FATHERLAND

KARL BILLINGER

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by

KARL BILLINGER

With a Foreword by

LINCOLN STEFFENS

And a New Preface for this Edition by

THE AUTHOR

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To the Prisoners
in
Hitler's
Concentration
Camps

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FOREWORD

THE highway of history forked after the World War, as it has forked after other such major catastrophes. One part of the civilized world turned off up to the left toward Communism. Other parts—Italy, Germany, Austria, Spain—have gone on to the right down the old way toward Fascism or Nazi-ism. That was the choice. That is the choice. Other nations coming up to the turn are looking around now anxiously, desperately for another, a third, a middle way, but history, both ancient and modern, and the working womb of creative economics show no other way. Either left or right they—we—must go.

And to the backward, balking nations that are coming to the fork and have not yet chosen—England, the United States, Japan—that narrow choice is fair and clear enough. They—we—can look ahead at the peoples who have gone on before us and see how they have fared. We can see thus into our future. Whether we can deliberately choose even when we see a preference, was once thought to be impossible. But now we know that it can be done. It has been done.

Russia, which has been longest on the way and went left and likes it, that young pioneer of planned civilization and revolution, has shown experimentally that the human race has arrived at the stage where they can comprehend and use history to shape its end. In one short

sharp struggle, the Russian people used their head and picked their own way, knowingly. Next came Italy, and consciously rejected the Communist road and chose the Fascist. I know that the choice was conscious because I was in Italy at the time and, soon after the march on Rome, I had a talk with Benito Mussolini showing that he understood, historically, what he had been doing. Now come Germany and Austria, whose Fascist-Nazis are not so aware, not so realistic, historical and original as Italy's Duce but who do know enough about what they are up to to show that the course they were following was politically understood by them. The German people did not know where they were going; they were misled into thinking that they were going back to a middle-class system, but their Führer knew that he had sold them out and was going to deliver them to big business. They were backing away from Communism and trying hard to maintain the capitalist system; as they are still doing—by force and violence.

When the Russians made their planned revolution, the rest of the world, though it was just emerging from a devastating war, was shocked at the force and violence in Russia and declared itself with many voices against a revolution. It preferred what was called "evolution" as more gradual and less costly. Now we can see, if we will, by looking comparatively at Russia and at Germany, Austria, Italy and Spain that some struggle is inevitable, and that "evolution" is more violent. It is more terrible; and it probably means two civil wars instead of one.

But the test of these two ways, Communism and violent conservatism, is not, I submit, the use of force,

which will come anyhow. The real test is whether they have solved the problem which blew them up in the first place and now is terrifying us. And the point for us to notice is that Fascism has not solved our problem in western Europe. On the contrary, the economic problem of which the symptoms are war, imperialism and graft, poverty, riches and crime, has grown upon them as it is growing with us. In other words, the experiment with Fascism has failed. In Russia, however, Communism has from the start, and is continuing to make progress toward a solution.

The Russians have not gone far on their new road, but you can see that they have changed the road-bed and the direction. They have cleared it of all the economic privileges that have blocked our reforms and they have found that that clearance disposes of the big obstacles to progress; they do not have to kill pigs and plough the cotton under when they are hungry and need clothing; they can use a surplus whether of goods or workers; they are rid of individual poverty and individual riches; they can avoid war and have peace; they can abolish graft and crime; they can let science and invention ride. They have found that they can have civilization. And the Fascists can't. The Fascists have not yet had to destroy crops, but they have had to—and I say *had* to—kill races or suppress them and organized labor; they have had to abolish free press, and justice, and proceed to the making of an army and war.

Like Capitalism itself, of which it is only a form, Fascism, to survive, needs a war, as do England, the United States, France and Japan.

It is a hard choice that faces the unrevolutionary world, but peoples who have not made that choice yet are deterred most by fear of the process of transition from the present into the future. Well, we know pretty well the economic changes that are ahead of us, but we still cannot make a picture of the actual road into Fascism. We cannot see what will happen to us personally. Now comes this book that tells us just what happened to individuals during the forced, "evolutionary" change to Fascism. As I see it, it is a chapter of our still avoidable future; we don't have to continue on the way we are headed now. A very simple narrative, this vivid book tells with tight-lipped, unexpressed emotion just what happened in Germany to one man who suffered as much as any other German probably. He was not a middle-class Jew, he was a Communist worker and the Communists are the worst hated of all men by the Nazis. You can see here the reason for this. Communism is the opposite to the Fascists' way; the Communists are the most dangerous of all people to the Fascists; and the Communists are the hardest to conquer. This man, for example, was sent to one of the Fascist prisons in Berlin and he was tortured there, en masse; then to a concentration camp and tortured there, en masse. Indeed this is his whole story told in moving detail, except that he did not yield or peach, but held silently, grimly, to the line of his conviction. And when he was released he went back to work, with his party, for Communism.

