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Downfall

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INSANITY FAIR
DISGRACE ABOUNDING
NEMESIS ?
A PROPHET AT HOME
ALL OUR TOMORROWS

Downfall

A Play in Three Acts

by

Douglas Reed



Jonathan Cape
Thirty Bedford Square, London

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DOUGLAS REED

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

HISTORY is more interesting before it happens than after. This play portrays a piece of history of the fairly near future- the departure from the stage of world affairs "of one Adolf Hitler, who to-day is Fuehrer and Chancellor of the German Reich, Supreme Commander of the German lighting forces, and the like more, if that is not enough.

A play, written after the event, that showed Napoleon's capture, voyage on the *Bellerophon* to England, and subsequent exile in Saint Helena, would have been of limited interest, though it could have been made correct in detail to the last shako. A play, written before the event, which depicted in broadly accurate outline that stupendous event, 'would have been of much greater interest.

That Adolf Hitler *will* depart, is now certain. How, then, To make a play about his departure? There are three incalculable possibilities, three pranks which destiny might play, that have to be left out of the reckoning in any attempt to portray the shape oi things to come, because they are aside from the logic of events, these are, that he might be killed by a bomb, or in an accident, or die a natural death. Each would be an anti-climax.

For the purpose of a play, then, these possibilities must be ignored. The choice lies between several other ways in which his departure might happen. He might be assassinated; I have discarded this possibility because he is well guarded. He might commit suicide; I have rejected this one because he has so often threatened suicide. He might be killed fighting at the head of his armies; I think this the least likely alternative of all, because the men in all countries who proclaim the glory of war and the beauty of death on the battlefield always take great pains to avoid this end.

What remains? He might be handed over by the Germans to their adversaries for trial and punishment; this is

conceivable, especially if the forces in Germany which he has suppressed should suddenly erupt (in which case assassination also becomes a possibility), but I think it less likely, because I know Germany.

The probability I choose is that he will be removed from power, and caused to disappear, before any negotiations are begun with Germany's enemies - *in order that Jus surrender may not be made a condition of opening such negotiations*. If he were to resist, he might then be killed, but I think the people who will bring about his removal would only do this in the last extremity, and if they were left no other choice whatever. They might *announce* that he was dead (as he himself announced for his own ends, that Hess was mad at first but I think they will exhaust every device of ingenuity, while casting him from the fold and proclaiming to the world that he was 'the guilty man', to keep him safe and alive, even in hiding.

This is an attempt to build a plausible play round such an event, to look behind the curtain that conceals from us something which has begun to happen *now*, as I write, and as - I hope - you read. There is no fun, to my mind, in trying to read the future from the stars, though this engrosses some; but it is absorbing to try and project your imagination behind the German outer scene, and watch what is happening while it happens. So I have tried to trace, in the form of a play, from its beginning to its end, the process which will end in Hitler's downfall, a process of intrigue and counter-intrigue, treachery and counter-treachery, crossing and double-crossing, move and counter-move, between this man and others who are at first but dimly seen, gradually emerge, and then stand clearly defined in the full glare of the spotlight at the peak of the crisis, while the shadows creep forward to claim him, who so long monopolized it.

It is a fanciful sketch of the future, not a photograph of it. It does not aim at photographic accuracy of detail. I have taken liberties with the Reich Chancery, for in reality the window of the dining-room there is not the window

from which Hitler acknowledged the acclamation of the Storm Troopers on January 30th 1935 I have shifted a window for the sake of the play. None of us know where Hitler has his headquarters, unless our Military Intelligence knows, and I never heard even a rumour that he set it up in the East Prussian mansion of the Hindenburgs; but I know no reason why he should not, and it makes the perfect background for the early moves (or 'intrigues', as Hitler will call them) of the traditional power-groups, to oust him. I do not suppose Field-Marshal von Keitel will be the man who will break to Hitler the news of his dismissal⁵ but I have chosen him for the part because he belongs to the group and class of men who well may play it. Hitler could not talk with an English prisoner, unless he has learned English during the war, but I saw no need to introduce the wooden figure of an interpreter; any who wish may imagine one there.

In short, this play attempts to show how an event *may* happen which, unimportant though it will prove to have been to-morrow, engages all our thoughts to-day. Possibly the event, when it happens, may happen in rather this way; or it may not. This is a *play*, but one built upon anticipation as intelligent as I could make it.

June-October, 1942

THE CHARACTERS

| | |
|----------------|------------------------------|
| HITLER | FIELD-MARSHAL VON KEIJEL |
| GOEBBELS | COLONEL OSKAR VON HINDENBURG |
| MAGDA GOEBBELS | A BRITISH AIRMAN |
| GÖRING | AN AMERICAN AIRMAN |
| EMMY GORING | SCHACHT |
| HIMMLER | VÖGLER |
| MARTHA HIMMLER | KRUPP |
| LEY | PRINCE AUGUST WILHELM |
| GERDA LEY | MANSERVANTS |
| MEISSNER | A MAIDSERVANT |

ACT I

Time: A period of the future which will soon be the present.

Scene: There is a dinner party at the Reich Chancery in Berlin. The stage is divided into two parts. On the right, the greater part, is Hitler's dining-room, with the table laid for guests. At the back, a large window between portraits of Bismarck and Frederick the Great. On the left, the smaller part, divided from the dining-room by a wall and door, is an ante-room in which Hitler's guests assemble, led in as they arrive by a uniformed servant. Throughout this scene the action develops, sometimes in the dining-room, sometimes in the ante-room, sometimes in both together. At some moments the action in the one room 'stops' while it continues in the other; that is, the players freeze in their attitudes and hold them until released. At one point, all the players in the dining-room freeze in their poses, one after another of the group, however, continuing to move and speak; this is done to enable the spoken utterance of thoughts, for the benefit of the audience, which on such an occasion would not be revealed, but would be kept strictly private. This seems the best way to suggest, on a stage, what these people are thinking, as distinct from what they say — or do not say. In olden times, the unconvincing and jarring device of the "aside" would have been used.

(When the curtain rises, GOEBBELS, standing, in Nazi uniform, talks to MAGDA GOEBBELS, who is seated. She is well-gowned, forty-ish, rather taller than he when she stands up. She has a peevish and dissatisfied air, and the ill-concealed distaste for him of a woman whose husband has been involved in a public scandal about an actress. As they talk, two uniformed servants, in the dining-room, put the finishing touches to the table, one of them laying place-cards. The conversation in the ante-room is acrimonious)

GOEBBELS Magda, if you wish to make a scene, at least wait until we are at home. Must you choose the Fuehrer's own house for a display of nerves? He will be here at any moment. Are you mad?

MAGDA Ach, I'm sick of your eternal ranting about the Fuehrer. Are you man or mouse? I wonder how some of you would behave if he were no longer Fuehrer'

GOEBBELS (*terrified, looks quickly behind him*) Magda, for heaven's sake be quiet! If you don't care about me, or even about yourself, at least think of the children.

MAGDA (*coldly*) You should think of the children. If you are so anxious about them, I'd advise you to make arrangements to get us all out of the country. Thanks to you, they wouldn't have many friends here if National Socialism should collapse.

GOEBBELS Collapse! You *are* mad¹ National Socialism is only at the beginning of its reign. Nothing can shake our National Socialist Reich. In a thousand years it will still rule Europe.

MAGDA Are those the only words you know? Must you waste these words even on me, your wife? / am not the Sportpalast.

GOEBBELS (*loudly, as the GORINGS enter*) Ach, it is good to be here in the Fuehrer's house again, after so long. What glorious times we have had at his table.

(GORING is blustering and jovial, and wears the white uniform of Air Marshal. EMMY GORING is all smiles and gushes. Both are very large. From the moment of their entry an atmosphere of great heartiness and jollity pervades the scene; but the vehemence of it suggests underlying anxieties and restraints among all these people. The two men bow, click heels, and kiss the women's hands.

During the following exchanges, HITLER, alone, enters the dining-room from a door, right. The two servants spring to attention. He walks slowly round the table, studying the place-cards. At the end of the table,

facing his Own seat, he picks up a card, studies it for a long moment, then with a violent gesture tears it in half and throws the pieces on the ground)

EMMY Magda, my dear! You look tired. Are you well?

MAGDA (*deliberately*) No, I'm not well, and I *am* tired. I'm tired of the war, tired of the black-out, and tired of the pretence that everything is going well, that we shall soon gain victory. I don't believe it any more. I don't believe in *anything* any more. I remember 1918. I was a girl then, and I thought the end of the world was come. Then, in 1933, when the Party came to power, I thought the world was born anew, and that Germany was going to be great and happy again. Now I don't believe it any more. I think it's going to be 1918 all over again, and I'm tired of pretending. (EMMY and GOEBBELS *stand aghast*)

(HITLER, *in the next room, turns to one of the servants, and gives him an instruction, pointing first to the torn card on the floor, then to the next room. He goes out. The servant picks up the torn pieces, puts them together very carefully, and lays them in their former place*)

GORING (*impressively*) My dear Frau Doktor, I am no key-holer or secret policeman. You may say what you wish before me, I shall forget it. But for the sake of your children I beg of you not to talk like that before the good Himmler, who will be here soon. Whatever you may think about the future, in the present he is a power in this land, and he could make things a good deal worse for you than they need be even if the worst of your forebodings for Germany were to come true. They will not come true. You are ill, Frau Doktor, your nerves need a rest, you should take yourself and the children to Bavaria or Austria for a month. (MAGDA *shrinks a little, and GORING turns with boisterous heartiness to the abject GOEBBELS*) Now, my dear Joseph, what news? Do you still win the war of words? Do you still, like David, slay thousands with your microphone? Do you still gain paper victories? (*Laughing uproariously, he*

slaps GOEBBELS on the shoulder, whofidgets in this sarcasm, while his wife looks contemptuously on)

(HIMMLER, in black uniform, and MARTHA HIMMLER come in, followed by LEY, in brown uniform, and GERDA LEY. HIMMLER is an owl-like looking fellow, who never smiles, seldom speaks, and is in appearance the exact opposite of what a conventional terrorist chief should be. His wife is a plain and awkward woman, patently uncomfortable in society. LEY is red-faced, boisterous and aggressive. His wife is young, good-looking, blonde, soignee and self-possessed - an efficient self-seeker with a chorus-girl past. Heels are clicked, hands kissed, the seniority of EMMY GORING being given much emphasis during this performance.

As it ends, the servant in the next room, having put back the torn card, enters, and bows to EMMY GORING)

SERVANT Frau Reichsmarschall, the Fuehrer begs you to lead his guests to table and to entertain them for a few moments; he is detained.

(A loose procession passes into the dining-room, GOEBBELS limping beside the large EMMY GORING, GORING escorting MAGDA GOEBELS, and so on. The women take their seats, chattering. The men group themselves, standing. GORING is bluff and masterful, HIMMLER silent and non-committal, LEY loud, GOEBELS uneasy)

LEY *(admiringly)* That's the kind of table I like to see! What a picture! The only drawback is, it looks as if it were laid for the Last Supper, eh? *(Laughs heartily)*

(All are perceptibly shocked. GORING frowns, GOEBELS looks down)

MARTHA Really, Herr Doktor!

HIMMLER Robert, that's blasphemy.

LEY Not the way I meant it.

IIIMMLKR Which ever way you meant it, it was blasphem .
And my department deals with blasphenn

LEY (*quite unmoved*) Our Heimich proposes to undettakē
the cine of souls That's a good joke I like to picture n
Gestapo-man standing; alongside Saint Peter at the heavenly
gates.

EMMY (*hasuly*) Gentlemen, gentlemen, \ think you
forget the respect }(m owe tins loom!

GOIVBBKLS (*assiduoush*) yes, gentlemen, this loom is a
sacred]place for us, a shnne Jokes that might amuse us
elsewheie aie out of })lace here. Tins loom will be a place
of pilgrimage for Germans lor centuries to come, - tins
room where our long struggle for powei ended in triumph
ten years ago.

LEY Mem (iott, that was a night¹ I wasn't sober for a
week afterwards

MARTHA Robeit ¹

GORING There never was a night like that night None
of us, of (Oinse, ever doubted that the Pail) would even-
ually come to power, dm inn; those ioui teen years of stiuggle,
hut when victoiv *did* come, it Seemed too good to he tine
It was like a dream I couldn't belive it was when I
stood at the Fuehier's side at that window (*He point*) I
had to pinch myself Lo make sure that [was awake It was
the grandest siglit I ever saw, that river of singing men and
tore (fowing down the Wilhelmstiasr for hours on
end TheStormin Tioops were still man lung by next day,
with then- hands I don't know how the Fuelner stood it.
But when he stepped (low n from that window next morning,
at hi eak fast tune, he was as fresh as paint He tin iled to me
and said, 'Now I lei mann, we will make histoiy' And, mom
Ciott, we have'

HIMMLMV Who would have belived that We could
arcornphsli so much in ten years'

GOIBLLS History never knew anything like it. (Get
many set on its feet again (*lie counts on his fingers*), the
Rhneland regained, the Saar regained, Austria annexed,
the Sudetenland annexed, Bohemia annexed, Danzing

regained - all Europe conquered. What a record - for ten years! Ten years that shook the world!

(Vigorously expressing agreement, the men move to the window. The picture is an animated one, of great masculine good-fellowship at the window, feminine vivaciousness at the table. All are in lively conversation, but do not speak. A very faint sound of music (the Storm Troopers march) and of marching feet comes through the window. During the following passages, each player who speaks almost imperceptibly detaches himself or herself from the others, who freeze in their poses while he or she is speaking and spring into animation "again immediately he or she is done)

EMMY This fool Goebbels, with his eternal phrases about the thousand years that National Socialism will last. He will be the first rat to leave if this ship sinks, and his lameness won't stop him from setting up new records for speed. Hermann says he has money hidden in half a dozen countries.

(Animation)

LEY Do you remember old Hindenburg that night, Hermann? They propped him up at his window next door and he thought the whole show was for *him* \ *(Laughter)* They say he turned to his son and said, 'Mem Gott, Oskar, where did we take all these Russian prisoners?' He'd never seen our Brownshirts. He thought he was back in the Great War! *(Laughter)*

(Stop)

GOEBBELS If I've heard Ley tell that story once, I've heard him tell it a thousand times. A sure sign of the drunkard. And he slumps round the country boasting that he's given up drinking out of devotion to the Fuehrer! What a crew they are. How can National Socialism expect to last, with such men at the head. I wonder where Ley will

skip to when the circus tent falls in. I'll wager they've all made their plans, even Hermann. Well, they won't leave me to carry the baby. My line of retreat is secure, and they won't find me. Magda should know me better than to imagine I haven't thought of everything. But I wouldn't trust her, or anyone else. Only one man is going to know of my plans, and his name is Joseph Goebbels.

(*Animation*)

MARTHA Ach, Frau Reichsmarschall, what a *wonderful* night that was, after all those years of waiting and disappointment. It was like a miracle on earth. I was here too, that night, with Heinrich, and I kissed the Fuehrer. I *had* to, Frau Reichsmarschall. (*There is no need to stop the action hercj the expressions of the others clearly reveal their thoughts*) That was the happiest day in all my life.

GERDA (*sweetly*) Not happier than your wedding-day, surely, gnaedige Frau?

EMMY (*tactfully*) Ach, we all know what Frau Martha means. Every German woman gives her heart twice, and completely — once to her husband and once to the Fuehrer.

(*Stop*)

HIMMLER It's a funny thing, I know more secrets than any man in the world, probably, but the mind of a woman is as much a mystery to me to-day as it was when I was a boy. I know more about these men than they know about themselves. I know what they think before they think it, and they know it. They know that I have strong rooms full of documents, safely stored abroad, that would break them all. That's why, whatever may come, none of them will ever dare to turn on me. That's why I can count on them⁵¹ have them in my power. But my own wife is a mystery to me. She always seems to me to undress in public when she speaks about the Fuehrer. Yet she is a prude of prudes; she will not undress before *me*. Not that I particularly want her to, - now! But sometimes I suspect her of thoughts . . . For the life of me, I can't make up my mind. Give me men to deal

with. I know *them*. I know what you have in your minds now — you, Hermann; you, Goebbels; you. Ley! You stand here and rant and prate about the Fuehrer, and the love you bear him, and the glory he has brought to Germany. Each of you has made his plans to get away, if National Socialism collapses. Each of you has his hiding-place abroad for himself and his money. I know you - and you know that I know.

(*Animatiori*)

MAGDA (*keeping her end up*) Yes, the memory of that night is something that can never be taken from us, - whatever comes.

GERDA (*innocently*) Whatever comes? Why, what should come, Frau Doktor?

MAGDA (*covering up*) I mean, however long we have to go on fighting yet, for victory, the memory of that night would bear us up, if we needed it. I think none of us could quite believe our senses, that night. We had waited for it so long. And then, when it came, it was hard to believe, for a long time, that *we* were the rulers of Germany. I was ill in bed, that night, but I sat at the radio, listening to the bands and the singing and the cheering until breakfast time. And the Fuehrer, in the midst of it all, remembered me¹ He telephoned to ask how I was¹

GERDA And how were you?

MAGDA Oh, I was cured! It was better than all the medicine in the world. I felt a new woman. I thought, now life begins again.

MARTHA (*approvingly*) Of course you did, Frau Doktor.

EMMY Yes, our life began again that night, and it has never paused since. How wonderful life has been, since that night.

(*Stop*)

GORING Where the devil is Adolf? These clucking hens Qxasperate me. For ten years now, I have had to listen to them talking like that about the Fuehrer, and in their hearts

most of them begin to wish themselves well out of it all, since the war began to go badly for us. Emmy is the only one of them worth anything. The others are all thinking about their skins, and so are their husbands. They're thinking of Switzerland, and Sweden, and Spain, or further afield. I sometimes think I'm the only man of the lot who would stay here and face the music if real disaster came upon us. I'm the only one who would stay with Adolf. I wonder if *he* would stay' In times like these, you begin to lose faith in everyone. Well, I'm a man of my word. I'll stand by Adolf, if the need arises - and if he stands by me. I wonder ! I wonder With Adolf, you never quite know. If *he* should go - well, Germany will still need a man. He himself named me his successor. These fools all think, in their inmost hearts, of escaping abroad, if the worst should happen. Not I! I have friends enough, and Germany is big enough to hide me for a time, if I need to hide.

(Annation)

GERDA *(leaning over the table)*. Whose is the odd seat, there?

EMMY Herr von Ribberitrop's. He is late.

MARTHA It must be something very important, to keep him from the Fuehrer's table.

EMMY Yes, it must be something most important. The Fuehrer insists on punctuality. And the Fuehrer is late, too. But then, the Fuehrer's burden is so much heavier than all others put together. I wonder he can ever find time to come to Berlin, or to dine at all.

MAGDA Why, look' *(She has leaned over and picked up the card at Ribbentrop's place. It is in two pieces, and she displays these to the others. The other women look in astonishment. The men at the window come across, look at it, show it to each other, with puzzled or portentous mien)*

The faint music outside suddenly becomes very loud, then breaks off with an abrupt blare and clash as HITLER strides into the ante-room, accompanied by

MEISSNER, *his Secretary-of-State, a stout bespectacled man in the dark blue diplomatic uniform of the Nazis. The group in the dining-room hold their poses during the following exchanges)*

HITLER Does Himmler know of this?

MEISSNER I cannot say, mein Fuehrer. Himmler's business is to know everything.

HITLER I wonder if Goebbels or Goring know.

MEISSNER I cannot say, mein Fuehrer. It is by the sheerest chance that my sister in Switzerland, when she telephoned to me this afternoon about the death of our mother, mentioned this rumour that Ribbentrop had been seen in Berne. The fact that he is not to be found either at the Foreign Office or at his home, and that none could tell me where he is, suggest that this rumour may be true. It seems likely that Ribbentrop has fled, but whether anybody else knew of his intention, I cannot say. (*He looks at the floor*)

HITLER Ribbentrop a traitor! Yet another! Is it not fantastic that I, of all men, should all my life be shadowed by treachery¹ Ribbentrop¹ I would never have believed it¹ Would you have believed this, Meissner?

