sir."

 "Looks like I chose the right man for the job," FDR remarked, highly pleased. "Very impressive bits of information you just shared with me, Major. I have a very important, top secret mission for you. You will leave tonight from New York on the Pan Am Dixie Clipper and fly to Lisbon. Our embassy in neutral Portugal has a defector from Hitler's inner circle, a certain Colonel, or Oberst, named Bruno Vogel. He bravely and wisely escaped the Nazis and fled to Switzerland, where he was granted asylum at our embassy there and later transferred to Lisbon. Preliminary intelligence reports say that Vogel was an eyewitness to Hitler stealing the Spear of Destiny two years ago. If this is true, I need you to find out the whole story, then report back to me via coded diplomatic cable."

 "My secretary will telephone your wife -- Madeline, isn't it? -- to explain your abrupt absence, Warren. Don't worry; you'll be back home with your family in time for Thanksgiving. Missy also has your airplane tickets from here to New York and beyond, and a pre-packed suitcase with clothes and toiletries ready for you by her desk. A car is waiting outside to take you to National Airport. Here is the Vogel file," the President offered the top secret folder to Philips. "Study up on him on your trip over the Atlantic. The weather will be more pleasant in Lisbon, I suspect. That's all for now. Good luck, Major Philips." The President reached over again, and the men warmly shook hands. At that, the meeting was concluded, just as another official appointee entered the Oval Office with a small pile of documents.

 Warren's Pan Am (a Boeing 314 'flying boat') Dixie Clipper flight was quite comfortable, and included a refueling stop at Horta in the Azores. Along with twenty-one other deluxe passengers, the 27-hour trip provided gourmet meals, and featured seats which were converted into individual sleeping berths at night. Upon arrival at the U.S. Embassy in Lisbon in the afternoon, the Major was taken by Ambassador Herbert Pell to a secure private bedroom, where he was cordially introduced to Oberst Bruno Vogel, who fortunately spoke English. The two uniformed men saluted each other, then shook hands.

 "At last we meet, Major Philips," Bruno began, smiling. "Like you, I am educated in both military history and religion. A somewhat odd pairing, don't you agree? First, you must know that I am a loyal German who reveres the Fatherland, as did my ancestors. But when I saw the sheer evil that the National Socialist Party was doing to my country, I had to flee. Herr Hitler is an abomination to the German race -- in fact, he is a scourge on the whole human race. He must be stopped at all costs."

 As Warren had learned from the President's file on Oberst Vogel, the man was age thirty-six, unmarried, and hailed from Mainz. He had at one time considered entering the priesthood, but instead wound up in the military for need of a job during the Great Depression. He was of average height and build, with short-clipped salt & pepper hair. He had a neatly trimmed mustache and wore wire-framed eyeglasses. His clear grey eyes appeared both learned and compassionate.

 "What can you tell me about Herr Hitler and the Spear of Destiny"? Philips asked.

 "Sadly, he has indeed stolen the holy relic, and it lies under his dark control now. I was with him as a historical and religious advisor when he entered the Hofburg Museum Treasure Collection Room in Vienna after Austria was annexed to Germany on March 14, 1938. He told me how he had seen the Spear once before as a boy on a school field trip. Der Fuhrer told me how its power drew him in like a magnet, and how it silently spoke to him as he gazed at it, awestruck. He confessed to me of sensing at that very moment that one day he would actually possess it, and with it, be able to rule the world. With me beside him explaining all the famous rulers who had once owned it, he ordered the display case opened. Hitler then held the Spear of Destiny to his breast and sighed -- murmuring some strange phrases I couldn't hear -- before replacing it in its case. Seven months later, on October 13, he ordered the Spear and the entire Hapsburg Treasury to be loaded onto an armored train and transported to St. Catherine's Church in Nuremburg."

 "And you feel certain that Hitler means to do evil with this holy talisman?" the Major wondered.

 "Without a doubt, my friend. Absolutely! Just before Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, I was with Hitler in that same church in Nuremburg. He asked the priest for a private room to use and ordered that the Spear be brought to him. As you know, the Spear of Destiny can be used for either good or evil. A good ruler or leader will reverently pray and kneel to God while clutching it at a consecrated church altar, for example. The Sacred Lance will be anointed with holy water, or offered respect and blessing with holy incense. But an evil ruler will spit on it, plunge it into a chalice filled with urine, or curse it. He will pledge his soul not to God but instead to the Dark One -- Satan -- in return for total power and domination of his will over any and all enemies. With my own eyes and ears, Warren, I briefly saw and heard Adolf Hitler curse Jesus Christ and spit on the Spear, and surrender his total allegiance to Lucifer himself, the Prince of Darkness. Then I was abruptly hurried out of the room by two SS security guards, so that the Fuhrer could be alone to further invoke still more horrid incantations. At that instant, I knew I had to flee Germany and warn the world of this demonic monster. I carefully planned my escape to Switzerland over the following months. I am hoping now for political asylum and eventual citizenship from your Government, and I fervently wish to emigrate to America as soon as possible."