LINCOLN STEFFENS.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

AS the German sailors in November 1918, with the taking of the harbor of Kiel, gave the signal for the revolution which was to bring an end to the imperialist slaughter, they inscribed upon their banner the words: SACRED TO US WHATEVER BEARS A HUMAN COUNTENANCE.

The "criminals of November" took seriously those great ideals which once had served to light the bourgeois world on its upward path. Theirs was a faith in human reason and in human justice. That was in 1918. What has become of the deep and stirring emotions of that distant day? "You swine, so you are for peace among the nations, are you? That is treason. You would deny the mission of the Aryan race, would you? A damned Jewish Marxist. Off with him, to the People's Court!"

In Nazi Germany, it has become a crime to believe that all men are equal *in the sight of God.* Woe to Catholics and Protestants alike. But woe and woe again to those who dare to raise their voice for the equality of man *in the sight of men!* Hitler's *Volksgemeinschaft* will hunt them down and torture them, will slander and traduce them, in a way that has never before been, in the history of mankind. To struggle against political injustice, economic misery and cultural night is the un-

pardonable sin, to be mercilessly punished by a system which is only able to maintain itself through the exploitation and oppression of the workers and the besotting of their minds.

Four thousand two hundred persons up to now have been murdered under the Hitler régime; 317,800 have been thrown in prison; 218,600 anti-Fascist workers, white-collar workers, peasants, intellectuals, Communists, Social-Democrats, and members of opposition Christian sects have been put to the rack or have received bodily injuries of one sort or another. The books and appeals of those who have been held in the prisons and concentration camps of the Third Reich, concerning their own and their comrades' fate, all have the same story to tell of mistreatment, torture and death. Such is the fate that awaits the authors of these books, be they Catholics or pacifists, Communists or Social-Democrats, if in Berlin or Münich, in Hamburg or Düsseldorf, they have the misfortune to fall into Nazi hands. The orders come from higher up. The murderers hold government seats.

National Socialism has spread an awful cloud of darkness over Germany. That blanket, however, under which the country appears to be lying motionless, is from time to time lifted by events which are not precisely of the sort that the régime in its governmental policy had counted upon. Mass shootings or explosions in munitions factories, tidings of hunger and religious persecution enable the outer world to surmise, if it cannot know, what is taking place beneath the surface. Germans themselves, if they are not in contact with the

anti-Fascist movement, are aware of little more than what occurs in their immediate vicinity. As for the foreign tourist, he can be there for weeks and even months without catching a glimpse of any other than the official Germany. The invisible Germany, OUR GERMANY, is kept carefully concealed from him. When Fascism points with pride to having transformed Germany from top to bottom, it does not know how truly it speaks. It may be true that the top is still the top and the under-dog is the under-dog; but nevertheless, when bestiality and degeneracy have been made over into political virtues, when revolutionary convictions are punished by death, and when men, in a "family trial," are tortured in the presence of their wives and children, then may we say that human relations have indeed undergone a transformation, from the bottom up.

In the Germany of today, a brother is silent in the presence of his brother, and a mother in front of her children. Terror has taught the anti-Fascists the art of dissimulation and the lying word, on so wholesale a scale that executioners are left in anxious wonderment as to who is really friend and who is foe. For National Socialism must bear its bloody fruitage. Whoever has passed through the hands of the State Secret Police will have lost his faith in the sacredness of the human countenance.

When I first set down my prison experiences, I like most of us stood overwhelmed by the catastrophe which had burst upon the German people. How could it ever have happened? How was it possible? A country such as Germany, with its powerful labor unions, its hun-

dreds of thousands, nay, millions of politically trained workers—the Berlin we knew, the Ruhr, the Saxons—how could it have surrendered without a struggle to the Fascist domination? Was it for this that all the years of self-sacrificing devotion on the part of our comrades had gone, that they should now be strangled, strung up, murdered in cold blood, by the SA or the SS? It was inconceivable. With the reality of the thing so terrible and the future so dark, we turned to the past and began threshing over the question: Whose fault was it? "Your fault," the Social-Democrats said; and "Your fault," the Communists replied. The passion behind our mutual recriminations was all the greater, by reason of the fact that we knew it had lain in our power to spare Germany these years of Fascist agony and degradation. The German working class, by joining hands with the progressive forces of the country, might have crushed a Fascist Hitlerism at its birth! That it, in a decisive hour, had not proved equal to its task—that was what hurt most.