MEISSNER (*unperturbably*) I Ah, I have seen many things, mein Fuehrer. I am prepared to believe anything.

HITLER What do you mean by that?

MEISSNER That I am ready to believe Herr von Ribbentrop has run away, if that should prove to be the case, mein Fuehrer?

HITLER *If!* What else could be the explanation?

MEISSNER I can think of no other, mein Fuehrer. As I say, he *seems* to have fled.

HITLER (*impatiently*) Ach, enough of this word-wasting. If you should learn anything while I am at dinner, send in to me and I will come out. On no account mention anything before the others.

MEISSNER Jawohl, meiri Fuehrer.

(MEISSNER *goes out and* HITLER *moves towards the*

dining-room. Throughout the play, he alternates between two moods: one, voluble, excitable and melodramatic to the point of hysteria; the other, dark, brooding and taciturn.

As he takes the handle of the door in his hand, the poses of the people within melt. Hefinng the voices, he pauses with his ear close to the door, suspicion written on his face, as they relax into animated conversation, while MAGDA carefully restores the torn card to its place)

EMMY That's right, my dear, I expect it became torn by some accident. As I was saying, the Fuehrer is superhuman in his devotion to Germany, in the way he renounces all worldly pleasure for our sakes, for the sake of Germany. He is not like a mortal man at all; more like a saint, or a god. Such simplicity, such austerity, and at the same time such an iron will, such unbending resolution. And with it all, such *kindness*. I don't know how he finds the strength to go on. It's silly of me, but I sometimes think he would be happier for the help of some good woman.

GERDA I remember reading a play by one of those English writers, Oscar Wilde, and it said the only really happy men were those who were under the influence of bad women.

MARTHA Really, Frau Doktor!

EMMY (*like a playful elephant*) Was it Oscar Wilde who wrote that walls have ears, Frau Doktor?

MARTHA Women have no place in the Fuehrer's life. He is far above all worldly things. He shares the good old German belief that women should devote themselves to childbearing, cooking and churchgoing.

MAGDA (*recklessly*) Yet he has no children, eats only vegetables, and does not go to Church.

(The other women are silent from shock. HIMMLER shifts his position a little and places his hands on the back of the chair before his place at the table, which happens to be next to MAGDA's. Glancing round, she

finds him at her elbow, starts a little and looks down. While these last exchanges have been in progress, dusk has been deepening in the Wilhelmstrasse, and a servant, coming from the door right, has lit more lights and drawn the black-out curtains across the window)

GORING (*looking at his watch*) Donnerwetter, Fm hungry. Still no Ribbentrop, no Fuehrer!

(HITLER composes his face, opens the door and enters. He is now in his other mood, the dark, monosyllabic and curt one. The women spring to their feet. All greet him with outstretched arms and 'Heil Hitler', a salute which he acknowledges with a negligent flip of his right hand. He kisses EMMY'S hand, bows to the others, and all sit down, while servants place dishes and retire. They set to, but HITLER makes no move to touch his food. He sits staring before him along the table to the vacant place at the other end. The others produce a broken murmur of small talk, but as silence becomes oppressive and they begin to glance, apprehensively, at him)

EMMY Did the Fuehrer have a good journey from the Front?

HITLER (*curtly*) Ja, danke.

EMMY (*solicitously*) The Fuehrer must be hungry. The Fuehrer should eat. He owes it to us to maintain his strength.

GORING Yes, mein Fuehrer, my wife is right. You eat less than the soldiers at the Front.

HITLER (*sharply*) Their rations are sufficient. They want for nothing.

GORING (*taken aback*) Well, yes, of course, their rations are sufficient. They are not hungry. But soldiers' fare is no banquet.

HITLER Hermann, I do not share your views about the importance of food. The nourishment of the spirit is the

vital thing, not the stuffing of the body. I have a feeling that at any moment you will tell me that an army marches on its stomach. In case you do not know, I have heard that before. I do not approve of the cult of the stomach. Men crawl on their stomachs, they do riot march on them.

GORING (*jovially*) I should not care to try and crawl on *mine*, mem Fuehrer. It is a good friend of mine - and of yours, too. Why, what did Julius Caesar say? 'Let me have men about me that are fat; sleek-headed men, and such as sleep o' nights; yon Cassius has a lean and hungry look; he thinks too much; such men are dangerous'. (*His glance rests as if by accident on GOEBBELS*)

HITLER Caesar did riot say that, Hermann. Shakespeare said it. The habit of quoting from English writers is one to beware of. (*MAGDA and GERDA look up, and find HIMMLER looking at them*) Good Germans will find all the quotations they need in our German poets.

MARTHA (*rapturously*) Ach yes, mem Fuehrer, I read from Goethe every day, and in every sentence that I read I laid the glorious story of the Fuehrer and of National Socialism foretold. To-day I discovered a sentence in *Faust* that fits the Fuehrer as if it were coined for him: 'He who seizes on the moment, he is the right man.'

LEY Yes, that's good. Before you came in, mein Fuehrer, we were discussing that great moment which *you* seized, ten yeais ago, in this very room. Goethe might have foreseen it when he wrote that line. (*All agree vigorously*)

GOEBBELS Ja, mein Fuehrer, I think that you should have those words carved in golden letters above that window. But I, too, recently discovered some words written by one of our German poets, just a hundred years ago, which lit our National Socialist struggle and triumph like a cap. It was von Merckels, who wrote in 1845, 'The only lemedy against democrats is soldiers'.

HITLER If you have not yet discovered it, ladies and gentlemen, let me commend to you the greatest line of all - from Goethe: 'Let there be truth between us ' (*He pauses, then turns abruptly to HIMMLER*) Himmler, I want you to

give your most particular protection to Herr von Ribbentrop. He has many enemies, and the Reich cannot afford to lose him.

(There is a pausefull of unspoken questions, surprise and bewilderment, during which HIMMLER struggles to conceal perplexity, then recovers himself)

HIMMLER I'll see to it, mein Fuehrer. But my men already watch over him night and day. It would be easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for an assassin to approach him.

HITLER *(curtly)* Ribbentrop is in Switzerland.

GORING *(explosively)* Donnerwetter!

GOEBBELS What!

LEY *Ribbentrop!*

EMMY *In Switzerland!*

MAGDA *(involuntarily turns her head towards Ribbentrop's vacant place, as do the others).*

(Stop, while all hold their poses. GOEBBELS, who is facing the audience, while all the others look towards HITLER or towards Ribbentrop's place, speaks:)

GOEBBELS So! Ribbentrop now! Ribbentrop has scented the morning air! That cunning fox. *He* has not waited on the order of his going. He's gone while the going is good. What does this mean for all of us? What does it mean for *met* Pribbentrop was taking no risks, he's gone before the hue and cry begins. The avalanche is moving. Goebbels, you are clever, you know they call you the best-hated man in Germany. Look out that they don't leave you alone to bear the brunt. Don't let them make a scapegoat of *you*. You must have your wits about you night and day, from now on. This is the red light,

(Animation)

HIMMLER *(stammering and watching HITLER as if for a cue)* Ribbentrop is in Switzerland, mein Fuehrer? I cannot understand . . .

HITLER Now you see how much your men are worth!

Somebody in the Gestapo is playing us false, Herr Himmler. Somebody told the Czechs just where your own chief lieutenant, Heydrich, would be at a given time on a given day - and they killed him. Now somebody else in your office, perhaps one of your most trusted men, has let Ribbentrop slip through his fingers.

HIMMLER (*a picture of guarded perplexity*) But . . . but *why* is he in Switzerland, mein Fuehrer?

HITLER Why, why, why? *lie* has run away, and your men have allowed him to go. Goring, did you know anything of this?

GÖRING P Mein Fuehrer, I do not understand you. I *choose* not to understand you. Have I not, for months and years, sought to warn you against Ribbentrop?

HITLER (*soothingly*) True, Hermann. *You* couldn't have known anything about it. Nor you, Goebbels, or you would either have told me or have gone with him.

GOEBBELS Mein Fuehrer, this news has come like a thunderbolt to me. *I* am no runaway. Why should I run away, when our National Socialist Reich stands at the summit of its might and glory, as master of conquered Europe? I do not even understand why Ribbentrop has gone. What had he to fear? He is a coward, and we have no place in National Socialist Germany for cowards. I swear . . .

HITLER Undying devotion' Good¹ But calm yourselves, gentlemen. I shall not exaggerate the importance of this. Ribbentrop was never a real Nazi. Perhaps I *was* wrong to employ him. He was a supercargo, a man without ideals who sought his own advancement.

LEY (*violently*) He was and is the instrument of big banking and big business, mein Fuehrer. I, too, tried often enough to warn you against him. Was it not in a banker's house in Cologne that he brought you together with Papen, and made the deal that brought us to power. *That* was all right. That was good tactics. You *used* him. But I always held that he should have been dropped immediately afterwards, and if I had had my way, he wouldn't have been dropped on a cushion. Now he's gone back to his friends.

HITLER Do not excite yourself, Ley. There is no need for alarm. I count myself happy (*it is difficult to judge whether he is sincere or sarcastic in the following words*) still to be surrounded by my old stalwarts from the earlier times. In such groups of men as ours there is always a potential or an actual traitor. Even Our Lord (*he inclines his head reverently*) was betrayed by Judas. That is no reason why you should think that this is our Last Supper. (*He pauses and looks fixedly at LEY, who moves uneasily*) We have the good fortune to know who our Judas was. Now that we are rid of him, we can go forward with clear minds to victory. (*An uncomfortable fidgety pause follows this remark*) Well, do you hear me? I said, to victory!

GORING Of course, of course, mein Fuehrer, we have taken worse things than this in our stride. This is but a wasp's sting; there is no real hurt in it. But the news came as a shock to us all.

GOEBBELS It is the kind of news that looks bad at first but looks better the further it recedes. Our chain is only strengthened by losing this weak link. We are the healthier for being rid of a germ that might have spread infection.

(LEY, who always blurts out his thoughts and has been looking at the tablecloth, raises his red face and speaks bluntly)

LEY Mein Fuehrer, you know me. I belong to your oldest followers. I have been with you through thick and thin and never faltered. I even gave up drinking because you wished me to set a good example, and believe me that was not easy, because I like drinking. I do not like this news. It is bad news, and we have been having a lot of bad news of late. It will not be easy to make the people understand that it is *good* news, or to thinly that we are stronger and more united than ever because Ribbentrop has gone. When you speak of Judases, the thought strikes me that we have had a lot of Judases. The Judases will soon be in the majority, and we loyal followers of Adolf Hitler in the minority, if things go on like this. That empty chair isn't

the first by a long way. There's Hess's empty chair, and we don't know to this day just why it's empty. There's Dane's empty chair, and Hanfstaengl's, and Strasser's, and Roehm's and Ernst's, and a whole crowd of others, enough to fill this room many times over. (*The others shift uneasily in their chairs*) People are becoming bewildered. They begin to ask whether some of the people who sat in those chairs *were* really Judases . . .

HITLER One moment, my dear Ley. Frau Reichsmarschall, these affairs are too dull for you ladies. I regret to spoil our pleasant evening, but perhaps you will leave us for a few moments.

(EMMY marshals her flustered flock and they pass into the ante-room, where they take up, and maintain, a pose of murmured but excited chatter)

HITLER Now. Do you know, Ley, why your head, which contains so loose a tongue, is still on your shoulders?

LEY (*doggedly*) No, mein Fuehrer, I don't know, but I know that if it were not there I should be described as a Judas, and that wouldn't be true.

HITLER The reason is, that your tongue, when it wags, tells me without reserve what you consider to be the truth. I do not need to give myself the trouble to read your real thoughts; they spill from your lips as soon as you conceive them. Most other tongues tell me what their owners think I want to hear, or what will best serve their own designs.

LEY Well, I won't deny that, and I tell you, mein Fuehrer, that this kind of news is serious. Talk of victory won't suffice to offset it much longer. The people begin to shrug their shoulders or look down their noses or turn the radio off when they hear it. I am your bailiff in your dealings with the workpeople. In your name, I promised every workman his own motor-car and I took 100,000,000 marks from them in instalment payments. In your name, I promised them free holidays on land and sea and I took more instalments from them for that. The money has now gone to build tanks. The Strength through Joy ships are being

used as troop transports. Instead of motor-cars and holidays, the people are getting food-rationing and the black-out and bombs. They would put up with those, but the kind of news they have been having lately is getting them down. That is why I don't dismiss this latest news so lightly as my comrades here. I feel it my duty to tell you the truth as I see it, not to throw high-sounding phrases about. You may pile straws on the camel's back for a very long time, but the time must come when you give the camel a rest and a good feed or stop adding straws, and as I see it, that time is approaching. The people want to cash in on my promises to them.

HITLER (*sharply*) It is your business to keep their spirits up, to make them realize that, when victory is won, they will be better off than ever before.

LEY Yes, that's my business, and I know my business. But if it doesn't happen soon, they will hold, not only me, but also *you* responsible, mein Fuehrer.

(*a pause*)

HITLER (*with restrained violence*) So! When things go wrong, the blame is to be put on me¹ Not on my inefficient or negligent subordinates, or on generals who do not know their jobs. As long as all goes well, I am good enough for the German people. But if one of my Ministers fails me - if Himmler here lets Ribbentrop run, away to Switzerland - or if my generals forget to provide winter greatcoats for my troops, I am to blame - I, I!

LEY (*shifting uneasily*) It sounds wrong, when you put it like that, mein Fuehrer, but actually it's true. That *is* our National Socialist doctrine of personal leadership - all power, and all *responsibility*, concentrated in and incorporated by one man - the Fuehrer!

HITLER (*with growing excitement*) Ley, you are reckless. It is a long time since anybody spoke to me like that.

GORING (*hastily intervenes*) Mein Fuehrer, our good Robert is no lip-server or courtier, but I will answer for his heart. You and National Socialism are his life. *He* will

never desert, either in word or deed. If all are as staunch as he, we have nothing to fear. His work keeps him among the workers of the Ruhr and Rhineland, who suffer most from the black-out, the bombing and the rationing. If he is too gloomy, it is because the darkest corner of the picture is constantly before his eyes. If any grumbling is to be found, it is to be found there, and naturally the greatest impatience for victory, too.

HITLER Victory¹ They dare to reproach me with lack of *victory* ! What more do they want? Have we not years of victory behind us? Have we not conquered all Europe? Are we not masters of Europe, and well able to hold all we have gained?

GORING Mein Fuehrer, we have had victories in plenty. No other country in the history of the world ever gained such victories. But we have not *Victory* - yet. The people Ley speaks for want the Victory that will end the war.

HITLER (*slowly and with menacing emphasis*) And what if they cannot have *that* Victory? Are you by any chance trying to say to me that all is then lost?

(*All protest vigorously*)

GORING (*hastily*) But no, mein Fuehrer. In that case, of course, in the event that complete victory is denied us, the people will fight on for years, if necessary for ever, to the last man, woman and child. They will fight in every city, town, village and hamlet, in the streets and in the houses, in the valleys and on the hilltops — they will NEVER give in!

HITLER Ah! And what do *you* say to that, Goebbels?

GOEBBELS Mein Fuehrer, the new Germany will *never* surrender. I think our comrades here see too much shade in the picture. I am unshakably certain that we shall win complete Victory. But if by any chance that should be withheld from us, then here, in our German and National Socialist stronghold, we are invincible. We can and shall, hold out for ever. There will never be another 1918 in Germany . . .

HITLER Ach, I did not ask you to play a gramophone

record. I am not Herr Meyer of Moabit, you need not spin a web of phrases around me. Why do you always keep on crying *1918'? You say that in every broadcast. Do you not see that you *implant* in people's minds the very thought you wish to banish? You protest too much and too often that 'there will never be another 1918'. You become more like a parrot than a Propaganda Minister. Do you not see that you make people fear there *will* be another 1918 by this damnable iteration? (*He falls into his self-commiseratory vein*) Mein Gott, must I be my own Propaganda Minister, as well as Fuehrer of Germany, head of the Party, Commander-in-Chief and all the rest? I am like Atlas, with the burden of the whole world on my shoulders.

GOEBBELS (*feebly protesting*) Mein Fuehrer, I cannot help it. The thought of 1918 *is* in people's minds, but I did not put it there. History and their own memories put it there. The present similarity of events puts it there. In that war, too, the people had four years of victories, but were robbed of *Victory* by the traitors at home who stabbed them in the back.

HITLER Ah, that was what I was waiting for. *That* cannot happen again. You should know it! The people should know it! It is your business to make them understand it, to hammer it into their minds - but not by crying, 'There will never be another 1918'. I have taken the necessary steps to ensure that there will never be another 1918. All you need to do is to draw the people's attention to these steps. *Then* they will realize that there can never be another 1918 - because it will not pay them to repeat the events of 1918. They would suffer most. Himmler, under my direction, will see to it that 1918 does not happen again. What do you say, Himmler?

HIMMLER Mein Fuehrer, I give my personal guarantee that any and every attempt at uprising or revolt in Germany, however small or great, would be ruthlessly crushed within a few hours. I do not believe that any is even possible. The SS now forms a large army which has hardly been touched by this war and is equipped with tanks, artillery, aircraft -

everything. These troops are better, if possible, than the best of those which have conquered Europe. They have hardly been in action. If necessary (*he looks at GORING*) they will suppress' any disaffection in the regular forces. Their mere presence, in my opinion, makes any civilian unrest impossible. (*He turns to LEY*) These troops have been trained night and day for ten years for one task alone - to prevent the victory of Germany from being jeopardized or lost, as it was in the last war, by mutineers, intriguers or traitors at home. They form the steel core of Germany, and any who might bite into Germany's flesh would break his teeth upon them. In my opinion, they are the finest troops the world has ever seen. While they exist, no opposition can arise in this country.

HITLER You hear, gentlemen?

ALL Heil!

HITLER (*whose voice rises during this speech from a low, intense, restrained note to the hysterical high pitch of his platform performances, so that the ladies in the ante-room look round in trepidation*) Gentlemen, I have come from the Front to tell you this. You knew it before, but my sixth sense (*he rubs his nose*) told me that you needed reminding of it. Perhaps I am too much away from you, nowadays. Now I am here, to reassure you, to reinvigorate you with *my* strength. I wanted to make quite sure that you understand the situation, that your nerves are good and your minds clear. Among many triumphs, we have had a few small misfortunes. The doubters and fainthearts in the country would like to seize hold of those and magnify them into disasters, for their own ends. Now you have heard from me and from Himmler how you stand, how we stand, how *I* stand, how Germany stands. We have conquered Europe, and we shall hold what we have. Germany will fight 'to the last man; *not* because you say so, or from love of me, - but because / say so, and because I have the means to ensure it. That is leadership, as / understand it. There will be no lagging, no parleying, no truckling-under, because / will

not allow that and have the means to prevent it. Do you understand me, gentlemen? It is necessary that you *should* understand me, before I return to the Front and you to your duties. I know better than you what the people say and think and fear and want. I do not need you to remind me of it, or of the last war. I know that we are in the fourth year of this one, and that the fourth year of the last one brought defeat. I have forgotten nothing, but I have learned a great deal. *I* have never forgotten how they turned the Kaiser out in 1918 and put all the blame on him. They will not play that trick on me. The people want Victory, you say, not victories. They have forgotten Warsaw and Rotterdam and Paris and Oslo and Belgrade and Athens, they have forgotten that I have made them the masters of Europe. Now they will not be happy unless they can have Moscow, Leningrad, London - New York, perhaps, or the world! I tell you, we *have* Victory. We *have* what we want - Europe. We have smashed the Russians in the East; they have not the strength left to do us any harm. In the West, I have built the West Wall, and our enemies can never break it. Here we are safe. Here we are invulnerable, invincible. What if England, that miserable island, is still unconquered? We do not want it; we have conquered what *we* want. None can take from us what we have won - and mark my words, gentlemen, none will take from *me* what / have won. I am not a puppet Kaiser. Do not let your thoughts stray back to 1918. Look forward! Do not allow your thoughts to dwell on the possibility of a timely withdrawal into private life, or of a political resurrection in some new regime. This is the fourth year of the war. I tell you that we shall still be fighting, still defying our enemies, in the eighth year of the war - if I wish it. Do not delude yourselves that the house which I have built could be brought down without burying *you* in the ruins, too. My eyes are everywhere. I can ill spare the time to come to Berlin from the Front, where my soldiers need me. But I have *made* the time, because I felt that I needed to speak clearly to you. I hope you have understood me.