 Major Philips was stunned upon hearing Bruno's story. He sincerely thanked the German Colonel, then walked out of the embassy to seriously think and clear his head. He later found a quiet restaurant for dinner alone, having turned down a formal invitation to dine with Ambassador Pell. After a fitful night's sleep, Warren wrote up his promised report for President Roosevelt the following morning after breakfast, and had it diplomatically coded and cabled to Washington. After two more days in Portugal with two more enlightening visits with Bruno Vogel, the Major flew home and returned to his family in Falls Church, Virginia in time for the Thanksgiving holiday. Philips had learned more from Vogel about bizarre Satanic rituals within Hitler's inner circle of Nazi fanatics, as well as in the SS corps under the sinister Joseph Goebbels. He had likewise forwarded this extra information in code to the President.

 Meanwhile, the war in Europe was dangerously escalating. On December 30, FDR announced his 'Lend-Lease' plan for getting sorely needed war equipment and supplies to a still struggling England. The German Luftwaffe had been massively bombing London and other strategic British cities since September 7, and this devastating 'blitz' was continuing without letup. Roosevelt did the best he could to help Churchill and England survive, while still keeping the U.S. technically neutral. It was a hard balancing act.

 In May, 1941, Bruno Vogel was granted special American citizenship by the President, and emigrated to a suburb of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where he had several distant family relatives. Meanwhile, Major Philips had been assigned as his war duties to the Army Intelligence Services in Washington. Warren regularly telephoned Bruno to see how he was doing.

 On June 22, Hitler invaded western Russia in a savage, surprise attack called "Operation Barbarossa." Over three million German troops, 150 Divisions, and 3000 tanks smashed across the frontier into Soviet territory, cruelly negating a neutrality pact that Hitler had previously made with Premier Joseph Stalin. But the attack -- which ended in retreat on December 5 -- was a disaster, as the fierce Soviet defending forces and the harsh winter conditions of Russia killed more than 830,000 Germans. The invasion would later be judged as Hitler's greatest mistake, wrongly splitting his forces onto two fronts.

 On December 7, 1941, in a surprise attack, the Japanese bombed the U.S. Naval bases at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. America was now at war with both Japan and her deadly ally, Germany. World War Two was in total engagement. The United States, Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union quickly became allies.

 The D-Day invasion at the beaches of Normandy in France on June 6, 1944 marked the beginning of the rapid reversal of the spread of Nazism across Europe. The tables had turned! Meanwhile, Major Philips was receiving horrific secret intelligence dispatches detailing the systematic, mass-extermination of the Jews by the murderous Nazi regime.

 In October, 1944, Adolf Hitler ordered the Spear of Destiny removed from its secret storage at St. Catherine's Church in Nuremburg and placed in a specially constructed underground vault to protect it from heavy Allied bombing. By now, the war was dramatically favoring the Allies.

 Franklin Roosevelt -- either by faith or superstition -- kept the concept of the possession of the Spear of Destiny in the back of his mind all throughout the war. When it appeared that final victory in Europe was in sight, he ordered U.S. General George S. Patton to find and capture the holy relic. But FDR would never savor the American triumph. Shockingly, on April 12 in Warm Springs, Georgia, the President died of a massive cerebral hemorrhage. Vice-president Harry S. Truman was immediately sworn in.

 On April 30, 1945, at 2:10 p.m., advancing American forces under Patton finally took possession of the vault and its historic Spear. Eighty minutes later, Adolf Hitler committed suicide in his bunker in Berlin. Germany surrendered unconditionally on May 7.

 The power of Good, once again, overcame the power of Evil. Western Civilization was saved...

 The Spear of Destiny was returned by the American Army to the Hofburg Museum soon afterward.

 Back in the United States -- after Japan surrendered in August, 1945 following the dropping of two American atomic bombs -- Warren Philips and Bruno Vogel continued what had become an abiding friendship over the years that lasted until their deaths -- just months apart -- in 1991.

 But life is always filled with surprises, is it not?

 When the Spear of Destiny was privately examined by scientific experts in 2012 -- on the 100th anniversary of its acquisition by the Hofburg Museum -- it was discovered to be a clever fake, its metal being carbon-dated to only the 7th century rather than to the 1st, among other subtle flaws. The results were kept secret and sealed. The counterfeit Spear of Destiny rests there today for all to behold, the numerous annual visitors to the Hofburg unaware of the truth.

 So history has left us with a mysterious dilemma: When was the fake made and substituted, and by whom? Where is the real Holy Lance now, and exactly who possesses its formidable powers? And finally, is it being used for good, or is it being wielded for evil?

 THE END

 by Jack Karolewski

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