For a moment I have hesitated as to whether or not I should take out, in the new edition of this book, the passages descriptive of the hapless dissension among the workers, even in prison. Our state of mind at that time is one that no longer marks the relations between Communists and Social-Democrats. But after all, I reflected, the book is not a political treatise; it is a reporting of facts; and so I decided that I would leave it as it originally was. It will serve as a record of one of the darkest periods in the history of the German labor movement. The only thing is, the reader must not forget that even during those months when hatred and despair, pride

and stubbornness prevented our coming together, we still knew that we *must* come together, realizing as we did that the very bitterness of our recriminations was but the form assumed by a new-born desire for an understanding.

The German workers are on the road to unity, hesitatingly and with much loss of time and heavy sacrifices. Just as the workers of other lands have learned a lesson from its fate, so has German labor in turn profited from the defensive struggles of the Austrian, Spanish and French proletariats. In the German Social-Democracy, a process of clarification is under way. Their Left wing is acquainted with the truth once more confirmed by recent European history, to the effect that the theory and practice of class collaboration between labor and the bourgeoisie disarms the working class and, when a political crisis breaks, leads it down to certain defeat. It is becoming harder all the time for the Social-Democratic worker to blink the fact that, in the one country in which the proletariat together with the peasants has seized the political power, and where it is engaged in beneficially erecting a socialist order, Fascism can find no foothold. There is no Fascism in the Soviet Union. On the other hand, a sharp struggle was launched at the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International against the "complacent sectarianism" in Communist ranks. Dimitroff, in his great speech, has reminded us German Communists of Lenin's warning, that merely because a thing for us has outlived its day, we are not therefore to look upon it as having outlived its usefulness for the class, for the masses. More than we

have done in the past, we must bear in mind that patience and good comradeship are revolutionary virtues, when shown to honest workers and intellectuals.

Fascism is not Italian, and it is not German, it is not Polish and it is not Austrian. It is capitalistic, through and through. It draws its strength out of the horror and bewilderment of a dying class-society; it but elevates into a system the monstrosities of the capitalist order. It glories in bringing civilization with tanks and gas-bombs, and besmirches the pain and sorrow of its victims. It must annihilate the last sorry remnants of a bourgeois culture in order to protect itself against those who out of the ruins would build a new and better life. No capitalist country is safe against it, whose working masses do not at once come to grips with the cutthroat. The more resolutely they grapple him, the more speedily will the workers find rallying about them all those elements of the nation which refuse to see in war and misery the last fine flower and heydey of human culture.

KARL BILLINGER.

FATHERLAND

CHAPTER I

ALIEN LAND

THE number of victims sacrificed during the early stages of our work was out of all proportion to the results accomplished. We all knew that. Our activity during the first weeks was confined almost entirely to printing and distributing illegal literature, and a pamphlet in the pocket might mean death. But we knew too that only through this work could the Party be held together and reorganized on an illegal basis.

Every day comrades were being dragged off, manhandled, murdered. Police trucks sped through the streets, carrying workers under arrest to the torture chambers of Hedemann- and Friedrichstrasse. We grew accustomed to the idea that sooner or later the same fate would overtake us.

Eva's arrest in mid-April cut us off for a time from contact with the district leadership. We decided to get out a newspaper of our own, that we might keep the comrades and sympathizers of our subdistrict informed as to the more important developments at home and abroad. Most of our material we borrowed from the Basel *Rundschau*, which Werner stole from his father's files. The English and French press also supplied us with valuable news items that had been rigidly suppressed by the coördinated [1] German papers. Anna cut the stencils

[1] The German word is *gleichgeschaltet*, and the meaning is "brought into line." "Coördinated" is the word now commonly used in translation.

on her office typewriter; Martin and I worked the mimeograph machine, which we managed to get out of harm's way in the nick of time.

The workers hungered for news of the Party, of the general economic situation, of foreign opinion on Hitler's accession to power. But the distribution of literature became increasingly difficult. One was never safe from the house searches and block raids by the SA [2] and SS [3] troops. Under the brutal reign of terror instituted by the government, people shrank from any display of sympathy with us. The lists we had drawn up of sympathizers in our district had lost their value. Many of those who, during former election campaigns, had hung up red flags and pasted our placards in their windows, had moved to sections of the city where they were unknown. Some deserted to the Nazis and informed against our comrades. Most of them pleaded with us to bring no more forbidden literature into their homes.