(HITLER'S platform magic has worked again. During this speech, the others have listened with a rapt attention which has gradually become fired with enthusiasm. As he finishes, they spring to their feet with a thunderclap-like Heil which makes the women in the ante-room jump)

HITLER Hermann, you have been kept all too long from your food. We must not neglect our mutual ally, your stomach. Let the ladies come in.

(As the Ladies return to resume their places at table, the curtain falls to indicate the lapse of an hour. When it rises, the table has been cleared save for the coffee cups. The party is in cheerful and chattering mood)

EMMY Mein Fuehrer, I wish you could have seen this poor old woman. It would have uplifted you. She was over eighty, and came on foot all the way from Moabit to my Winter Help offices in the Tiergarten with her wedding ring, and when she put it in my hand, she said, 'Trau Reichsmarschall, this is all I have, and I give it for the Fuehrer!' *(A general murmur of applause and approval)*

GOEBBELS It is the same all over the Reich. The women of Germany have given themselves heart and soul to the Fuehrer.

HITLER I wish our enemies could see these German women. Imagine what a legacy of strength they will impart to future generations! That is why I have always refused to call up the women, as our enemies do. In England and Russia, and I believe in America too, they are ruthlessly calling up the women for auxiliary services. They do not see that they imperil their own future by doing this. When you break up families, separate husbands and wives, and put the young girls into camps for years at a time, you strike a blow at the next generation. I have not done this — I whom these knowalls deride and vilify. If I were to die to-day, and if Germany were to conclude peace, I should

have saved the Germany of to-morrow by preserving the German family of to-day. (*The women nod emphatically*)

MARTHA In the *Cologne Gazette* to-day is a mourning announcement inserted by the mother of four soldiers killed in Russia. She says, 'My fourth and last son has given his life for the Fuehrer and Fatherland. I wish I had four more sons to give!' Isn't that wonderful?

EMMY Magnificent!

HITLER There you see the fruit of the spirit I have implanted and cultivated in Germany, gnaedige Frau.

MAGDA (*bent on rehabilitation*) What heroines these women are! Small wonder that no soldiers in the world can stand up to their sons.

GERDA (*who is childless, to MAGDA, whose four children are all young*) How old are your children now, Frau Doktor?

GORING (*tactfully, to MAGDA*) You are right, gnaedige Frau. These sons of German mothers repeatedly astonish our enemies even when they are taken prisoner. The other day in England some old professor (*he strokes a long, imaginary beard*) was sent to lecture to some of our air force lads in a prison camp. None but the English could be stupid enough to pick on some blathering old schoolmaster¹ to talk to German airmen¹ You may imagine the contempt our boys felt for him in their hearts. But they kept perfectly straight faces and listened to him without making a sound or batting an eyelid until he mentioned the name of 'Hitler'. Then, like one man, as if released by a spring, they jumped to their feet and shouted 'Heil Hitler' with a roar that nearly took the roof off. The professor was so startled he almost collapsed from heart failure. (*He laughs uproariously. The others join in, while HITLER nods weighty approval*)

GORING (*becoming serious*) Ach ja, that was a good joke. But there was another lad who showed the English what he thought of them in a different way. He was shot down over England and taken to hospital, dying. One chance remained of saving his life - a blood transfusion. When they told him, he refused to let them make one! He would not allow

his German blood to be polluted. He preferred death to life bought by that means - and he died, crying 'Heil Hitler' with his last breath!

GOEBBELS (*enthusiastically*) Fantastic! Faithful unto death! It is in the highest tradition of classic valour and self-sacrifice. It recalls the great legends of antiquity, of Greece and Rome, Who but a German could achieve such a victory of the soul over the body, in our modern world?

LEY (*who wears decorations for valour and wound-scars from the last war*) Ja, the military virtues are the highest of all, Herr Doktor.

HITLER This young man should offer an example to every German, gentlemen. He valued his faith in me more than his life. Goebbels, you should have a book, or a booklet published about him. A copy should be in every German home. Every German boy and girl must read it. And now, Frau Reichsmarschall, I have work to do. (*He rises, and the others follow. HITLER takes leave of them with the most winning affability*) This pleasant evening among you all has mean]: a great deal to me, in the midst of my cares and burdens. I only wish it could be longer. But the time is coming when we shall be able to meet together more often, in such informal little parties, just as we used to do in the old days. (*He goes among the women, kissing their hands, smiling, and shakes hands with the men. As they withdraw, saluting, he says:)* Himmler, a moment. I want to speak to you.

(As the door closes behind them, his manner suddenly and completely changes. The smile vanishes, a scowl appears, and he strides furiously up and down the room, while HIMMLER stands watching, Meanwhile, in the ante-room)

EMMY Ribbentrop gone! That swine! I never trusted him.

GORING How often have I warned the Fuehrer against him!

LEY And I! He had too many friends in the Old Gang - and not only in this country.

GERDA I remember the day when he was made Foreign Minister. Robert was like a bear with a sore head about it. Ribbentrop always knew Robert didn't trust him, and went out of the way to avoid him.

MARTHA It is heartbreaking to think of the Fuehrer's confidence being betrayed like that.

MAGDA You assume he has run away? But - suppose he was *sent*, for a purpose, like Hess?

GOEBBELS Magda!

LEY (*explosively*) Donnerwetter! I never thought of that.

(The excited group stands transfixed for a moment, while HITLER next door continues to stride up and down)

GORING (*urgently*) Come, come, ladies and gentlemen, whatever you may think, this is not the time or place to express it. And thoughts are like soldiers, anyway-they are only good when they are kept under strict discipline.

(Exit. HITLER stops his pacing and turns to HIMMLER)

HITLER Do you think they suspected anything?

HIMMLER I fancy not, mein Fuehrer. But they may, when they come to think. They know that Hess was sent with a mission, and that in his case he was said to have fled abroad. But (*urgently*) why did you *tell* them of Ribbentrop's journey, mein Fuehrer? I was nearly startled into betraying myself. I did not know what you expected me to say. I needed all my presence of mind to show surprise.

HITLER I told them because I *had* to tell them. Ribbentrop has let himself be seen and recognized in Berne. Meissner's old sister there learned of it and told her brother on the telephone. Soon the news will be out; we cannot prevent that now. I had to act at once and tell them that Ribbentrop had fled. The fool. He will have to *stay* in Switzerland, now.

HIMMLER Himmel, that is awkward!

HITLER Awkward! The word is too small. I rush to Berlin

from the Front, because my instinct tells me that I am needed here, to pull things together, and I am greeted with this news! Ribbentrop must be mad. He knew that secrecy was essential, if these negotiations were to have any hope of success. And there was good hope of their success, of a favourable peace. Now our friends in Madrid and London will be frightened and withdraw into their shells. We shall have to disavow him publicly, before the news gets out.

HIMMLER Ribbentrop must be mad. Mad - or worse¹

HITLER Heinrich, you think he may have done this deliberately? The suspicion occurred to me immediately. You think he may have gone with the intention to betray us, to let his presence in Switzerland become known, so that he could stay there, would have to stay there? You think he has done this to get out of Germany and save his own skin?

HIMMLER It looks very possible, mein Fuehrer. None of us old National Socialists, who have been with you for twenty years, have ever fully trusted this opportunist, who came to us when your triumph was assured. Hess is different. We may count on him to the last. He is one of us; he will fight for you as long as he lives, and die for you at the end if that is necessary. But we have never shared your faith in Ribbentrop.

HITLER How long will it be before you know the truth?

HIMMLER Very soon, mein Fuehrer. My men are always near him. I cannot understand why I have not had their report already, if he has done this deliberately, or why they did not remove him as soon as his intention became clear.

HITLER Perhaps they, too . . . ?

HIMMLER No, no, mein Fuehrer, I can answer for them. I will find out, immediately.

HITLER I begin to feel myself surrounded by treachery. Is there no loyalty left in this world? I feel like a man who sits in the warmth of the noonday sun, and sits and sits, while gradually the sun passes and sinks behind the trees, and the long shadows creep slowly out and reach, first his

feet, then his legs, then his chest, then his head, and suddenly he realizes that the warmth is gone, that the air is chill, that he is cold, cold . . . (*He shivers*) Heinrich, go and find out the truth. I must know at once. I must decide at once what I have to do.

(HIMMLER goes. HITLER paces the room once or twice, then goes to the window and draws aside the heavy curtain. He stands, on a raised step, looking out into the street below. A uniformed servant comes in with a tray, from the door right, and starts as he sees HITLER. He hesitates, then nervously approaches the window)

SERVANT Mein Fuehrer, the black-out.

HITLER (*abruptly coming out of his thoughts*) What of the black-out?

SERVANT (*stammering*) The police, mein Fuehrer. They have orders to shoot at a lighted window.

HITLER (*furiously*) The police! Shoot! At me! At this window! I alone decide whether *this* window shall be blacked out. Do you forget what window this is?

SERVANT No, no, mein Fuehrer.

HITLER This window can never be blacked out, even when the curtains are drawn. The light from this window illuminates all Germany, the whole world. Before this window the Storm Troops marched all night long, ten years ago, on that day when I was made Chancellor and the new Germany was born. From this window I, the unknown soldier, the Adolf Hitler whom the world mocked, I leaned out with the searchlight full on me, and took the homage of Germany. Do you remember?

SERVANT Yes, mein Fuehrer.

HITLER (*harshly*) Put out the lights, and come here!

(*The servant switches off the lights and approaches the window. A brilliant moon illuminates the Wilhelmstrasse, lighting the buildings opposite and falling full on HITLER as he stands at the window, with the servant in shadow below and behind him*)

HITLER Come here! Look out! What do you see?

SERVANT Nothing, mein Fuehrer, just the Wilhelmstrasse and the guard.

HITLER (*mockingly*) Nothing! Just the Wilhelmstrasse! And the guard! How little you see, with your two eyes. / see everything. I know everything. I know all about you. Your name is Schultze, you were a good soldier in the last war and were several times wounded. You joined the Party in its beginnings and in recognition of your services were given this responsible post. Is that right?

SERVANT (*eagerly*) Ja, ja, mein Fuehrer, I joined the party in '24, and never doubted your triumph, even in the darkest days.

HITLER (*impatiently*) And you are a Berliner. Do you remember this street in 1919?

SERVANT Oh ja, mein Fuehrer, those were bad times. There was revolution, and I was unemployed, and often walked along here, hungry and worried to death about my wife and children. Life was not worth living.

HITLER And did you 'walk along here'⁷ ten years ago with the Storm Troops, on that night?

SERVANT Ja, indeed, mein Fuehrer, that was the happiest night of my life. I thought, 'everything has worked out well for us after all, thanks to the Fuehrer! All that about losing the war, all that about revolution and unemployment and despair, all that was a nightmare, and now I am awake. Life is good, after all. The world is good, after all. Germany is great again, after all.' That is what I thought.

HITLER And now you tell me you see nothing, when at my side, from this window of all windows, you look into this historic street, of all streets.

SERVANT Pardon, mein Fuehrer.

HITLER Are you *sure* you see nothing? Do you not see treachery, disloyalty, intrigue there, in the shadows?

SERVANT (*startled*) No, I see nothing, mein Fuehrer.

HITLER Ah, nothing. (*He stares down, and begins to speak, softly:*) On that night a great living wave flowed down the Wilhelmstrasse, a human river of shouting and singing

and torchbearing men, all crying 'Heil Hitler, Heil Hitler, Heil Hitler!' They acclaimed me] And to-day that great wave has flown all over Europe! How much have I not done for Germany in these ten short years! What other man ever did as much in the history of the world? I, the Austrian village lad, the Viennese destitute, the unknown soldier of the World War, I am master of Germany, master of Europe. (*He turns*) You, the workless Schultze, you serve the master of Europe. And you see nothing when, at my side, you look down from here at the Wilhelmstrasse! (*He turns back*) Look again! Do you see them! Do you hear them! Hundreds of thousands of them! Do you hear them marching, singing, shouting? Do you see them, all looking upwards to this window, while the bands blare and all Germany rejoices and all Europe trembles and the tramp of marching feet shakes this very house.

(The faint echo of the Storm Troopers' song, of bands, and the tramp-tramp of many men marching is heard. HITLER sings a few words of the song, 'Die Strassefrei, die Reihen fest geschlossen . . .')

Then, as the servant, scared, retreats further and further into the shadows and through the door, HITLER leans far out into the moonlight, saluting with his right hand, and crying, "Heil . . . Heil . . . Heil". The faint music dies away. Only the moonlit and empty Wilhelmstrasse remains, and a man leaning far out of an open window and crying 'Heil . . . Heil'. This raucous cry dwindles and dies away after

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT II

Time: *A few months later.*

Scene: *Hitler's headquarters in an East Prussian manor house - Neudeck, the estate of the Hindenburgs. A large, panelled room, with gun-racks, sporting trophies on the walls, heavy furniture.*

Neudeck has played an important part in the history of the last twenty-five years, which brought the revival of militarism in Germany and the Second World War, or second half of the World War (or second third of the World War, if history is again allowed to repeat itself).

The house belonged in earlier times to the Hindenburg family, and some time in the nineteenth century passed out of its possession. Napoleon's soldiers were quartered in it in 1812, and were seen there by the Hindenburg who was father of Field-Marshal von Hindenburg of the 1914-1918 war. This Hindenburg, who commanded the German armies in that war, became President of the German Republic in 1925. His election was the first major step towards the resumption of the war (in 1939), and when he was made President a fierce struggle for his soul was waged (though the outer world either did not or would not see this) between contesting power-groups in Germany on the one hand the Republicans, who were anti-militarist and on the other, the traditional rulers of Germany, the great landlords of East Elbia, the big business magnates of the Ruhr and Rhineland industrial regions, and the officer caste, who were working for rearmament and the new war which should reverse the verdict of 1918.

The most astute move in this tug-of-war was made by the second group after Hindenburg was elected President. They subscribed together to buy, and present to him, the lost ancestral estate of the Hindenburgs. By doing this, they restored a landless general to the acres of his forefathers and

to the class — that of the big landowners — to which every inherited instinct made him yearn to belong. They made him one of themselves and placed him under the strongest conceivable obligation to themselves. They ensured that he should live in their midst and that his ear should constantly be theirs.

Their influence, working through him, at once became apparent, and effected the decisive events of the following years - the dismissal of the last Republican Chancellor, Bruening-, the election of the unknown, gap-filling Papen-, and finally the appointment to the Chancellorship of Hitler, whom they regarded as their puppet. This man was, in the eyes of the world, to be responsible for the rearmament of Germany; if the second attempt to achieve world domination should fail, he would be responsible, not only in the eyes of the world, but also in those of the German people, for the calamity.

Thus Neudeck is a most historic place, of direct interest to every man and woman of our times. Its significance may possibly be made clearer to English people by translating the transaction into English. Suppose, then, that this country were defeated in a world war, the monarchy dethroned, a republic established, and, presently, the most popular general of the war period installed as President. A hidden, but tremendous struggle for real power in the land then follows between the Republicans (represented, say, by the Trades Union Congress) and the traditional ruling classes (landowners, industrial magnates, Churchmen, and the like). As this contest approaches its climax, the members of the Carlton Club purchase, and present to the President, an abbey, a great estate, and a stud of hunters in Leicestershire, where he takes up his permanent abode and becomes Master of the Quorn.

Neudeck, then, is no ordinary house of four walls and a roof, but a place where 'history has been made', to use the phrase which warmakers love. Now, for the purpose of this play, Hitler has taken up his headquarters in it as the second half (or second third?) of the World War approaches its climax.

Backstage, a large window between a map of the world and one of Europe. Tables, chairs, filing cabinets, telephones.

(GORING and VON KEITEL are bent over reports)

GORING (*straightens himself*) Mein Gott, Herr Feldmarschall, I only hope the Fuehrer, when he comes, can find something to cheer him in these reports. I can't.

KEITEL (*everything about this man is grey - his uniform, his lips, his eyes, and his face, the skin of which is drawn tight over the bones*) They are what is to be expected, Herr Reichsmarschall, in our present position.

GORING Our present position? Our position seems to me like that of a nut held in nut-crackers which continually increase their pressure. It is a marvel to me how the Fuehrer, in his speeches, succeeds in making it appear that the nut will eventually triumph over the crackers. (*He laughs heartily*) But he does it. Did you hear his speech from Munich? Did you hear the applause?

KEITEL Yes, I heard it. The Fuehrer's gift of speech, and his hold over the masses, are most remarkable.

GORING Remarkable? It's miraculous¹ If / listen hard, I can hear the nut cracking. And Goebbels hobbles round the country telling the poeple that time is on our side and they must prepare for a Thirty Years War.

KEITEL Goebbels is out of date with his propaganda, Herr Reichsmarschall. This already *is* a Thirty Years War. It began in 1914. But I incline to agree with him that time is on our side.

GORING (*in astonishment*) You do!

KEITEL Perhaps this war will become a Sixty Years War. Perhaps it will continue in 1974. Germany is a very hard nut to crack.

GORING Herr Feldmarschall, are you joking? Can you imagine that even Germany will fight for another thirty years?

KEITEL Fight? I did not quite say that.

GORING What then?

KEITEL Herr Reichsmarschall, war is only the continuation of politics by means of force, when politics fail to

achieve national aims and ambitions. If war, too, fails to achieve these aims and ambitions, they may be pursued again by political means. Until a favourable moment comes to pursue them again by forcible means - war.

GORING Mein Gott, Herr Feldmarschall, the Catholic Church and the Chinese are said to take a very long view of history. They always know how to wait. They think in centuries. I see that the same may be said of the Reichswehr.

KEITEL *Someone* must think for Germany, and that means thinking ahead. The Reichswehr has served Germany well by looking so far ahead. Think of 1918! How many people in the world then believed that in twenty years German armies would conquer Europe again.

GORING Donnerwetter, no! Nor did I. You are right. I led my squadron back to Germany and hid the aeroplanes, to prevent them from falling into the hands of our enemies. But I did not foresee that, I did not dare to indulge such dreams. All seemed lost.

KEITEL The Reichswehr foresaw it. It never accepted the verdict of 1918. It worked quietly but tirelessly to reverse that verdict. There were only a few of us, in the barracks of Prussia and the offices of Berlin, but how we worked! We kept in the background and let the politicians strut about in the limelight. But within seven years our new day dawned¹ That was when old Hindenburg was elected President in 1925.

GORING Hindenburg! Himmel, how the times have changed. In 1918 I was a young captain. Now, twenty-five years later, I stand in Hindenburg's shoes.

KEITEL (*thoughtfully*) In Hindenburg's shoes!

GORING Yes, of course in Hindenburg's shoes - the shoes he wore in 1918, and I'll be hanged if I like the fit of them. For to-day I am Commander-in-Chief, in reality, for all the Fuehrer wears the title. He leaves the great decisions to me. If only he had done that earlier! But now, for my virtues, I stand in Hindenburg's shoes, and you, the Chief of Staff, stand in Ludendorff's.

KEITEL (*slowly*) The two of us stand not only in their shoes, but in their footprints, Herr Reichsmarschall - the footprints of 1918. We have conquered Europe - but we have not won the war. We have bombed London - but we have not beaten England. We have waged unrestricted submarine warfare — but we have not starved England and we have not prevented the Americans from sending their armies across the Atlantic.

GORING (*hitting the table a mighty blow*) If only the Fuehrer had listened to me¹ We should have struck at England with all our strength at the beginning of the war. We should have struck at England with all our strength after Dunkirk. We should *not* have attacked Russia, unless we could buy England off first. Ach, if, if, if ... These things are done. How the devil are they to be undone, now?

KEITEL If you are addressing that question to me, Herr Reichsmarschall, and not to yourself, I say, we must start all over again.

GORING All over again? Once more? A second time? Ach, nonsense. You cannot play that trick twice. We must fight to the bitter end now - to the last man.

KEITEL I do not agree. I do not believe, and you do not believe, that we can now win this war on the field of battle - whatever the Fuehrer may tell a mass meeting at Munich. We may yet win it in peace, by political means. The time approaches to exchange war for politics, temporarily. We shall need another Hindenburg. You said just now that you stand in Hindenburg's shoes . . .

G5RING (*turning on him violently*) Herr Feldmarschall, you know that I meant no such thing as that!

KEITEL Of course you did not mean that. But, after all, the Fuehrer himself has chosen you for his successor. We must begin to think far ahead again, we who serve Germany and shall continue to serve Germany, whatever comes, and may yet save Germany. Changes are coming in this land, as changes came at the end of the last war. Then, the Kaiser was sent away. A time of confusion and chaos

followed, while the politicians played at government for a few years. Then, quite quietly, we turned them out, one after another, and took charge again. The same thing will repeat itself. Germany will remain, and the future will remain, and our national aims will remain. That means, unless this country falls into the hands of traitors, that the war will go on, for all the talk we shall hear about peace and a new world. Germany will need strong arms and cool heads, in the time that is coming, Herr Goring. Some figureheads will go, but we who will remain will have to negotiate with the outer world, which hates us, to prevent it from crushing Germany for good, to try and outwit it, and make Germany strong once more.

GORING 'Donnerwetter' 'Some figureheads will go'¹ Herr von Keitel, I hardly recognize you. You never spoke like this before. I never knew a man of fewer words than you. You certainly deluded me. I have never credited you with a thought or an idea outside military affairs. You are very frank - dangerously frank.

KEITEL For me, 'military affairs' and the future of Germany are inseparable things, Herr Reichsmarschall. You said that the Reichswehr thinks far ahead. It is true. The time approaches to be frank, in the right direction. You know the lesson of 1918 and the years that followed it as well as I. *Somebody* had to rebuild Germany.

GORING Herr Feldmarschall, in 1918 every word you say would have seemed to me like the purest gold of patriotism and wisdom. To-day, it sounds damned like treachery.

KEITEL (*suavely*) That is surely illogical of you, Herr Reichsmarschall. The situation is precisely the same - save that to-day you, as you say, stand in Hindenburg's shoes - Hindenburg, who dismissed the Kaiser.

GORING (*with menacing calmness*) Herr von Keitel, are you suggesting that I should send the Fuehrer away? I cannot credit you with the thought, or believe that any man in this country would be mad enough to express such an idea to me. But your words force me to ask you?

KEITEL By no means. I say that *events* may be coming which will send the Fuehrer away, whether we will or no, and we who think of Germany's future are considering what to do in that unhappy case . . .

GORING 'We' who think for Germany! Whom do you mean?

KEITEL (*unperturbed*) My friends and myself. My friends (*with emphasis*) in the Reichswehr and myself. I repeat, *we* do not think that you, Herr Reichsmarschall, would be so gravely involved, in that unhappy event. You are not so deeply implicated, in the eyes of the world, that you would need to do more than withdraw from the lime-light for a while. (*Derisively*) Why, within a few years of 1918 they came to love Hindenburg, whom they swore to hang, these windbags. You, Herr Reichsmarschall, were a professional soldier, a man of the Reichswehr, long before you were a Nazi and a politician. We count you among those who put Germany first. You should think far ahead. Perhaps you do?

GORING Not I, Herr Feldmarschall, I am not the man for such schemes, I am here to fight and win this war, or to go down fighting. I know my duty. I am no intriguer, no careerist. I am the Fuehrer's truest paladin. If he goes, I go!

KEITEL (*shrugs*) In that case, of course . . . But you take a false view of the situation. Do you not see that you and I would not stand here to-day, if a few men of my school had not taken the affairs of Germany in hand in 1918. How would it have helped Germany if they had all accompanied the Raiser to Doom, or placed themselves around him, revolver in hand, and died fighting? In that case, Germany would never have risen again.

GORING (*angrily*) The devil take me if I can nail you down. Your words carry the perfume of reason and the smell of treachery, both at once. I cannot trust my own nose.

KEITEL Herr Reichsmarschall, for the moment a personal loyalty obstructs your view. No man in the world is less a traitor, less an intriguer than I.

GORING Yes, I feel that. It is very confusing.

KEITEL (*reflectively*) Have you ever wondered why the Fuehrer chose this place, old Hindenburg's mansion, for his headquarters?

GORING No. Why should P I do not seek an ulterior motive in everything the Fuehrer does. This place is comfortable, and near enough to the front, and near enough to Berlin.

KEITEL True. But I think it means more than that to the Fuehrer. You and I you say, Herr Reichsmarschall, stand where Hmdenburg and Ludendorff stood in 1918. You are right; and the Fuehrer stands very near where the Kaiser then stood. I think he is becoming obsessed with the resemblance between the situation in which he finds himself and that of the Kaiser twenty-five years ago - and with his determination not to come to the Kaiser's end.

GORING What has that to do with Neudeck?

KEITEL Why, this is a good vantage point to keep an eye on our Prussian country gentry, who dethroned the Kaiser, enthroned Hindenburg, and made the Fuehrer what he is! This is their native haunt; these are their native acres; from these parts they have for two centuries ruled Germany. You know the popular rhyme about their loyalty to the King of Prussia. "He's our unchallenged King and Lord - as long as he obey our word" They bought this place, Neudeck, for old Hindenburg, so that they might keep him in their midst and under their supervision, and ensure that he obeyed their word. He did so; he made the Fuehrer master of Germany before he died. But now, I think, perhaps, the Fuehrer, who is very vigilant, very suspicious, and very well-informed, wishes to turn the tables on our Prussian squires. He has come to Neudeck to make himself the watcher and them the watched. You know that he keeps a large part of his private SS army in these parts!

GORING I know more than that, Herr Feldmarschall. I know that, by promoting chosen men in large numbers to high rank in the *regular* army, the Fuehrer has secured a very large personal following inside the Reichswehr itself!

Perhaps you still do not realize how farseeing he is, Herr von Keitel. The position is not, as you may imagine, that in the event of a conflict *inside Germany* the Fuehrer, solidly supported by his SS, would be confronted by the Reichswehr generals, solidly supported by the regular army. The position is that a large part of the Reichswehr would go over to the Fuehrer and his SS, and any deluded people who thought to use the army, as the army was used in 1918, to chase the ruler of Germany out of his country, would find themselves very much alone. And there is no place so lonely as a gallows or a brick wall. I know; I can speak from personal observation. (*He laughs in his stomach*)

KEITEL I am glad that you are as frank with me as I have been with you, Herr Reichsmarschall. It may be good for Germany that we have been frank with each other. I must tell you this: The 'unhappy event' you speak of—civil strife in Germany—must not be allowed to occur. It is vital for the future of Germany that this should be prevented. It is essential that, in the bad times which are coming, the country should have one firm support to lean on, one strong and trustworthy force which will keep law and order and cherish the ideals of German patriotism until Germany is free again. That force can only be, in future as in the past, the German Reichswehr, whose uniform I wear. I most earnestly assure you Herr Reichsmarschall, that you are wrong in thinking this force would disintegrate and surge over to the Fuehrer's black-uniformed private army. The measures he has taken, to ensure this, have been carefully watched and counteracted. No matter what happens, the Reichswehr will take the future of Germany into its care — not the SS.

GORING I think you must be mad to speak to me like this, Herr von Keitel. You know I have had one Reichswehr general shot, in my time, who tried to play politics against the Fuehrer.

KEITEL I am not to be intimidated. Too much is at stake. *Germany* is at stake. I do not believe that you can really misunderstand me or my motives, Herr Goring, for you are

a German general's son, and you yourself wore the grey coat before you put on the brown shirt. I say, once more, (*choosing his words with great deliberation*) in the present military situation of Germany, the SS is not beneficial for Germany. I say that my opinion is shared by others. I say that this force would not succeed if it were to pit itself against the Reichswehr. And I say that such a conflict would be so disastrous for Germany's future that it must not be allowed to happen.

GORING (*explosively*) Donnerwetter!

(He is about to pursue the debate when shouts of 'AchtungV and the reports of clicking heels are heard outside. They both turn. An orderly opens the door and HITLER flings in, followed by HIMMLER and by OSKAR VON HINDENBURG, who is in civilian dress. HITLER is in his most melodramatic mood. He strides to the table, giving GORING and KEITEL a searching look, and throws on it his gloves, cap and riding whip)

HITLER 'morning, Hermann. Good-day, Herr Feldmarschall. You are both pictures of joy, I see. What news?

(KEITEL silently hands him a sheaf of reports)

HITLER (*running through them*) 'British bombers over Hanover. American bombers over Cologne. Some damage to residential property and loss of life among the civilian population.' Was anything important hit?

GORING The Gestapo barracks in Hanover, mein Fuehrer; 97 men killed and some hundreds wounded. The civilian casualties in Cologne are heavy.

HITLER 'Our fighters and anti-aircraft defences brought down twenty-three enemy aircraft.' What were our losses?

GORING Three fighters shot down and seven crashed.

HITLER 'Our submarines operating in the North Atlantic sank eleven ships of a convoy of twenty.' Ach, rubbish! Dope for the people. I suppose Goebbels broadcast this with his tin-trumpets before and after. Does he not realize that

these fanfares only irritate and depress the people unless there is some real success to report. How many American troops are now in England?

GORING We estimate, over a million.

HITLER (*eagerly*) Ah, our report from Rome. 'The general expectation of an attack on Italy has been growing daily since the British and American defeat of Rommel and reconquest of Libya. Now that control of the Mediterranean has reverted to the British and American naval forces, it is thought here that a full-scale attack on Italy cannot long be delayed. There is great uneasiness and anxiety among the population. The whole situation causes us the gravest concern. Our friends here bring us clear evidence of a growing movement in influential quarters to supplant Mussolini and negotiate a separate peace/

(He throws the papers on the table with such force that they slither across it and are strewn over the floor, and strides up and down the room, declaiming violently)

HITLER So! These spaghetti-eaters think the time approaches to strike a bargain. They, too, scent the morning air. The House of Savoy and the Jesuits get ready to throw Mussolini overboard. No doubt they are already in touch with their friends in London. (*He stops and addresses the others theatrically*) What gratitude! What loyalty! Think what Mussolini has done for Italy! Perhaps they think they can slide out of the war cheaply, now, at our expense. The British have a saying, 'We lose every battle except the last'. The Italians have a saying, 'Italy is always beaten in war, but always emerges victorious from the peace conference'. Perhaps they would like even to throw in their lot with the British and Americans, hoping to get Libya back like that - Libya, which we recaptured for them and held for months and years. Let them try it! I would turn the Luftwaffe on them and leave their Cities a heap of ruins. Eh, gentlemen?

(They incline their heads silently, without enthusiasm)

HITLER (*sharply*) WeIP

GORING (*rubbing his chin in some embarrassment*) The Luftwaffe is a very sharp weapon indeed, mein Fuehrer, but it is a two-edged one nowadays, and the enemy's air strength grows so quickly that the edge which is turned towards us becomes the sharper. And we are so stretched, in the air. If only we could *relax* somewhere - in the East, in the North, in the West, in the South. We have many idle squadrons, but we dare not withdraw them. The moment they were gone, they might be needed. The people are already impatient and angry because we have not repaid the English the bombs they have dropped on us during the past year. I can't think of anything that would cheer them more than a few good raids on England, like the ones we made in 1940. But our resources are severely strained.

HITLER Ach, there is a temporary stringency. When the new factories we have built get into full production we shall outnumber them all again in the air.

GORING (*hesitantly*) Ja . . . but there is the problem of training crews, too.

HITLER Problems, problems. Of course there are problems. I am here to overcome problems. Were there not enough problems during our struggle for power in Germany? Nobody believed that we could solve *that* problem. But / solved it.

KEITEL (*smoothly*) Nevertheless, mein Fuehrer, that was a political problem, and now we have many *military* problems, very grave ones. We must hope these reports from Italy are exaggerated, but our representatives have been sending us the same warning, in increasingly alarming terms, for some months now. Our military situation would become most difficult if Italy should make a separate peace, and much more so if Italy should change sides - a possibility one must always reckon with, when dealing with Italians. In either case, the enemy would make use of Italian territory to attack us.

HITLER And what then? Here in our German fortress,

and in the lands we have conquered,, we are unconquerable. We have everything we want - foodstuffs, oil, raw materials. If the worst came to the very worst, we could still hold out for many years, if necessary for ever, or until the enemy is forced from weariness to make peace on our terms - that is, to leave us masters of Europe.

KEITEL We must also take account of weariness among our people, mein Fuehrer. These reports . . .

HITLER (*sweeping them aside*) Ah, now you poach on my preserves, Herr von Keitel. That is *my* affair, and Himmler here is responsible to me for it, not yourself. Leave the people to me, please. Am I the only man of courage here? The people? The people are behind *me*, solidly, jubilantly! You underrate them. You are out of touch with them. You do not go among them. Did you hear their reception of my last speech in Munich? Listen!

(He goes to a gramophone and puts on a record. A few words in his voice are heard, followed by the familiar, ear-splitting roar of frantic applause. He stands by it for a full minute, while the uproar continues, triumphantly surveying them, then turns it off)

You hear! *That* is Germany! *That* is the people's voice!

GORING (*cautiously*) Of course, Munich has not been much bombed, mein Fuehrer.

HITLER (*furiously*) Bombs¹ Do you want to tell me that my German people are less able to stand up to bombing than the English? The English were not broken by our bombing, and it was heavy enough. Now it is the turn of our people, to hold out for a little while.

GORING Ja, but . . . The situation is not quite the same, mein Fuehrer. The war, and our people, are two years older,

KEITEL Our reports of unrest from the occupied territories, too, are disturbing, mein Fuehrer.

HITLER Again I tell you, Herr Feldmarschall, that is *my* affair- and Himmler's. It is the affair of the Gestapo and the SS, not of the army.

HIMMLER I can answer for the occupied countries, mein Fuehrer. The Gestapo and the SS will suppress all sedition there, hereafter as in the past.

KEITEL No one questions the efficiency of your organization, Herr Himmler, but were you able to guarantee the life of Herr Heydrich?

HIMMLER (*angrily*) That was a solitary case. There is a margin of error in all human things. It does not affect the general situation. I can give the Fuehrer my full guarantee for order in the occupied countries.

KEITEL (*heel-clicking, gravely*) Mein Fuehrer, as a German general and your Chief-of-Staff, my duty is to obey your orders. But a part of that duty is also to depict the situation to you as I see it, without illusions. The civilian situation, in my view, can no longer be completely separated from the military situation; they begin to overlap. I do not wish to question Herr Himmler's judgment, but frankly, I begin to fear the time when the Gestapo may fear the populations more than the populations will fear the Gestapo.

HITLER And I tell you your fears are illusions. I tell you that / decide what is to be done and is not to be done. Do you think I shall allow the stupendous work I have done, in uniting Europe under the rule of Germany, to be imperilled by these phantoms of your imagination? I remember too well the way Germany's victory was thrown away by traitors in the last war. I do not like the atmosphere here. I smell insubordination in this Prussian air. I smell fainthearts.

G5RING There are no fainthearts here, mein Fuehrer, only devoted followers of yourself.

KEITEL And there is no insubordination, mein Fuehrer, only a desire to see the situation clearly and to inform you correctly.

HITLER Gd'od. Then let me tell you that it is *you* who do not see the situation correctly. You do not see the great difference between our situation now and our situation in 1918. We could have had victory in 1918, but for the fact that the Kaiser was a weak man and did not have a united

nation behind him. All sorts of parties and factions existed, and as soon as things went a little wrong the Kaiser found himself nothing but a lonely figurehead, while all these groups and parties, which cared nothing for Germany, fought each other for power in the land. They deserted him and he ran away. To-day the situation is entirely different. There are no parties. There is only the nation, welded into a compact, organic whole behind my leadership. The National Socialist Party, through its organization, controls every department of civilian life, great and small. Behind it, as a guarantee of unity, as an insurance against desertion and disruption, stand the Gestapo and the SS, which have all the arms they need. The army, and the other fighting forces, have been made progressively more and more National Socialist - as you will know, Herr Feldmarschall von Keitel - by the wholesale promotion, in the commissioned and non-commissioned ranks, of trustworthy National Socialists. Thus, as you will see, gentlemen, there are no cracks in this edifice. There are no possibilities of disruption or faction. Either the entire edifice stands, with me, or it crashes completely, with me. Thus, when you talk of 'the people', and their weariness, and hint at all sorts of consequences, you show that *you* misunderstand our situation, and not I.

(After this eloquent but violent oration, he strides excitably about. This brings him near to COLONEL VON HINDENBURG, whom, stopping abruptly, he confronts)

HITLER Colonel von Hindenburg, you are master of this house, and my host. I am your guest. I am glad you are here. I should like to know if *you* have views about these matters. What do you think of what you have just heard?

HINDENBURG P Mein Fuehrer, I do not know what you wish to hear from me, or what I can say. I do not know or understand enough about these things to have any views. I am not even a serving officer. I have been on the retired list since my father's death; you placed me on it. I lead the

quiet life of a country gentleman, here in Neudeck. I know nothing of public affairs or of our war situation.

HITLER Herr Colonel, many others like yourself, who are not serving officers, lead the quiet lives of country gentlemen on these cold Prussian estates, and yet contrive to know a great deal about public affairs. (*Excitably*) More than that, they interfere a great deal in public affairs, or they would like to. From what I hear, they consider themselves, indeed, the real masters of Germany, and presume to decide who shall rule this country, and for how long, and when he shall be discarded. The Moor has served his turn; the Moor can go', that is their motto. You are a grown man, Herr Colonel, and your father's son. You have remarked nothing of all this?

HINDENBURG (*coldly*) Nothing, mein Fuehrer.

HITLER Colonel von Hindenburg, if you perceive so little of what goes on about you, it is well that you are not a serving officer; you would win no battles. You must know that the history of the last eleven years in Germany was shaped in this very house. *You* know full well where it was decided that I should be appointed Chancellor, and by whom — by your father and his fellow squires hereabouts. You know that this was not done because they loved me, but because they thought my shoulders were the right ones to bear the onus of Germany's rearmament - and the blame if things went ill again. This is a notable house, this Neudeck. (*He looks round the room*) It is history in stone. Why, your grandfather saw Napoleon's soldiers in this room, Colonel von Hindenburg!

HINDENBURG Yes, mein Fuehrer. He saw them. He saw them come . . . (*he pauses*) . . . and he saw them go.

HITLER (*violently*) Ah, there speaks the arrogance of Prussia. I read your mind, Herr von Hindenburg. I know what goes on. I smell the brew that is being cooked here, in these remote Prussian estates. But Neudeck will not see *me* come . . . (*he pauses*) . . . and go! 7 stay! I do not delude myself that your friends love me. And they should not delude themselves that I do not know their every word

and thought and move. (*He turns and glances at Himmler*)

HINDENBURG (*stiffly*) Mem Fuehrer, I can only repeat that I do not know to what you allude. I must ask you to accept my word as a Prussian officer, even if I am not a serving one, that I know nothing of any feeling or activities of the kind you suggest. My friends here, such as are left of them - many of them lie in Russian graves - and I occupy ourselves with our crops and our cattle and leave affairs of State to the leaders of the nation.

HITLER (*with a hoarse laugh*) Mein Gott, if I did not know Prussia so well, I might believe you. Herr Colonel, this is your ancestral home. Your family lost it - you Prussian gentlemen, often enough, are damned good soldiers and politicians, but damned bad farmers. Neudeck was bought and given back to you by the *former* rulers of Germany. By doing that, they made your Herr Father the puppet of their will, and when he appointed me, I was to be another puppet. They reckoned without *me*. They will not throw me overboard, as they threw the Kaiser. But you can tell me something I wish to know. That is why I desired you to come here. Twenty-five years ago, your father was the real ruler of Germany and the Kaiser was a figurehead. Your father turned the Kaiser out, by threatening him with the desertion of the army and civil war. Tell me, *why* did he do that? Germany was still strong, invincible. Germany was master of Europe . . . German troops held half Russia, Poland, the Balkans, Belgium, a large part of France. Germany could have fought on for years, and have gained victory, but for that betrayal. *Why* did your father turn the Kaiser out and surrender instead of fighting on, as a German general should? *Why*?