Early in May the leaders of the adjacent subdistrict were arrested—through the agency, it was said, of a spy among the UB [4] functionaries. This was probably true. But more formidable than the work of spies within our ranks was the spy-psychosis, which we found it necessary to combat with every weapon at our disposal, for it threatened to cripple the activity of the comrades and to demoralize the Party. It was quite apparent that the Nazis were working in this direction. They had begun with newspaper reports that the Komintern had re-

[2] *Sturmabteilung*—Storm Troops, whose members wear brown shirts.

[3] *Schutzstaffel*—Guard Troops, an organization composed of picked and trusted men from among the Storm Troops. The Guard Troops are black-shirted.

[4] *Unterbezirk*—subdistrict.

moved Ernst Thaelmann from office and replaced him as leader of the CPG [8] by Heinz Neumann, and that Thaelmann himself had fled to Denmark. This was followed by the rumor that S., one of the most devoted functionaries in the Central Committee, was actually a police spy—a second Azev. Suspicion fell on comrades in our very midst. Surrounded as we were by uncertainty, a single remark was enough to stir doubts which we had great difficulty in quieting.

The habits of a lifetime were altered by our illegal status, which developed in us perceptions hitherto dormant. Peril lurked in factory and underground, street and café—dogging our every footstep. Never had I scanned the faces of the people about me so attentively. If I caught a glance I didn't like, I left the place at once. I never went near my rooms until late at night, and varied my homeward route and the routine of my return as much as possible. I pricked up my ears for the sound of footsteps behind me and of windows opening overhead, and ran my eye over every doorway before venturing to pass it. My flat still bore the nameplate of its former occupant, and I hadn't yet presented my card of identity, signed by the landlord, at police headquarters. Despite all these precautionary measures, however, I still felt unsafe at home. My rooms seemed to me a mouse-trap.

Each of us evolved his own methods of guarding against the danger of being trailed. The subway and the huge department stores were admirably suited to the business of shaking off spies. If you waited till your train

[8] Communist Party of Germany.

was actually under way before you stepped off, no one could possibly follow you from the compartment unseen. The department stores, with their swarms of people, were as huge conduits through which you let yourself be carried. To get momentary relief from the constant pressure on all my senses, I liked to spend my free evenings at a small movie, to which the Nazi films hadn't yet got around. The gloom of the interior, and the presence of people whose attention was concentrated on the screen, had a soothing effect. Once, and once only, I let Werner talk me into going with him to the Ufa Palace near the Zoo, to see *Brandt, the SA-man.* As the Nazi orchestra, which preceded the film on the program, broke into the strains of the Horst Wessel song, the audience rose to its feet. That was enough for me. The moment the theater was dark I got up and left.

For a while we met mostly in cafés, but we soon had to give that up. The Brown Shirts were combing the eating places, demanding the name, address, and occupation of everyone present. One evening I was walking along Kleiststrasse on my way to meet Martin and Werner at a café which had hitherto been unsuspected when, a few paces ahead of me, I caught sight of a former sympathizer, accompanied by two Brown Shirts. Positive that I had seen them first, I stopped in front of a bookshop to widen the distance between us. They took their time, strolling along without any apparent aim. I waited till they were well past the café before going in. Martin and Werner had not yet arrived. Hardly had I seated myself at the table when a door opened to admit the deserter and his companions. I promptly picked up my hat

and coat and walked to the rear exit which, for some reason, was bolted. I turned and made for the front door by way of the narrow passage adjoining the kitchen. I had gone half way when I saw the deserter coming toward me. It was too late to turn back. Thrusting my hands into my pockets, I headed straight for him, conscious, as we neared each other, that the skin over his cheekbones was drawn taut with nervousness. We were still a couple of paces apart when his gaze left mine and shifted aside. I held my breath involuntarily as we passed each other. The next moment I plunged into the thick of the street traffic. Even a spy's trade has to be learned, I reflected. It requires strength of purpose and a steady morale—which can come only with training. Beginners must find their last remnants of decency an embarrassing handicap.

Later I had another narrow escape. I had arranged to call at the home of a comrade one evening for some paper on which to print our bulletin. Getting paper had become a complicated process, now that the Secret Police had passed a regulation to the effect that any private citizen purchasing that commodity must explain to the shopkeeper what he wanted it for.