HINDENBURG My father would not have agreed with your description of his action, mein Fuehrer. He repeatedly told me the story and to the moment of his death his bitterest regret was that he was forced to advise the Kaiser to go. But the alternative was civil war in Germany, and that was worse. He believed he could best serve Germany by the action he took. He looked far ahead. Was he not right?

HITLER Ah, he looked *far ahead*] And that justifies treachery! You have told me what I wanted to know. As long as all goes well, the loyalty of these gentlemen is impeccable. But when things go wrong, they begin to 'look far ahead'. Then they turn on the man who has lifted them up and made them important. The traitors and self-seekers suddenly perceive (*with heavy sarcasm*) that they can 'serve Germany better' by 'looking far ahead'⁷. They begin to talk about 'the people!' The people are weary, they say, the people need peace - they who plunder and oppress the people! Here in East Prussia, among the Junkers, that plot was hatched, and your Herr Father did the dirty work and was made an honorary Junker for his reward. To-day, certain gentlemen would like to repeat the trick, perhaps? But I am not the man to be shown the door like that! I know everything that goes on, and I do not wait for others to trip me up, I trip them up first. I did not set up my headquarters in your house by accident, Colonel von Hindenburg. This is a good look-out post and a good listening post. I know where German politics are hatched - I am an Austrian, and we Austrians know the Prussians. Your Herr Father once turned me out of his house, as his cronies would like to turn me out of power to-day. A 'Bohemian corporal', he contemptuously called me, this beaten general. He rated me as if I were some slovenly recruit on the barrack square and brandished his stick at me - and six months later it was, 'Ah, come in Herr Hitler, come in, and be Chancellor'. Ah no, gentlemen. I know with whom I have to deal. You may tell any who care to know that the story of 1918 will *not* be repeated. Here in Neudeck the old Diehards, thinking themselves very clever, decided that I might, by their grace, become Chancellor. Here in Neudeck old Hindenburg died and I became, *whether they liked it or not*, master of Germany - absolute unchallenged master! Now I am master of Europe! Here in Neudeck, I tell you that I intend to remain master of Germany and master of Europe. I tell you that the German *people* want this, no matter what a few Prussian generals

and landowners or Rhineland manufacturers want. If you doubt me, you may accompany Himmler here on a tour of the SS camps and barracks. What you see will convince you of my ability to be as good as my word. Now, gentlemen, you may go¹ (*His face is dark red and he seems to boil with suppressed fury*)

(HINDENBURG says 'Heil Hitler', salutes, and goes out. KEITEL *imprcturbably* collects his papers and withdraws. GORING stands his ground and speaks:)

GORING (*roundly*) Mein Fuehrer, I do not understand all this. You hint at treachery and intrigue and by the way you spoke you appeared to include me in your reproaches and warnings,. You have no cause to reproach me. I said once, years ago, that I was your truest paladin, and that is true. I have never failed you in word or deed. I think you are too ready to suspect disloyalty.

(HITLER *lias* changed from violent excitement to calm. He goes to GORING and lays a hand on his shoulder in a reassuring, coaxing and friendly manner)

HITLER Ach no, Hermann, you are wrong. Believe me, I have a sixth sense for treachery. *I feel* it about me, like fog, like a draught. What I said was not addressed to you. I wanted you to hear it, but it was meant for those two, and for all the others to whom they will repeat it. They needed a fright. You and I have marched side by side for twenty years. (*He becomes sentimental and almost maudlin*) I could not have become what I am without you, nor you what you are without me. But I have suffered so much from disloyalty and treachery in my time. I have come to fear the poison that ambition may become, in other men, - even in you, perhaps. Think of Julius Caesar and Brutus. Think of Napoleon and Bernadotte. So many who called themselves my sworn comrades have deserted me-Strasser, Roehm (GORING *stiffens*), Ribbentrop . . . You were and are the only one in whom my trust has never once

faltered. That is why I have raised you to the highest place in this land, next to mine, and named you my successor. We are of the same age, you and I, yet you are to me more like a son. We have our greatest fight before us and we will fight it together, like all the other fights, with God's help. Go now!

(GORING *leaves*. When the door has closed, HITLER turns to HIMMLER. His mood and mien have changed again. *He is a picture of crafty cunning and suspicion*)

HITLER (*savagely*) I can read his mind like a book. He begins to see himself as the saviour of Germany, as the new Hindenburg. He always had the military germ in his blood. His father was a general, and he himself dearly loves a squire. Such men never really forgive obscure birth and a penurious home in others. If it were not for my SS, I would not give a moment's purchase for his loyalty. But Hermann understands *that* argument.

HIMMLER I was watching the Reichsmarschall and clearly saw the doubt in his eyes when you mentioned Ribbentrop's desertion, mein Fuehrer. I fear the explanation that he ran away is now discredited on all sides. The belief that he went on your orders is so general that even people in important places openly discuss it. The only difference of opinion is between those who think you sent him to prepare your own flight and those who think that he has been sent to effect some diplomatic masterstroke which will yet discomfort our enemies and leave us triumphant.

HITLER Canaille! Should they not know me better by now than to doubt me. For twenty-five years I have had no thought, waking or sleeping, but for Germany's good. I am not the man to run away, like the Kaiser (*He pauses a moment, thinking. Then, abruptly*) Himmler, are those prisoners here?

HIMMLER Yes, they are downstairs. Do you still wish to see them?

HITLER (*eagerly*) Yes, yes, I am impatient to see them. Bring them in at once.

(HIMMLER goes out, and returns with a British and an American airman, accompanied by an officer. Both wear R.A.F. uniform, but the American has the letters U.S.A. on his shoulder. HITLER, who has been looking at a map on the wall, turns and comes towards them. They stand at attention, gradually relaxing this during the conversation. He looks at them for a long moment. They look at him with great curiosity. Then he speaks, to the Englishman, who is awkward and embarrassed, as he would be with any stranger. He interlards his sentences with 'Er . . . er' and calls Hitler, 'Sir'; The American is self-possessed, pugnacious and blunt)

HITLER Do you know me?

ENGLISHMAN Er, aren't you Herr Hitler, sir?

HITLER (to the American) And you?

AMERICAN Why yeah, I guess so.

HITLER (to the Englishman) What is your name?

ENGLISHMAN Er, Johnson, sir.

HITLER And you have come here to bomb German women and children!

JOHNSON Er, no sir, we came to bomb the docks at Koenigsberg, and, er, I think we hit them before we were shot down.

HITLER Ach, the usual lie. The English always bomb 'only military objectives'. The women and children, of course, are killed by accident, or by a strange coincidence succumb to heart failure just at the moment the bombs fall.

JOHNSON Er, I think your Air Force claims in its communiqu^es to attack only military objectives, sir, but we have had fifty thousand civilians killed.

HITLER And who began this senseless murder of innocent women and children? You know that your country began it, and that I did not retaliate until I could see that your bloodthirsty Churchill would not listen to any reason, until I was forced to hit back.

JOHNSON (*awkwardly but firmly*) Well, sir, I'm afraid we don't er agree about that. Er, we think, that Germany began it, long before this war, at Guernica in Spain, and after this war began at Warsaw and Cracow and Rotterdam and many other places.

HITLER (*to HIMMLER*) Ah, here we have a victim of the lying propaganda of the democracies! (*to JOHNSON*) Mr. Johnson, you are probably a humane and well-meaning young man. You cannot believe that the things you are told are lies. Guernica was a Bolshevist fortress, and Spain I saved from Bolshevism by my action. But for me, all Europe would have been infected by the Bolshevist plague by now. Warsaw and Rotterdam were both fortified towns. I observed every letter of international law in my operations against them. If civilians were killed in them, their criminal leaders were to blame. Do you understand now?

JOHNSON (*more awkwardly than ever*) Er, well, er, sir, I'm afraid I don't. It seems to me that you, er, began first.

HITLER (*turning angrily from him to the American*) What is your name?

AMERICAN Muller.

HITLER Muller! You are a German!

MULLER No, I guess I'm an American citizen all right. My father was an Austrian. He came from Linz.

HITLER From Linz? I was born near there.

MULLER Yeah, I know. My mother came from the village where you were born, Leonding. She remembered your father. She's often told me about him. She even thinks she remembers you.

HITLER And did your parents not dissuade you from fighting against your Fatherland?

MULLER I guess *not*. They're both American citizens now. They wanted me to join up.

HITLER And you feel no sense of guilt in what you do? You come here to murder your own kinswomen, and your blood does not cry out to you 'Murderer! Traitor!'

MULLER I guess you've got me wrong, Mr. Hitler. I'm an American, and my country is at war with yours. And I

didn't come here to murder any women. I came to bomb the docks at Koenigsberg and, as Lutenant Johnson here has told you, I guess we hit them. If you don't approve of air-bombing, I guess you shouldn't have started it.

HITLER (*furiously*) Herr Lieutenant, you sin against your own blood. You are not an American, but a renegade German. You are in my eyes a traitor, and treachery is for me the blackest sin a man can commit. (*He takes an excited pace or two, stops to consider the two airmen, then turns to HIMMLER suddenly*) Himmler, leave me. I want to speak to these . . . officers.

HIMMLER (*in protest*) Aber, rnein Fuehrer¹

HITLER (*impatently*) Go. They are unarmed, are they not? I will call when I want you.

(HIMMLER and the officer go out. HITLER'S manner undergoes another of the familiar lightning changes. He casts off the harshness and violence and becomes friendly, charming and winning. He speaks to JOHNSON)

HITLER Where is your aerodrome, Mr. Johnson.

JOHNSON Er, I'm afraid I'm, er, not allowed to say that, sir.

HITLER (*dismissing the subject with a sweep of his hand*) I know, I know, I wanted to see what you would say. Are you married?

JOHNSON Yes, and we have two children.

HITLER So. And you (*to MULLER*).

MULLER No, I'm not married - yet.

HITLER (*to JOHNSON*) And what does your wife think of this war, Mr. Johnson?

JOHNSON Oh, er, she *loathes* it, sir.

HITLER But she gives you courage to go out and fight? She does not weaken you? Shp loves her Fatherland and realizes that your first duty is to it?

JOHNSON O lord, sir, er, I don't think she's ever thought of it like that.

HITLER But what does she *say* to you. Does she say, 'Go and fight>for England, and come back if God wills, but if

you do not, remember that you die for England, and that I shall bring up our children to be proud of their hero father.

JOHNSON, Good heavens, no, sir. She couldn't talk like that if she tried. Er, akcherlly, the sort of thing she usually says is, 'I wish to God you'd hurry up and lick the pants off those damned Jerries, Bill, and get the job over and come back to us'.

MULLER (*guffaws*)

HITLER You are joking. I knew an Englishwoman once, she was not like that.

JOHNSON Well, er, that's how my wife is, sir.

HITLER And has she no compassion for the women and children you kill with your bombs?

JOHNSON Er, I doubt very much whether I have killecj any women and children, sir, unless there were some in the docks at Koenigsberg, because this was my first trip in a bomber. But her mother was killed by a" bomb in London, so she has a lot of compassion for the women and children killed by *German* bombs.

HITLER Ach, I am sorry. Why did your Churchill begin **this** insensateslaughter?

(JOHNSON *looks at him without replying, and HITLER turns away for a pace or two. He stops some distance from JOHNSON and regards Jam curiously*)

HITLER You are strange people, Mr. Johnson, you English. You are good fighters, but bad soldiers. Mein Gott, what wretched soldiers you are. It is inexplicable that you go on fighting so long. It must be just stupidity. In every war you light your enemies chase you all over Europe for so long, that they finally become exhausted, and are too tired to resist when you turn on them. You will not do that to me. I keep in condition; I have plenty of stamina. We shall see who lasts the longer. But now tell me something you *are* allowed to say. You are the iirst English man with whom I have spoken since the war began, Why do the English hate me so?

JOHNSON Er, I really don't know that they do, sir, I don't think they hate anybody very much. They're a funny lot.

HITLER (*despairingly*) 'A funny lot!' Eine komische Gesellschaft! Mein Gott. But I do not believe you. The English hate Germany. I have always known it, since I was a schoolboy.

MULLER How could you know a thing like that, as a schoolboy in Linz, Mr. Hitler? Linz is a long way from England.

HITLER Ach, I have an instinct. It *is* so. Why else do the English always interfere with us? What business was it of theirs that we took back from the Poles our good German land which they stole from us.

JOHNSON Well, sir, I don't think they saw it quite like that. They didn't feel convinced that the land *was* German, and they didn't think it ought to be taken like that, anyway. But I think, er, what really worried them was the suspicion that their turn would come next, if they didn't sort of make a stand sometime.

HITLER (*energetically*) Nonsense! I never wanted war with England¹ Repeatedly I offered England peace. I offered England peace after Dunkirk. Did you know that, or did your Ministry of Lies keep it from you?

JOHNSON Er, I seem to remember something, vaguely, about a peace offer, or several peace offers, but I'm afraid it wasn't taken very seriously. People thought it might be a trick of yours - er, I mean, a trick of Germany's to gain time for an attack on us.

HITLER (*a well-meaning man bitterly wronged*) A lie\ I offered peace again when I attacked Russia. What more could I do? Always I have offered England peace. But the English do not *want* peace. They want to destroy Germany. I have proved this. Otherwise they could have had peace. I gave my WORD!

JOHNSON (*maintains an embarrassed silence*)

HITLER I gave my *word*, I say, as Fuehrer of the Great German Reich! Was that nothing?

JOHNSON (*ope?is Ins mouth and shuts it again, like a stranded fish*)

(*There is a painful pause, while HITLER waits*)

MULLER (*easily*) I guess they didn't believe you.

HITLER Herr Lieutenant, that is insolence. Your opinion would not interest me if you were an American - and you are a German. I have only contempt for America. What did America do in the last war, save appear, like a vulture, at the killing, to pick the bones? America hopes to play the same part again this time. But as you call yourself an American, I tell you that nothing would have saved America if England had made peace 'after Dunkirk. *Nothing*. The miserable patchwork you call American democracy would have fallen to pieces. America to-day would be a National Socialist State.

MULLER Then I guess it was lucky for us that England *drdrft* accept that peace offer.

HITLER Can you even give me one good reason why you fight against your Fatherland, Germany?

MULLER Sure. We're fighting for democracy and freedom and the Atlantic Charter.

HITLER (*genuinely startled*) What? Do you really believe what you say? Is such stupidity possible? Do you really not see that you are the tool of others? Himrnel, that such idiots should be able to make difficulties for a man like me¹ (*He shrugs*) Tell me, gentlemen, what do you think of me now that you see me?

MULLER I guess you're pretty much like your pictures.

JOHNSON (*driven into the uttctmost corner of embarrassment*) Well, er, I don't think you look quite as fierce as I expected, sir.

HITLER I am *not* fierce. I am a kindly, a peace-loving, a humane man. I detest cruelty - I eat no meat because I loathe the whole process of butchery. I love children, music, flowers, the mountains, the countryside. Now do you see how you have been lied to about me?

(Again he receives no answer, though much may be inferred from JOHNSON'S embarrassment and MULLER'S guarded silence. It shakes HITLER, who walks about again, firing questions at them)

HITLER Well, gentlemen, you are here, prisoners in Germany. You came, you saw, and you were conquered. None of your comrades will ever set foot in Germany save as prisoners, like yourselves. You are among the lucky ones. The less fortunate ones have only death to look forward to. (*He confronts them again*) What do you expect to gain from this war?

MULLER Waal, I guess we don't figure it out like that, anyway. American troops are coming over the Atlantic all the time, and they'll come in millions, if need be, and you can't stop them. That's how it was in 1918.

HITLER 1918¹

MULLER Yes, *sir*. And once they're across, I don't see how you'll stop them from getting into Germany sooner or later. We've got more ships, more aeroplanes, more staying power, more men, more food, and more money.

HITLER (*spitting the word out*) Money¹

MULLER Waal, it helps.

HITLER (*to JOHNSON*) Is that what you think?

JOHNSON Er, roughly, yes, *sir*.

HITLER But do you not realize, can you not see that the situation this time is quite *different* from 1918? There are no *parties* this time, to wrangle and argue and stab the army in the back and dismiss the Kaiser. This time there is only *one* Party, backed by the Gestapo, the SS, and the fighting forces, and headed by me. There is no possibility of disintegration *inside* Germany, this time. Do you not realize that this country will become one vast grave for British and American youth? Do you not realize that eighty million Germans will fight to the last man rather than give up what they have won?

JOHNSON (*awkwardly*) Well, *sir*, we've heard that, er, phrase about fighting to the last man very often, in this

war, and somehow it doesn't ever seem to happen. I don't think many people believe in it. Er, as a matter of fact we used it ourselves, after France collapsed, when we expected you to invade us every day, but we were so un-armed and unready, akcherlly, that I doubt whether it would really have been possible for us to fight to the last man, if you had arrived then. We don't think there's any future for Germany in fighting to the last man now, and I think most of us expect Germany to call off the war fairly soon now and, er, try and prepare another one in twenty years' time.

HITLER (*slowly*) So¹ That is what you expect! But no doubt in that event, if your countries *were* able, as you delude yourselves, to overcome Germany, they would take every precaution to make that impossible?

JOHNSON (*with the ghost of an uneasy smile*) Er, well, I wouldn't like to invest any money in that, sir. Our politicians are a law unto themselves. They can do things which you would think impossible. I wouldn't put it at all beyond them to get us into a third war in twenty years' time.

HITLER (*in bewilderment*) And you do not care? You are not even *interested!*

JOHNSON Well, er, it's all very complicated, sir. We don't seem *able* to do anything about it, somehow. They're a funny lot, the English.

HITLER (*sharply*) You said that before. I find them only stupid, *not* funny.

JOHNSON Well, er, I suppose they *are*, sir, in a way. It's about the same thing. But would you mind if I, er, asked *you* a question, sir?

HITLER What?

JOHNSON Why didn't you invade us after Dunkirk, sir, when we were in such a mess — nothing ready, no arms, no defences, no organization, nothing? I've often puzzled about that, akcherlly?

MULLER Yeah, I'd like to know the answer to that one, too.

HITLER (*explosively*) Ach, Dunkirk, Dunkirk, Dunkirk!

The vyhole world seems able only to say one word - Dunkirk! There was a Queen of England who said that when she died the name of Calais would be found on her heart. On mine, you may find Dunkirk.

(They watch him with fascination during this outburst)

HITLER Dunkirk¹ You come here, Mr. Johnson, and you, Herr Lieutenant, and use this word as if you were rich men showing a gold coin to a beggar. Do you realize, are your brains capable of understanding that Dunkirk was one of the most stupendous military victories in the history of Europe? In a few days we crushed two small nations and one great nation, and drove the soldiers of another great power into the sea. There never was such a complete and smashing victory as that which the German armies brought to completion at Dunkirk. All that our enemies saved from that calamity was the bare lives of a few score thousand demoralized men who, instead of being captured or drowned, climbed like terrified rats into small boats and barges and were ferried back to England. And yet - to hear you talk, to hear the world talk, a man would think Dunkirk was a German disaster and an English triumph. My greatest victory is turned by my enemies into a thing with which to deride and mock me. How can the world be duped by that? It is too farcical. I cannot understand it, I cannot understand it. Mark my words, gentlemen, a man may conquer Europe or the whole world, and then be defeated by the stupidity of mankind. One of our greatest German poets, Schiller, wrote that, long ago: 'Against stupidity, the gods themselves struggle in vain.' If men do not know when they are beaten, how can I coriqyer them?

(He becomes restless under their gaze, turns away, and goes to the map of the world, on the wall. Then he calls to them, over his shoulder, 'Come here' They go across and stand near him)

HITLER Look at this map! Look at this enormous area of

land, a good slice of the whole world, which I have conquered. Now look at this paltry island in the North Sea. (*He points to the little red blob, England*) Would you think that a man who has run such a race as I could trip over this pebble, just before the winning post? Is it possible that this tiny and barbaric land, century after century, can bring every man to disaster who sets out to make this world a better place? (*He makes a violent gesture of anger and repugnance*)

JOHNSON Er, I know nothing of politics, sir, but I never could understand how any European country, however strong on land, could incur the risk of war with England unless it had a navy strong enough to have a good chance of defeating the British Navy - or an air force able to blow the British Navy out of the sea. After all, that little strip of water (*he points to the English Channel*) is one of the most formidable obstacles in the world. What shall it profit a man, I mean, if he conquer all Europe, unless he can cross the English Channel?

HITLER Ach, the sea.

MULLER Yeah, and that goes for America, too. I can't figure out how any European country could run the risk of starting a war that might bring America in on the other side unless it has a navy strong enough to prevent American armies from crossing those two thousand miles of open sea. (*He points to the Atlantic Ocean*) As long as those stretches of water are open, defeat in the long run seems inevitable to me, for any European country that starts the war, however strong it may be on land. It just don't make any sense to me.

HITLER The sea!

JOHNSON (*apologetically*) Er, I hope you don't mind us speaking so freely, sir. I'm afraid you rather encouraged us ...

HITLER Go on.

JOHNSON I was only going to say, sir, er, you see we've got the sea in our blood. We *are* stupid, no doubt, as you say, but we do understand the sea and its importance to us.

That's one thing we *do* know about, and we've a thousand years of experience. I read Shakespeare a bit, and the other day I came across a piece in one of his plays, *Antony and Cleopatra*, which seems to me to apply to Germany's position in this war. Er, you haven't told us *why* you didn't invade us after Dunkirk, but it seems to me this quotation may supply the answer. Antony is setting out to fight Caesar at sea, and a soldier comes to him and says

O noble Emperor, do not fight by sea;
Trust not to rotten planks; do you misdoubt
This sword and these my wounds? Let the
Egyptians and Phoenicians go a-ducking; we
Have used to conquer standing on the earth
And fighting foot to foot.

HITLER Shakespeare wrote that?

JOHNSON Yes.

(HITLER, *deep in thought, takes a pace or two and then turns to the two airmen*)

HITLER Do you know, gentlemen, that I never *saw* the sea before I became ruler of Germany? (*They stare*) No, never once. I was a boy - in the Austrian countryside. I was a youth - in Munich. I was a young man - in the trenches. I was a grown man - and I campaigned up and down the towns and cities of Germany for fourteen years, until I made my Party great, and beat all others from the field, and was made Chancellor. I was acclaimed by hundreds of thousands of Germans in the Wilhelmstrasse. Hindenburg died, and I became absolute master of this land. I built the greatest army and air force the world has ever seen. I thought of everything. I forgot nothing. I thought of the navy, too. I did not forget it. I knew there was something called the sea, and something called the navy, and because it was -something to fight with, I did all I could to make it strong.

(*A long pause, while he moves about*)

HITLER But I never really *understood it*. And in all those years I *never once saw the sea*, until one day, not long before this war, when I went for a trip in the Baltic in one of Ley's Strength through Joy ships. I thought of everything. But I never saw the sea. I do not understand the sea. It looks so little on the map. It looks dull, so harmless, so uninteresting, when you travel on it. It did not look as if defeat lurked in it. I do not understand the sea. What is it about this wet, grey thing that makes it such a menace and such a snare?

(He breaks off and looks into space, while they watch him. Suddenly he recovers, strides to the table, presses a bell, and instantly the door opens, to admit HIMMLER and the officer)

HITLER You may take these gentlemen away.

(They go out. HIMMLER returns, but HITLER motions him away and he goes out again, closing the door. HITLER stands a moment, thinking, then crosses the room to the map. He looks at it, spans the English Channel with his fingers, the Atlantic with his hands)

HITLER The sea! I never saw the sea!

As he makes a violent downward and outward gesture of dejection and repulsion

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT III

Time: *Several months later.*

Scene: *Hitler's 'Tea House', built on the topmost peak of the Kehlstem, a Bavarian mountain 1000 feet high. This is one of the most remarkable buildings in the world, accessible only by means of a lift built in the heart of the mountain. The lift shaft is 400 feet high, and the ascent takes three minutes. The 'Tea House' has been described as a structure beyond the dreams of the richest man in this world, and one which could only have been built by a man who has at his disposal the entire resources of a State. It occupies the whole area of the peak, which was blunted to allow it to be built. It is surrounded on all sides by Alpine peaks, while the sides of the Kehlstein fall from it in precipitous ravines.*

In this fantastic place Hitler likes to sit and feel Wagnerian. Not much has been published about it in the world, and what has appeared ignores, as far as the writer of this play knows, a most interesting thing - the strange resemblance between the characters and castle-building exploits of Hitler and another man. Yet the comparison seems to the present writer to offer a possible clue to the enigma of Hitler. For the 'Tea House', which you might expect to be unique on this planet, actually has a not dissimilar neighbour in Bavaria, and not very far away. This is the castle of Neuschwanstem, which, white and turreted, rises towering and inaccessible in the mountain mists from another Bavarian peak. It was built by King Ludwig II of Bavaria, he who was Wagner's patron, and who spent a great part of his life in a romantic passion for Wagner, both as man and musician, which found expression in the building of this fairy-tale castle on a mountain top, this cloud-cloaked ogre's eyrie, and many other dream-dwellings or nightmare-palaces throughout Bavaria, culminating in a preposterous mock-Versailles on the Chiemsee. The extreme forms which this King's Wagner-mania took may be realized from the astonishing winter-garden he made

in his rooms at Munich, where he would glide in a swan-like gondola of the Lohengrin type, dressed in the costume of the Swan-knights, and listen to the music of the master, played by a hidden orchestra. But his favourite abode was the mountaintop castle at Neuschwansteui, where lie would dream his life away among clouds, snowstorms, thunderstorms, Teutonic frescoes, Gothic gloom and Wagnenan music. In 1886 the Bavarian Cabinet and the other members of the Royal House decided that this King was insane; a Regency was established, he was put under constraint and taken to Berg, and there disappeared during a walk by the Starnberger Lake with his attendant, Dr. Gudden. The two bodies were afterwards found in the lake.

This tragedy of 1886 is an old one, but it inevitably springs to the mind when, in the mneteen-thirties, Hitler, the dark and brooding Wagner-worshipper, builds another, and an even more inaccessible retreat on a Bavarian mountain-top and withdraws to it to be alone with his dreams of Germanic godhead and Teutonic fury, with the snowcapped peaks and the thunderstorms that crash against the crags and ravines. Here is the ideal setting for a mind clouded with dark designs of world conquest. And here, surely, for the purpose of a play, is the perfect background for the last scene in the demoniac Hitlerian interlude that begyn in 1953 and approaches its end as this play is being written.

The scene is the great saloon of the Tea House, a semi-circular apartment with six windows set in foot-thick walls built of great blocks of red sandstone. Between each window is a heavy six-branched candelabrum; and in the central space is also a clock. Through the tall windows are seen the grim crags, peaks and snowcaps of the Hoher Goll range, and a deep blue sky above them. The glimpse through the windows conveys an impression of gaunt remoteness and utter loneliness.

(Two stalwart uniformed servants are setting tea-cups on small tables placed back-stage, near the line of windows)

FIRST SERVANT It's a long time since we had a tea-party up here, Karl.

SECOND SERVANT (*gruffly*) Ja.

FIRST SERVANT Do you remember the first one of all - when that old Chamberlain came to Munich?

SECOND SERVANT Ja, that was a busy time for us.

FIRST SERVANT And wasn't the Fuehrer pleased, when it was all over! Like a child, he was. I can see him now, taking off that old Chamberlain. Lifelike it was. I couldn't keep my face straight. He had 'em all in fits of laughter - Ribbentrop, Goring, Goebbels, the whole lot. I thought then that it was always going to be like that, up here - parties, and foreign kings and politicians coming and going all the time. I wish we could have more of that. It's too lonely for my liking, up here, stuck on top of a mountain. It gives me the creeps. Since the war began the Fuehrer's only been here twice, arid then alone.

SECOND SERVANT He's got other things to think about. He's no time to come here until the war's over.

FIRST SERVANT That's likely to be a long time yet, from what I can see.

SECOND SERVANT That's the Fuehrer's business, not ours. Our job is to lay these tables. You talk too much. Your tongue will get you into trouble one day. (*A buzzer sounds*) Achturig, there he is. The lift's coming up.

(They transform themselves into expressionless automatons. After a few moments they click Jieels, salute and cry 'Heil Hitler', as HITLER enters, with MEISSNER and PRINCE AUGUST WILHELM, one of the former Kaiser's younger son's, now a National Socialist Party official.

In the first two scenes, HITLER has been a man suspicious to the point of mania, excitable to the point of hysteria, but sane. In this scene a subtle change has taken place in him. There is a hint of madness in his gestures, his mien, the smirk of crafty cunning which continually shows through his expression.

MEISSNER and AUGUST WILHELM look wonderingly around them. MEISSNER is stolid and guarded} AUGUST WILHELM is foppish, and his appearance does not suggest great intellectual gifts)

HITLER Well, Prince? Well, Meissner? What do you think, of it?

MEISSNER I never imagined anything like it, mein Fuehrer.

AUGUST WILHELM It is quite *fantastic*, mein Fuehrer. A stupendous idea magnificently carried out.

HITLER It is a half-way thing between heaven and earth. Here lean *think*. Here the brain is cool and clear. I planned my greatest successes up here - Austria, Munich, Prague. I knew in advance exactly how they would work out. Up here you get distance and detachment, you can see deep into the minds of your adversaries. I wish I could have spent more time here during the war, but I could not. My soldiers needed me at the Front. But I have come here again now, to receive my visitors. If they wish to visit me, they must come to the mountain - my mountain. (*He chuckles*)

MEISSNER The view is unique. On a clear day, I should think you could see for hundreds of miles from here.

AUGUST WILHELM It is Kolossal! The gods themselves might envy you this place, mein Fuehrer.

HITLER The Gods! A man becomes a god, when he has my power, and sits up here. What you see to-day is nothing - *nothing*. The view! What is a view? A picture postcard. You should be here during a great storm, as I have been. Ah, that is something few men have ever experienced in the history of the world - a storm among these mountains. You cannot imagine how majestic that is. Up here, you belong to the elements. You ride the winds and hurl thunderbolts at the earth below. The black clouds come rolling up those ravines and impale themselves upon the peaks. Then, suddenly, the roar of thunder, hurled backward and forward between those echoing walls of rock. Lightning stabbing incessantly on all sides. Rain beating

down with a noise like all the drums in the world. It is as if the forces of hell were let loose.

AUGUST WILHELM *Mein Gott*¹

MEISSNER (*rubbing his chin*) Urn, that must indeed be an amazing sight, mein Fuehrer.

HITLER Ja, that is a sight. We are six thousand feet high, up here. The lift is our only link with the world. If someone blew it up I do not know how we should ever get down again. (*He laughs unpleasantly*) Ja, I wish you could see such a storm, up here. You would never forget it. Perhaps we shall have one, this afternoon. It is an experience, gentlemen, an unforgettable experience. And all life is experience. What music Wagner would have written if he could have lived here.

AUGUST WILHELM (*somewhat uneasily*) Does the loneliness not oppress you, mein Fuehrer?

HITLER Oppress me? It invigorates me. I love it. I had this place built so that I could find it.

AUGUST WILHELM It reminds me very much of Neuschwanstein.

HITLER *What?*

AUGUST WILHELM I laid it very similar to Neuschwanstein.

HITLER It resembles nothing else on earth. It is unique. Have you been to Neuschwanstein?

AUGUST WILHELM Yes.

HITLER Then why do you compare that madman's prank with the Tea House, Herr Prince? The two places have nothing in common.

AUGUST WILHELM (*hastily*) Mein Fuehrer, I only meant, the situation, the view. . . .

HITLER Herr Prince, Neuschwanstein is a madman's nightmare in stone, built on a mountain top. He was a kinsman of yours, was he not? Perhaps *you* have some of his blood! He was put away, you remember, and drowned himself and his doctor in the Starnberger Lake. A pretty scandal for the courts of Europe, that was. Gott sei dank, those courts are gone, and you, Herr Prince, are a minor

official of my Party, and Bavaria, and Germany, are ruled by a different kind of man to-day. (*Fiercely*) Do not compare me with the lunatic who built Neuschwanstein. My Tea House is no princely folly with a thousand turrets, but a simple place for a man to come and rest who has to think, not for Bavaria, not for Germany, but for all Europe'

AUGUST WILHELM Pardon, mein Fuehrer, I had no intention of making any comparison whatever. You find things in my words which were not there. There *is* a resemblance in the sites of Neuschwanstein and the Tea House, because both are built on mountain tops. That is all I said.

HITLER Ach, you always say so much and yet say nothing. You are like all the members of your prolific House, Prince-ling. Your Herr Father was the same. So many big words - and then, so hushed a departure. But I want you to tell me something, Prince August Wilhelm. If I remember rightly, your august parent always maintained that he abdicated in 1918 only as German Emperor and not as King of Prussia. Is that right?

AUGUST WILHELM (*hesitatingly*) I believe that was technically his view, mein Fuehrer.

HITLER (*suavely*) And is it still technically the view of your House?

AUGUST WILHELM (*protestmgly*) Mein Fuehrer, the thing is dead. I have been in your Party for many years, and my brothers too. Some of my nephews, the Kaiser's grandsons, have been killed fighting for you in this war'

HITLER I require information, Herr Prince. Is it still *technically* the view of your House?

AUGUST WILHELM (*in confusion*) Why, *technically*, I suppose it is, mein Fuehrer. But we have no aspirations....

HITLER Aspirations? Given the vacancy, the candidates would soon present themselves. Spare yourself any uneasiness, Prince. I may think fit to restore the Monarchy in Germany one day. My mind is not yet made up on that point. Much depends on the course of the next twenty or thirty years.

(They look at him in blank amazement)

HITLER *(looking at the clock on the wall)* Well, these gentlemen will soon be here. We shall see what they want. They 'demand' to see me, forsooth. They may 'demand'; they will find that I *command*. They would like to dictate to me, these pigmies. They think they detect a tide in the affairs of men which will lead them on to fortune. But first, they would like to get rid of me. They think I do not notice what is afoot, that they will take me unawares. I know what they are after. *(He imitates his callers-to-be; HITLER is a born mimic)* Mein Fuehrer, the military situation of Germany is desperate . . . Mein Fuehrer, we urge your temporary withdrawal from the leadership . . . Ach, these jackals. *(He turns suddenly on MEISSNER)* For God's sake sit down, Meissner. Don't stand there and gape.

(MEISSNER moves imperturbably to a chair and sits in it. HITLER strides to the window, right)

HITLER *(pomting)* Look over there. You see that dark mass in the distance, a hundred miles away. Those are the forests of Bohemia, dear old Bohemia of the fairy-tales. Well, I have made the name of Bohemia a fairy-tale, and it begins 'Once upon a time there was a country called Czechoslovakia . . .'
(He strides across the stage to the window, left) Down there is Salzburg; just beyond it, my birthplace. When I first came up here, Meissner, *that (he points)* was not a fairy-tale, but Czechoslovakia. *That (he points)* was Austria. This place was not finished. There was no glass in the windows. Now it is finished, and everything you can see and far beyond, is ours! Ours! From the English Channel to the Mediterranean, from the Atlantic to the Black Sea, everything is ours. I have done that'll alone. And now these pettifogging bankers and landlords and generals and manufacturers think to show me the door'

(AUGUST WILHELM is a picture of horror. MEISSNER makes no answer. HITLER turns and comes slowly towards him, stands facing him a moment in silence)

HITLER Meissner, my good Herr Meissner, my inscrutable Meissner, I should like to know what is in your mind. It is one of the few I cannot plumb. You interest me. You are a ghost of the past, of all the pasts. When your father (*he looks at* AUGUST WILHELM) was the mighty man in Germany, our good Meissner sat in his office in the Wilhelmstrasse, shouted 'Hoch', and took the Kaiser's medals. When the Reds came, and made their Republic, and your Herr Father quietly slipped out of the side door, our trusty and well-beloved Meissner went on sitting in his office, and cried 'Hoch', and served the Reds, and became old Ebert's right-hand man. When Hindenburg came, Meissner still sat in his office, and became Hindenburg's right-hand man. No matter how often the scene changed, Meissner stayed. And when I arrived, I took Meissner over, because he was useful to me. I took you, too, Prince, because you were a good man with the teacups and in the legations and drawing-rooms. But our Meissner was invaluable. He knew the ways of foreign governments and foreign diplomats; he knew how to handle and how to outwit these gentlemen. And now I wonder, my good Meissner, whether I *should* have kept you. Do you never change, never grow old? Do you to-day picture yourself serving the next ruler of Germany - some puppet prince or puppet politician? You would not even need to change the furniture in your office or the ink in your inkwell. Why, if Bolshevism were to triumph in Germany, you would be Chef-de-Protocol to the Chief Commissar. Mem Gott! Keep your fancy within bounds, Meissner. I am master here, and intend to remain master. Power of life and death, is mine, as these gentlemen may find, whom we now await.

MEISSNER (*quietly*) Mein Fuehrer, I do not know why you speak to me like this. My loyalty is absolute. I am an official, and when the form of State has changed, my loyalty to Germany has remained.

HITLER (*loudly*) Now I am the State.

MEISSNER Now *you* are the State, and therefore my loyalty is to you. In the past, changes frequently occurred in the

leadership of the State — four such in our turbulent times alone. I did not help to bring them about. I could not avert them. But what would have happened to Germany if, each time the form of State changed, every servant of the State had committed suicide or fled abroad? Somebody had to carry on. It is not disloyalty that keeps such men as I at our posts and in our seats, during such changing times, but loyalty. We continue to serve Germany. When the owner of a great house goes away, the permanent staff must remain to look after it, or it would soon fall into dilapidation. They tend it, so that it may be habitable when the owner returns - or a new owner comes. What good end would they serve by desertion? I do not know of any new change that impends in Germany, mein Fuehrer. Like Prince August Wilhelm here, who cannot get his mouth closed again, from shock, I am bewildered by the way you talk. I feel that you may see disloyalty where none is. I simply defend myself against your reproaches, or perhaps your sarcasm would be a better word, about my conduct in the past. If my service to you has been without flaw, I cannot think why you should speak so bitterly of earlier things.. If I have been useful to you, surely that vindicates my conception of my duty.

HITLER There speaks the official! There is a Ministerial document come to life. And what would your loyalty command you to do if / were overthrown.

MEISSNER My loyalty forbids me even to contemplate such a possibility, mein Fuehrer. I serve Germany, and you are Germany's Fuehrer.

HITLER Words, words! The West Wall that I built, the greatest fortification the world has ever seen, is a broken-down fence compared with the verbiage behind which you entrench yourself.

(The buzzer sounds)

HITLER Here they are!

(He takes a challenging attitude, upstage, right, confronting the door, left. After a moment, it opens. Enter GORING, VON KEITEL, SCHACHT, OSKAR VON

HINDENBURG, VOGLER and KRUPP (*the representatives of Ruhr-and-Rhineland big business*). Each as he comes in salutes with upraised right arm and 'Heil Hitler'. None of these men, save GORING, has seen the Tea House before, and their eyes turn involuntarily to the fantastic panorama of peak-and-crag seen through the windows)

HITLER Go on, gentlemen, look at the view while you are here. It is unique. And it all belongs to us, to you, to Germany. Four years ago this was a frontier outpost. Everything you can see belonged to the enemies of Germany. Behind those mountains and forests they lurked, encircling us, hemming us in, waiting to spring on us. I have brought all this within the boundaries of the Reich - all that you see and a hundred times as much again. Perhaps some of you would like to hand it all back again?

(During this speech, all save GORING, who looks puzzled and has taken up a position midstage, half-way between HITLER and KEITEL, and KEITEL, who remains where he came in, move across to the window, look round, up and down, and return, to form a loose group upstage, left, facing HITLER. Their bearing is constrained but dogged)

HITLER Well, gentlemen, you have come to the mountain? What do you want?

GORING Mein Fuehrer, you sent for me. I did not know these gentlemen were to be present. What is the purpose of this meeting?

HITLER That is what I am waiting to hear, Hermann. I wished you to hear it, too, whatever it may be. These gentlemen have demanded to see me.

GORING (*starts*) Demanded! (*He turns and looks questioningly at KEITEL*) What is this?

KEITEL (*moves a pace forward from the others*) Mein Fuehrer, we need not waste time. I feel that you know why we are come. The military situation . . .

HITLER (*mockingly*) Ach ja, the military situation is very grave, yes?

KEITEL No, the military situation is desperate, mein Fuehrer, and the interests of Germany demand immediate action.

GORING WHAT? Why was I not informed of this? What foolery is this?

KEITEL This is no foolery, Herr Reichsmarschall. You were not informed because we wished to avoid complications in this difficult matter.

GORING What the devil . . .

HITLER (*suavely*) One moment, Hermann. Well, what do you suggest, Herr Feldmarschall?

KEITEL (*with a slight effort*) Your withdrawal, from the supreme military and political leadership.

(MEISSNER and AUGUST WILHELM start. GORING looks backward and forward from HITLER to KEITEL. The others remain impassive)

HITLER So! So, so! A mere trifle. And for whom do you speak, Herr Feldmarschall von Keitel.

GORING (*furiously*) He is no Field-Marshal¹ I'll arrest him. He's mad.

HITLER Hermann, Hermann. Do you forget how often I had to restrain your impetuosity, in the old days, when we fought for power? You thought the only way to get power was to knock everybody down. I saw other methods. And was I not right? Now, Herr Feldmarschall, for whom do you speak?

KEITEL (*brusquely*) For the only organized force capable of assuming responsibility for law and order in Germany and of bringing the country through the crisis which impends - the army!

GORING Herr von Keitel, by what insolence do you claim to speak in the name of the army? / am the Fuehrer's deputy in the Supreme Command, not you. This is an outrage. This is treason.

KEITEL Herr Reichsmarschall, I urge you not to com-

plicate a decision which affects Germany's whole future. If you insist on it, I inform you officially that I speak for the army. None of us here are traitors. Your personal devotion to the Fuehrer prevents you from taking a step which you would otherwise approve, which the interest of the nation demands, if the Reich is not to dissolve into a chaos of warring factions and become the helpless prey of its neighbours. Much may be saved for Germany yet, but only in the way we propose. Germany needs to be nursed through a period of disaster, despair, and possibly revolution that may last many years. Your loyalty to the Fuehrer, Herr Goring, may blind you to a greater loyalty - loyalty to Germany. That is the only reason why you were not informed of this action. The army admires you, but the army cannot allow you to jeopardize Germany's future.

GORING I do not understand hair-splitting in loyalties, Herr von Keitel, *My place is at the Fuehrer's side. Loyalty to Germany is loyalty to the Fuehrer. I deny your statements about the army and the military situation. The army will fight for the Fuehrer to the death.*

KEITEL I beg you to await what we have to say, Herr Goring. You cannot win battles with words. The situation brooks no delay. Negotiations with our enemies must be begun *before Russian troops enter the Reich as a victorious army.* We have good reason to believe that England and America are as anxious to prevent that as we are, but they will not negotiate with the Fuehrer. There is no advantage in continuing the war on German territory, until the countryside is in the condition of the Russian battlefields, or the cities in the condition of Belgrade or Coventry or Rotterdam. Germany must be saved from becoming a shambles, and the course we propose is the only way of salvation.

HITLER May I, as your host, be allowed to say a word now, gentlemen? You use big words, Herr von Keitel. You also use a small one, that interests me — 'we'. Who are 'we'?

KEITEL The army, for whose senior commanders I speak, and . . . (*he silently indicates his companions*)

HITLER (*hands behind his back, and rocking himself on his heels*) Aha! Herr von Keitel and Company. Now let us see who we have here. Dr. Schacht - big banking! Dr. Vogler and Herr Krupp — big business! Colonel von Hindenburg - big landlordry! Field-Marshal von Keitel - the army! The Old Gang, risen from the grave! It only needs a Hohenzollern to complete the picture. Prince (*he turns towards AUGUST WILHELM, who shuffles in miserable embarrassment*) you should take your place in the ranks. Well, well. Herr von Keitel here speaks for the army, of which I am Commander-in-Chief. You, Dr. Schacht, the wizard of banking, no doubt you speak for the poor and thrifty man, for whose pennies you fear. You, Dr. Vogler and Herr Krupp, the Lords of the Ruhr and Rhineland, you who have multiplied your millions in the ten years since I came to power, through the army and the air force which I built, you of course speak for the workers, whose sufferings you cannot bear to see. You, Colonel von Hindenburg, who live in the midst of the Junkers and on the great estate that they bought for you, you no doubt speak for the downtrodden peasants! Ah yes, this is indeed Germany that visits me to-day in my house'

KRUPP (*expostulating*) Mein Fuehrer, you mock us, but nevertheless we *do* speak for the workers. Their homes and the factories they work in alike lie in ruins. They can neither sleep nor labour in peace.

HITLER Ah' No doubt you spoke with these workers before you came here?

KRUPP With very many of them, mem Fuehrer.

HITLER And of course, each of them said to you, 'The Fuehrer must go, there is no other way'.

KRUPP No, they did not say that. But they want peace - and there *is* no other way.

HITLER So you say. *They* do not say so.

KRUPP Mein Fuehrer, they are poor, uneducated people, they know nothing of affairs of State . . .

HITLER But you, Herr Krupp, you understand all about affairs of State, and you say that I must go?

KRUPP (*desperately*) Mein Fuehrer, the people are exhausted. Many of them have lost sons at the Front. They have suffered a great deal from bombing. I think they would have put up with that if we were in a position to repay our enemies these bombs, as we did in 1940 and 1941. But, in spite of many promises, we are not doing this, and they begin to fear that we are not in a position to hit back, that they will get more and more bombs, and our enemies less and less.

HITLER So¹ Then the people are in a bad way indeed, and your name entitles you to come to me on their behalf. True, it is not your own name; you took it when you married into the family. But you call yourself 'Krupp', and every time you do so you cry aloud, 'Behold me, I am the head, by marriage, of a family which has grown richer in every war for the last hundred years'. Who should speak for the people—if not you?

KRUPP (*moves to reply, then makes a despairing gesture, and is edged aside by VOGLER*)

VOGLER Mein Fuehrer, we cannot do more than tell you the truth. Whether you admit our right to speak for the workers or not, we *know* them. We know what they suffer, what they think. They need peace, and soon, if Germany is to be spared violent internal trouble. But how are we to obtain peace if our enemies will not negotiate with *you*?

HITLER Ah, there speaks another man of peace! The King of Steel. I am the architect of the New Germany, but you, Herr Vogler, were the craftsman. *You* built the new Chancery for me, in Berlin, that I designed. *You* built the Party Congress hall in Nuremberg, that I designed. *You* built the great motor roads, that I designed. I do not know just how rich you were before I came along, Herr Vogler, but I know within a few millions how rich you are now, through me.

VtiGLER (*makes no reply*)

HITLER But you also built something else for me, Herr Vogler. Do you remember?

VOGLER Yes.

HITLER You built this very house in which you and I stand, *my* house. And now you come to show me the door of it, to turn me out of it¹ Really, Herr V'gler.

VOGLER Mein Fuehrer, you *will* not understand us.

HITLER Ah, I understand you, Herr Vogler, man of steel and of the people. By the way, Herr Vogler, I must compliment you upon this house. I do not think any other firm in Europe could have built it. I do not think *you* could have built it but for the resources of the State, which I put at your disposal. Now then, Herr Vogler, you think that I should go?

VOGLER How else can we begin negotiations with the enemy?

HITLER But suppose we do *not* negotiate. Suppose I tell you that we shall fight. Suppose I tell you that I know the workers better than you, that they will fight for me, and the army too.

VOGLER I do not agree, mein Fuehrer. I fear the workers will be driven into the arms of Bolshevism if we wait for the enemy to conquer Germany by force of arms and reduce everything to a shambles. It is essential that they should not see Russian troops as an invading army, but only as an army of occupation, legally admitted by treaty for a limited period, at the worst.

HITLER (*with a wily air*) There are still many loopholes left to us, many ways we could outwit our enemies and show them that Germany is not so easily conquered. Germany and Russia together, for instance, could rule the world.

(*There is a startled silence. GORING turns to look in bewilderment at HITLER*)

KEITEL (*to GORING*) You hear, Herr Reichsmarschall.

GORING But, mein Fuehrer, you are not serious? That was perhaps a political and military possibility when Germany was strong. But now! It would be a surrender from weakness. We should have Soviet Germany in no time.

HITLER (*loftily waving this aside*) Ach, rubbish. But there are many other possibilities. The fact is, my dear friends,

you deal in bogymen. You are frightened of phantoms. You suffer from nightmares. You are not used to these crises, as I am, and you exaggerate the gravity of our situation. Assume the very worst that can happen - that we have to give up some of the occupied territories. We shall still be invincible here in our German fortress. We can fight for ever if need be. We can hold the Rumanian oilfields, and make some arrangement with Russia to get any other oil we need. Oil is our only weak point, and we can overcome it.

KEITEL Mein Fuehrer, you are too optimistic.

GORING On the contrary, Herr Feldmarschall, I hold that the Fuehrer is right.

SCHACHT Will you allow me to speak, mein Fuehrer?

HITLER Ah, here is the wizard of high finance and poor man's friend. Well, Mr. Schacht?

SCHACHT Mein Fuehrer, it is painful for me to interrupt. Indeed, this is the saddest day of my life . . .

HITLER (*with a high-pitched laugh*) Why, even the phrases have been kept in cold storage for twenty-five years. Do you remember, Meissner? Do you remember, Prince? You were there, or thereabouts. That is what they said to the Kaiser in 1918.

SCHACHT I do not know, I was not there. But you must believe in my sincerity. And I must tell you that it is *you* who deal in illusions. It appals us to hear you talk as you talked just now. The people are exhausted . . .

HITLER They are not hungry.

SCHACHT No, they are riot hungry, that is one thing we have been able to spare them, this time, and that is one reason more to come to an arrangement with our enemies soon, before they can inflict hunger on our people. Then we shall have a well-nourished nation to face the next twenty-five years with, at least.

HITLER They are not ill-clad. They are not cold. They have not suffered from bombing so much as the English. I am in the closest touch with the people. / know their condition. *They* do not talk of surrender, of betraying their

Fuehrer. It is you rich men who talk thus, and pretend to speak in the name of the people.

SCHACHT Mein Fuehrer, we all know that the people cannot say what they think. Himmler will tell you why. I repeat, it is an illusion of yours that the people will fight on indefinitely. The losses in Russia have been heavy. The effects of the bombing and the black-out are bad enough. But the real danger lies in the spiritual suffering of the people. From 1918 to 1953 they lived in the depths of despair, and were sick in soul. Then they were suddenly transported to the other extreme, of fantastic hopes and dreams, and for ten years have been living, as it were, on strychnine, on their nerves. The danger of a sudden and catastrophic collapse is not far off.

HITLER What I am forced to admire is the deep knowledge which you high and mighty gentlemen, with your mansions and manors, have of the people. What have you to say, Colonel von Hindenburg? You lead the quiet life of a Prussian country gentleman and know nothing, hear nothing. Has some little bird whispered something to you, that you, too, appear here to-day?

HINDENBURG Mein Fuehrer, I live on the eastern marches of the Reich. If the tide of war turns against us, as seems likely now, the wave will pass first of all over East Prussia, where I live.

HITLER And then?

HINDENBURG It is the only part of Germany which has known invasion for more than a hundred years. In 1914 the Russian armies overran it. My father drove them out again, at Tannenberg. The people in our parts have never forgotten that experience. Since then we have twice invaded Russia, and on the present occasion, from all one hears, we have not been sparing with fire and sword. The people in my part of the country are terrified that the Russians should come down upon them as an invading army, and wreak vengeance. If it must come, they see their only hope in an orderly occupation, under treaty. But that means negotiation with our enemies . . .

HITLER Spare me the rest, Herr Colonel. I know it by heart. And our enemies will not negotiate with me.

HINDENBURG. That is the case.

HITLER Well, well. Like father, like son. Your father showed the Kaiser the door, in 1918. You wish to usher *me* out.

GORING Donnerwetter, mein Fuehrer, why do you not show *these* gentlemen the door. Let us have done with this talk-talk-talk. Why do you tolerate this? *You* give the orders here. The order is 'Fight on'. Will you tell them, or shall I

KEITEL One moment, Herr Reichsmarschall. The matter is not so simple. Mein Fuehrer, let me explain the situation to you once more. When we listen to you, my friends here and I, we fear that in your eagle's eyrie you become remote from realities, that you live in a dream world. But in the real world, far below this place, events move fast. The collapse of Italy has brought the enemy very near our frontiers. At any moment we may expect an attack from the south. The air-bombing becomes increasingly hard for our people to bear. In the East, the Russians prepare to attack us, and woe betide us if they enter Germany as conquerors. The enemy's manpower is still growing; ours is dwindling. The Russians still have great reserves. The British have hardly begun to use their armies. The Americans are crossing the Atlantic in hordes. If we fight on, we shall be crushed in six months, nine months, a year. Our troops in the occupied countries are in such low spirits that they are a danger to us. They stand in definite fear of the populations, and if we should meet with a serious military reverse, many of them will desert and try to escape to Germany, from fear of the vengeance of the populations.

(*He pauses*)

HITLER (*with maddening courtesy*) Go on, Herr Feldmarschall, go on.

KEITEL (*slowly*) But there is a more powerful reason than all these for the advice we proffer you.

HITLER Advice¹ Ah, you call it advice! Well, what is the other reason?

KEITEL The moment we are compelled to open negotiations with the enemy, a demand will be made for your surrender, as a condition of such negotiations. It is imperative, in the best interests of Germany, that you should disappear before any such demand is made¹

GORING Donnerwetter¹ That is the summit.

HITLER *Disappear!*

GORING Why disappear?

KEITEL Because we cannot foresee what conditions might prevail here in Germany at the time such a demand might be received. We cannot be sure that someone would not be found to comply with it, and that is something we must avoid at all costs. (*He pauses and repeats with the utmost emphasis, 'At all costs'*) The future of Germany, which we who remain or survive shall have to rebuild after this war, must not be burdened from the start by the intolerable humiliation of your transfer to a foreign country, a public trial which would saddle Germany with the guilt for this war, and possibly - though we do not seriously envisage this - your execution.

HITLER (*melodramatically*) If I do not fear that, why should you, or anybody else? I prefer to die fighting at the head of my troops' And if that were denied me, I should shoot myself rather than fall into the enemy's hands.

KEITEL (*coldly*) We cannot afford to take the risk of that, mein Fuehrer. Such words have been frequently uttered in history, but events have often belied them. In war, it is the soldiers who die, not the political leaders. In any case, the possibility I have mentioned would in our view be so disastrous to all Germany's hopes of recovery and rehabilitation after this war that we are resolved to prevent it ... at ... all costs.

HITLER This sounds like a threat, Herr Feldmarschall.

KEITEL (*remains silent*)

GORING What part do you cast *me* for in this comedy of yours, Herr von Keitel?

KEITEL We do not consider your case so grave, Herr Reichsmarschall. We believe foreign opinion is less antagonistic to you than to the Fuehrer. We do not seriously contemplate any difficulty in your case. Nevertheless, it would be necessary for you to withdraw for some time, possibly for some years, from public affairs. We should arrange for your safety. I may add that we have good reason to believe that England and America would welcome the course we propose in regard to the Fuehrer. They would be seriously embarrassed if a demand for the Fuehrer's surrender *were* complied with, but they would be forced by their public opinion to insist if he were known to be in Germany. From the same source, Herr Reichsmarschall, we have gained the impression that we have no serious complications to fear in respect of yourself.

GORING Mein Gott, Herr von Keitel, do you stand there and tell me that you are *already* in negotiation with the enemy? Do you know what that means? Have you heard of a brick wall and six feet of earth?

KEITEL Ach, Herr Goring, there are no *negotiations*. Naturally we have sources of *information*, in neutral countries. We cannot afford to be ignorant of what is afoot.

HITLER So! At last the secret is out. Treachery, blackest treachery. Hermann, you are to be the Hindenburg of 1950! (GORING *looks in bewilderment from him to the others, while HITLER imitates the fawning gait of a servant*) 'Mein Fuehrer, you may go now¹ This way out, please. Mr. Goring, your turn next/

GORING Mein Fuehrer, I will have nothing to do with any of this. Give me the word and I will deal with these gentlemen as I dealt with the other traitors, on June the Thirtieth. I stand by you. If you go, I go. If you stay, I stay. If you fight, I fight.

HITLER Ah they all said that - Strasser, Rohm, Ribbentrop . . .

KEITEL I do not recall that Strasser and Rohm deserted you, mein Fuehrer. You had them shot. Hess went at your bidding. As for Ribbentrop, there have been enough

rumours that he too went at your behest. We have never understood his flight.

HITLER Ah, all lies. I have always been surrounded by lies and treachery. Prince August Wilhelm, you see why I wanted a member of your family to be present to-day. Twenty-five years ago your father was confronted with a demand very much like this. Do you remember?

AUGUST WILHELM Yes, mein Fuehrer. He told me about it at Doom.

HITLER Then you know what answer he gave. He said, 'I refuse to go, I will remain with my troops and fight'. Do you remember?

AUGUST WILHELM Yes, that is right.

HITLER So they told him his army would not fight for him, and when one of his officers intervened, and said the army would never break its oath and desert its sovereign warlord in time of need, a general got up and said, as Keitel here says - do you remember what Groener said?

AUGUST WILHELM Yes. He said, 'Military oaths' Warlords! Those are, after all, so many words. Those are, when all is said and done, mere phrases'.

HITLER That's right. And you others, the Kaiser's sons, you were bitter about it, yes?

AUGUST WILHELM Yes, we held it for a great betrayal, mein Fuehrer.

HITLER You held it for a great betrayal. Right. Well, to-day that scene repeats itself before your eyes. Let us see how *you* behave, who so loudly proclaimed the treachery of that day when your own father was involved. You have taken the oath to *me*. I am your supreme warlord. What should I do? What do you say to-day?

AUGUST WILHELM (*cautiously, with a side glance at KEITEL*) Mein Fuehrer, I have played a minor part in these great affairs and am not competent to judge what is best in your interest and in the interest of Germany. But of course I stand by my oath. No Hohenzollern ever broke his word.

HITLER Aha, another yes-and-no-man. On the one hand; on the other hand. You too are a master of the art of sitting

on the fence and standing on both sides of it. I guessed as much. Stand aside.

(AUGUST WILHELM *retreats clumsily*)

HITLER Well, gentlemen, now you have all had your say. Now I know at last with whom and with what I have to deal. Now it is *my* turn. You have come here and spoken to me, your Fuehrer, like bailiffs to a debtor. But I am not the Kaiser. I have long foreseen this day and prepared against it. I learn from experience. I have never forgotten the way they treated the Kaiser after the last war. You talk of the people and their desperation. I do not believe you. You tell me the army will not fight for me. I do not believe you. Neither do I believe in the black picture you paint of our military situation. I have my own army, and with it I will ensure that the other army does my will. There will be no surrender in Germany this time, no stab in the back. We fight on. We have many chances of victory yet, and if we cannot gain victory, we can withstand a siege until the enemy is black in the face and calls a truce on our terms. I am no puppet warlord, to be summoned and dismissed at your beck and call, gentlemen. I am the supreme military commander of the German Reich, and also head of the State. You have forgotten something, gentlemen. I am especially surprised that *you* have forgotten it, Dr. Vogler, for you built this place. You know, better than anyone, the strength of its defences. You are in a very inaccessible place here, gentlemen, a place in which my word is more than law, and which can only be entered or left by one means - the lift. I knew what I was doing when I had it built. There is no other way into or out of it, and below my SS troops stand guard. They have their orders, given before I came up here. / will decide when Germany is to stop fighting. / will decide when Germany is to open negotiations. Herr von Keitel, and you, gentlemen, you are under arrest. I have long watched you and long awaited your visit. I was ready for it, as you see. I have prepared for it for ten years past.

(He surveys them in triumph. There is a perceptible pause. GORING suddenly throws back his head and gives a mighty laugh. HITLER joins him. Facing the others, who do not move a muscle, they laugh together? uproariously. Gradually they recover. Then KEITEL speaks, as if with reluctance)

KEITEL Mein Fuehrer, I hoped you would spare me this, but you will not. I have tried to show you that you deal in illusions, but you will not see. I distrust the effect of these cloud castles on men. There is another such place in Bavaria, mein Fuehrer. May I remind you of the story and the fate of the man who built it? It is my duty to inform you that Herr Himmler is under arrest, in Berlin. Reichswehr troops took up their positions at the foot of the Kehlstein an hour ago, and the SS guards have been disarmed. Senior SS commanders throughout the Reich have been arrested, and Reichswehr troops have been moved to the vicinity of all Gestapo and SS barracks. They also have orders which automatically come into effect at a given time. We cannot afford to play fast and loose with Germany or to give this country over to civil war. We act in the higher interests of Germany.

(There is a long silence, while HITLER stands and stares, as if petrified, at KEITEL. GORING finally breaks the strain. With another loud laugh, he moves towards Hitler)

GORING Mein Fuehrer, that settles it. We are faced with our own favourite argument - force. We know full well that there is no answer to it, save superior force. For the first time, the superior force is against us. We have played and lost. It was a good fight and a long fight - it lasted twenty years. To-day it looks as if all were over - but perhaps it is not. If, in 1918, we could have looked into the future and read the secrets of 1935 and 1939? we should not have dared to believe them. Perhaps, to-day, we should be pleasantly surprised to see what 1950 and 1960 and 1970 hold for us and for Germany.

SCHACHT (*comes forward*) I feel you do not understand that our gratitude for the services you have rendered plays a chief part in prompting our action, mein Fuehrer. If you would only believe it, concern for your safety, anxiety that these foreign imbeciles should not lay hands on you, are our main motives. We have not forgotten what you have done for Germany, and Germany will not forget. It is only because of the future that we cannot take the risk of your capture, or surrender to the enemy or of the humiliation of a public trial by foreigners. The last hope for Germany's future would be destroyed by such a disaster.

KEITEL Everything has been prepared, mein Fuehrer. You will completely disappear. You will live in comfort and security in a foreign land, at least until the hue and cry is dead. None will know your identity and none will ever find it out. We have overlooked nothing. Your appearance will be changed beyond recognition; on that we must insist, so that there may be no danger of your detection. We guarantee your safety.

(During these last exchanges HITLER has sagged and seems to have shrunk in stature. He looks vacantly before him and seems limp, like a lay figure. All the braggadocio and noise have gone out of him)

HITLER (*dully*) I must think. I will think this over. We will discuss this another time. Perhaps we can find a way out. I do not want civil war. This is not necessary. It is a betrayal of Germany. I must think.

KEITEL I have one more duty to perform, mein Fuehrer. It is to tell you that we must have your answer by five o'clock.

HITLER An ultimatum!

KEITEL An ultimatum.

(HITLER stares stupidly at him, then turns his head to look at the clock on the wall. Their heads follow the direction of his gaze. The clock shows three o'clock.

During the latter part of this scene, the sky over the mountains has gradually darkened and heavy

clouds have rolled up, while, very faintly, music is heard - the music of the Storm scene from Wagner's 'Flying Dutchman'.

Now the sky is quite dark, the music swells and becomes very loud, and the storm breaks. Thunder crashes into the ravines, and the lightning flashes incessantly, revealing the motionless figure of HITLER. The other characters slowly retire. He is left alone with the storm.

The curtain falls to indicate a brief lapse of time. When it rises, the clock stands at a quarter to five. HITLER, attended by a manservant, is now in civilian clothes, and is quite cheerfully taking his favourite meal of the day — tea and cakes. The storm is past; the sky is clear again)

HITLER Good, that's enough, Karl. Go and tell the gentlemen I shall be with them at five o'clock. And bring me my greatcoat - the leather one - and my soft hat.

KARL Ja, mein Fuehrer. It is a long time since the Fuehrer wore anything but uniform.

HITLER (*irritably*) Can I not wear what I want? I suppose people will know me, even in civilian clothes.

KARL (*in alarm*) Oh ja, ja, mem Fuehrer. There isn't a man or woman in Germany but would know the Fuehrer anywhere, at any time, in no matter what dress.

HITLER Not a man or woman! Hm! I wonder what the women will think of this. I forgot them. (*Suddenly*) Karl, are there any women in the house?

KARL (*stupefied*) Women?

HITLER (*roughly*) Yes, *women!* If what I hear of you is right, you know what women are.

KARL (*stammering*) There are no women here, mein Fuehrer, not what you would call *women* - only a few girls in the kitchen for cleaning and washing-up.

HITLER (*springing up*) Donnerwetter, you fool, aren't they women?_ Send one of them to me.

KARL Which one, mein Fuehrer?

HITLER (*banging the table*) How do I know, if I haven't seen them? ANY one! Will you go!

(KARL goes hastily, stammering 'Ja, ja, mein Fuehrer')

HITLER (*looking after him and sitting down*) Canaille! How could I ever have hoped to conquer the world, with such people. (*He chooses a large cake, which he is munching when KARL enters with a pretty girl in a white kitchen uniform, a swastika is embroidered on the pocket and cap. She is almost speechless with nervousness. Both salute*)

HITLER You can go, Karl. Did you tell the gentlemen?

KARL Ja, mein Fuehrer. (*He salutes and goes, vainly trying to conceal curiosity and bewilderment*)

HITLER Come here. (*She salutes and comes a little nearer*) No, here\ (*She salutes again, says 'Ja, mein Fuehrer' and moves to the table*)

HITLER Sit down! (*Again she salutes, and sits on the extreme edge of a chair, at right angles to him*) What is your name?

GIRL (*saluting*) Else, mein Fuehrer.

HITLER For God's sake, stop saluting.

ELSE (*begins to salute, recovers herself, and says 'Ja, mein Fuehrer'*)

HITLER Have you seen me before?

ELSE (*breathlessly*) O ja, mein Fuehrer, often.

HITLER Where?

ELSE In Munich, and at Nuremberg, during the Parteitag. I was there with the Hitler Girls, mein Fuehrer.

HITLER And what do you think of me?

ELSE Ach, what every German girl thinks of the Fuehrer, mein Fuehrer. We cannot imagine life without the Fuehrer.

HITLER Why not? Life would go on just the same without the Fuehrer.

ELSE (*taken aback, but anxious to please*) Oh, the Fuehrer has made Germany great and strong and glorious again. I think the Fuehrer is in every German woman's heart. No matter how she may love her husband, or her betrothed,

the Fuehrer takes first place. I think the Fuehrer is loved by millions of women.

HITLER (*impatiently*) Ach, you talk like one of my own speeches. (*On second thoughts*) Or like one of Goebbels's. I have only a little time, only a few minutes* I do not want to hear these things from you. I want you to stop calling me Mein Fuehrer and speak to me as if I were an ordinary man, and to tell me what the women really think of me. Take a cake. (*He offers her the plate*)

ELSE No, danke, mein Fuehrer. I mean, no, danke. The Fuehrer -I mean, you like cakes very much?

HITLER (*gruffly, as he takes a large éclair*) Why not? (*He holds the éclair in the air, looks at it*) No blood is spilt to make a cake. I hate meat and all the filthy butchery that attends meat-eating. I do not know how civilized people can look at or enter a butcher's shop, far less eat the stuff. Now, for a cake, all you need is some flour, which you get from a field, and some milk, that the cow is glad to be rid of, and an egg, that the hen never misses. There is no bloodshed, no cruelty, no killing, in a cake.

ELSE (*more at ease, and adoringly*) Ah, you hate cruelty and killing. That is one of the reasons why the women love you so much!

HITLER (*stops as if transfixed in mid-bite and looks at her searchingly, as who should say, 'Is it possible that she can mean that seriously, or has she the audacity to be funny at my expense?' Finally he put the éclair down again*) Can you not forget these phrases which you have read in newspapers or heard in the radio. I want to know what the women think of me as a man, not what they would say if they were writing an essay about me for publication in the *Angriff*. What do you think of me?

ELSE (*searching for words*) That is difficult to answer, because you are so far above me, and you do not look at me like other men.

HITLER So!

ELSE No. I think I am pretty, and when men look at me they show that they think so too, for their eyes change.

But yours do not. You look at me as if I were a piece of furniture.

HITLER (*leans across and cups her face in his hand*) Yes, you are very pretty. That gives you power over men? I do not understand that. It arouses distrust in me. I despise men who let themselves be subjugated by women. (*He relinquishes her chin*)

ELSE But you love children - and big families!

HITLER (*looking searchingly at her again, as if he suspected her of mocking him*) As an ideal, for Germany - but not for myself. I have no time for these things.

ELSE Of course not. You work night and day for Germany. But were you never in love? That is so strange!

HITLER What is strange about it? The strange thing is that so many men are tricked by this illusion. Love is a word which women invented long ago and use when they want something.

ELSE (*vehemently*) Oh no, no, that is *wrong*! I think that is one of the things that bind the women to you so, that makes them all feel you are their lover, even if they have husbands or lovers. They feel sorry for you.

HITLER *Sorry!*

ELSE Because you have no wife, no woman to share your cares, to make for you the cakes you love so much. How I should love to make cakes for you. I am very good at making cakes.

HITLER Ach, there speaks the eternal conceit of women. They are the source of all unhappiness, but cannot imagine how any man can be happy without them. Do you know that I could have had any woman I wanted in Germany - any one at all? But I could never have found one to make me such cakes as my chef downstairs.

ELSE You laugh at me, but I know here (*she puts her hand on her heart*) that I am right. A man is not a real man without a woman (*she realizes what she has said and claps her hand to her mouth*)

HITLER Yet you say every woman in Germany loves this man who, as you now say, is not a real man!

ELSE Yes, it is very strange, I cannot explain what I mean, but I feel that I am right.

HITLER Ach, I can explain what you mean. These women love power, • importance, position. *That* is what they love in me. Nothing else.

ELSE Oh no, no, it is not like that.

HITLER How is it then? Do you think they would still love me if I were no longer Fuehrer?

ELSE Oh yes, I think so. I do not know (*doubtfully*). I have never imagined Germany without the Fuehrer. I *cannot* imagine it. It would be like Germany without the sun and moon. I have grown up thinking of and for the Fuehrer, every day and night of my life. It makes me want to cry when you say that. It makes me think you* *are* unhappy. Perhaps your life would have been different if . . .

HITLER If a woman had shared it with me! Donnerwetter, cannot you stop saying that? You are like the cuckoo, with your one song. You say I have made Germany happy. Is that not enough? I could not have done it if I had wasted my time on women. Every woman in Germany would have gone mad with delight to share my power with me. I wonder how many of them would be happy to share my life with me *now*.

(He rises and strides about, then turns to face her)

HITLER (*wildly*) Tell me then, you. If you were my wife, or even if you were not, would you gladly put your hand in mine now, when I shall in a few minutes be no longer Fuehrer, nor even an ordinary man, but an outcast, wandering about the world with false papers and a false face. Not even my own features may I keep. I may only keep my life because it would be bad for the future of Germany if I should die. If it were better for the future of Germany that I should be hanged in the nearest market place, then they would hang me in the nearest market place. I must alter my looks, so that I look like somebody else, so that they may not catch me. Now tell me, you who prate so much

about love in general and about the love of every German woman for Adolf Hitler in particular, and about the happiness a man may find in the woman who shares all his troubles with him - would you gaily and gladly come with me on such a journey?

ELSE You are no longer the Fuehrer?

HITLER (*putting on his leather coat and soft hat and pointing at the clock*) In a few seconds I shall no longer be the Fuehrer. Now answer me.

ELSE I do not know. I do not know what to answer. I do not understand. I cannot think of you as anything but the Fuehrer.

HITLER Then look at me, with your two eyes. What do you see? Herr Adolf Hitler, an ageing man in a soft hat and a raincoat, about to start on a journey. A man like any other. A man you would not notice in the street. And yet, you say, the man whom every German woman enthrones in her heart above her husband or lover. Well, here I stand. You said the eyes of other men change when they look at you. I see now that *your* eyes change when they look at me. Speak! Answer me! Would you be happy to share my lot now, to accompany me into the wilderness? Gloriously happy! Happy in your great love!

ELSE (*stammers*) I do not know. I am confused. I cannot understand all this. I think you are making fun of me. I do not know what you wish me to say. You frighten me.

HITLER Ach, go, go.

ELSE (*frightened, makes hurriedly for the door, curtsying*) Ja, Herr Hitler.

HITLER WHAT?

ELSE (*nearly in tears*) Pardon. You said you were no longer Fuehrer. You told me to speak to you as an ordinary man. I thought I must call you just, 'Herr Hitler'.

HITLER (*furiously*) Get out!

(Frightened and bewildered, she gladly goes out, and the door closes behind her. HITLER goes to the window and looks at the mountains, in the direction of his

birthplace.Austria] he says to himself] 'I wonder if I should have done better to stay in Austria.' Then he comes upstage and says to himself twice, as if in soliloquy, 'Iferr Hitler! Herr Hitler!'

He shivers and shrugs his shoulders. The clock behind him strikes five. He turns and looks at it. He glances round the room, pulls his coat collar up and his hat brim down, and goes out.)

As the door closes behind him

THE CURTAIN FALLS

AUTHOR'S POSTSCRIPT

THIS play was begun in June 1942 and I hoped to finish it in July. Illnesses and a long series of unforeseeable hindrances joined to delay it, and I only completed it on October 10th. An attack of malaria then retarded the typing of the fair copy for my publisher, which I eventually posted to him on October 26th.

The structure of the play, however, still remained that which I chose in June. At that time, the war lay in the doldrums, and, although I was nevertheless convinced that Hitler's downfall could quickly be brought about, once we began to strike effective blows at Germany, it was very difficult, in that stagnant period, to plunge my hand into the lucky dip of the future and extract from it a plausible anticipation of the process which would lead up to his overthrow. For the purpose of a play about Hitler's downfall, I needed to imagine events, in the theatres of the war *outside* Germany, which would set in movement other events *inside* Germany, which would logically culminate in the end of Hitler's dictatorship.

In this search for a plausible story for the play, therefore, I chose, in June, the following sequence of events: A British and American reconquest of North Africa, a consequent British and American recovery of mastery in the Mediterranean; a resultant threat to Italy leading to a crisis in that country (and, as a long shot, I even assumed the withdrawal of Italy from the war); and a development inside Germany, growing from this and other things, such as the continued Russian resistance, bombing, war-weariness, fear of invasion, which eventually lead to Hitler's overthrow.

This, as I explained in the foreword, was simply 'anticipation as intelligent as I could make it', for the purpose of devising a play. Now, in November of 1942, as the play approaches publication, the process I imagined begins to take the shape of fact. On October 22nd while I was

finishing the fair copy for my publisher, the Eighth Army attacked in Egypt. But on November 4th, when he already had the manuscript and was jotting down a few notes for the improvement of the play (the only alteration he suggested in the *structure* was that it might not be wise too confidently to foresee the collapse of Italy, but I have retained this) the Germans and Italians broke and ran, with the Eighth Army after them, and 'the reconquest of North Africa', the first of my presumptions, seemingly began. On November 10th the completed play, incorporating his suggestions, was in his hands again; and on November 7th the second of its presumptions was already come true, because the Americans, by landing at many places in north-western Africa, bade fair to make 'the reconquest of North Africa; a 'British and American reconquest'.

So now the play leaves my hands, on November 9th, 1942, and in due course will be printed and published. But as it goes to London, one other thing has happened to strengthen-me in the belief that, no matter how the later course of events may diverge, in this or that particular, from the sequence I have foreseen, the main trend - a climax in the war leading to Hitler's downfall-is right. This was Hitler's speech on November 8th, 1942, the nineteenth anniversary of his first, and unsuccessful attempt to seize power in Germany.

Listening to this speech on the radio, I felt that the event which forms the central theme of this play may be nearer than even I thought, that it can now only be delayed for long by some unforeseeable misfortune to our cause or maladroitness in the handling of it. For, listening to his speech, which lasted *two full hours*, I experienced a sensation which I never expected to feel - a sort of sympathy for Hitler.

I have watched Hitler speak, and heard Hitler speak, on staves of occasions, and know his every trick of oratory. You have all felt the chill discomfort which spreads through a theatre when some great but ageing performer, who has countless triumphs behind him, fails at last to grip, hold

and arouse his audience. Sitting by my loud-speaker in the English countryside, with the picture of that great beer-hall in Munich in my mind, of the rows and rows of National Socialist leaders sitting behind and in front of Hitler, I listened in fascination while Hitler, time and time and time again, used the devices which once, invariably, infallibly, brought a spontaneous, animal-like roar of applause, like the bursting of a bomb, that threatened to lift the very roof from its supports. He used sarcastic taunts about 'Churchill, Eden and Roosevelt; where once he raised a thunderous salvo of hoarse laughter, was only a snigger from some toady on the platform. Once more, he brought the tale of past triumphs out of its dusty pigeon-hole and turned the yellowing leaves; the hollow silence, in that great hall, could be felt hundreds of miles away, where I sat. He climbed the familiar way to a crescendo of raucous eloquence about the pledged and undying loyalty of his millions of National Socialists, all ranked solidly behind him; he paused for the customary storm of jubilant applause - and would have reaped stony silence but for the quick intervention of a claue-leader on the platforrii behind him, whose loud clapping set a modest ovation in movement. He rapped and banged on his rostrum, the sure old way of telling them when to cheer - no use! He paused where he was sure that he had worked his hearers up to the points he desired - and, in the ensuing silence, covered up with a nervous cough.

The old gags failed, every one of them. The man who left the beer-cellar in Munich that night knew that his end is near: I am as sure of it as if I walked beside him and heard him tell nie so. What would I not have given to be there! A speech that lasted two hours contained only one single, solitary thing on which, he knew, he could count to raise the old tempest of cheers. He kept it until the end, so that he might make a fairly worthy exit. It was a promise which, in my opinion, he can no longer carry out. He spoke of our bombing of Germany. This, as I have written in all my books, is a *war-winning* weapon, in *our* hands, in the

fourth year of the war, *if* we use it to the full. That they were bombed more than they bombed us in the summer of 1942, is a thing which shakes and shivers the Germans' faith and hope of victory. It fills them with foreboding. The only thing that could mend the great hole which this makes in their spirit and appetite for the war, would be, if their air force were able to retaliate more strongly still. *Then*, they would be ready to take their medicine — if we were getting more of it. So Hitler promised them that very thing. 'I note every bomb that drops', he said: 'We shall repay them. The German inventive genius is not dead. We will give them an answer that will take their breath and eyesight away/

At that, for the only time in his speech, the old howl of glee rattled the rafters, doors and windows of the beer-cellar. It went on for minutes. At this price, he obtained his ovation.

But -I do not think he can do it. If he *can*, he may prolong his hold on power and on the German people for a while yet. I do not think he can. I think it was a desperate bid for applause.

If our bombing attack on Germany should for any reason be relaxed again (and as I write this has happened, for the R.A.F, has not bombed Germany for a month, but is bombing Italy, seemingly in support of the African campaign), this will give Hitler a respite, will slow down the process anticipated in this play. But the process has begun.

So matters stand, as this play goes to the publisher. It is primarily meant to be read. But I think its first scenes are already being played on the greater stage - that of world events.

November 9th, 1942