I reached the house shortly before eight and climbed to the top floor, where the comrade lived. After ringing several times without reply, I decided I'd better not wait and descended the stairs again, only to find the outer door locked; the porter had closed the entrance to the house while I was upstairs. There was nothing to do but to ring someone's doorbell, and ask to be let out. The two tenants I tried on the first floor did not dare to open

their doors. Who was there? they inquired from within. What did I want? No, they couldn't open the door for me; they'd gone to bed. (It was just a few minutes past eight!) There was something wrong here. Finally a man on the second floor consented to come out and escort me downstairs. We were nearing the bottom of the stairway when he turned to me and asked, "Whom did you come to see?"

"Kerich," I replied.

He stopped short and shot me a strange glance.

"But he was arrested today."

"Don't talk about it!" I said. "We want to catch a few more birds in that nest. I'm from the Secret Police."

He ran forward ahead of me in his slippered feet, eager to get the key into the lock, flattered and delighted to help me.

"Good night, Herr Kommissar," he said, bowing low.

For three months I had managed to avoid saluting the swastika flag. It was true that after May 1 the Hitler-greeting was obligatory in the factory, and the NSBO [6] saw to it that the workers and clerks raised their right arms in salute as they entered each morning. But you could always steer clear of SA parades and demonstrations by turning off into a side street or a restaurant. I tried it once too often, however, and got myself into needless danger through my none too clever behavior. Toward the end of May I had made a street appointment with two of our subdistrict functionaries to discuss the

[6] *National-Sozialistische Betriebszellen Organisation*—the Nazi labor organization for factory workers.

reorganization of various units. As I neared our meeting place, I caught sight of an approaching procession of Nazi nurses, carrying banners. Without stopping to think, I turned my back on it and walked in the opposite direction, only to face four Brown Shirts crossing toward me from the other side of the street.

"Trying to get out of it?" said one. "Arm up! And now——?"

"Heil Hitler," I said.

I could have spit at myself as I strode past the procession with arm uplifted.

For months before Hitler's accession to power, the Party had already issued instructions that a courier service was to be organized, the cells broken up into smaller units, lodgings cleared of all incriminating material, and rooms provided for underground work. Matters were to be arranged so that every subdistrict and, wherever possible, every cell could continue its work independently, even if contact with the Central Committee should be temporarily severed. But it was one thing to prepare for approaching illegal activity; it was quite another thing to be driven overnight into the most complete illegality. The tremendous Party apparatus, with more than a quarter of a million members, and thousands of factory and street cells, had to elude the grip of the Nazi state power the morning after the Reichstag fire. It was clear that the incendiaries intended to follow the fire up with a wave of terrorism directed against the Party and all the workers' organizations.

The transition to illegality cost us many victims, for

which our own lack of training was largely to blame. It was hard to part from the painfully acquired works of Lenin, from the theoretical journals we had accumulated, from the documents dealing with the Party history. Against our better judgment, we kept them on our bookshelves, till we learned that another comrade had been caught. Then we weeded them out. But what was harmless today became high treason within a week. We weeded them again and again till the entire library had been burned and our empty bookshelves stacked with cheap love stories and rubbish.

I packed my most precious books into two boxes, which I hid in the cellar until the time when I could convey them to safety.

We "searched" our comrades' rooms to make sure that they had carried out the Party's instructions. Sometimes we came across instances of incredible carelessness in the matter of holding on to forbidden material. It was particularly important to gain prompt access to the rooms of comrades *after* they had been arrested. We had to remove all clues suggesting Party work or leading to the trail of other comrades. At the time when the Party had been organizing the Home Defense Squads against surprise attacks by the Brown Shirts, we had had skeleton keys made to the rooms of comrades. This precaution now proved very useful. Our "searches" saved a number of comrades from certain death. On one occasion Mother Hannchen carried from the rooms of an RFB-man [7] a full clothesbasket of weapons, covered

[7] *Rot-Frontkämpfer-Bund*—Red Front-Fighters' League, the fighting organization of the CPG.

only by a few towels; this was done in broad daylight.

It was now more important than ever—in view of the flood of Nazi propaganda, verbal and written—to impress upon the minds of the comrades the principles of Marxism-Leninism. But the educational work in our subdistrict presented serious difficulties. Private homes could not be used for large classes without attracting attention. When the warm weather came, we met outdoors in groups of five to ten. I remember that on the day of the big auto races along the Avus highway we lay in the wood that borders the race course. Thousands of spectators lined the road. We were discussing the Marx-Lenin theory of the state, and agreed that never before had the state's rôle in class society been more strikingly illustrated than now in the Third Reich. Only a few months earlier, huge SPG [8] placards had shouted from the advertising kiosks: "STATE, ACT!" The SPG appealed to the Weimar Republic to protect the people; the "democratic" state was supposed to act against the rising Nazi menace. Now the state had acted; it had destroyed the workers' organizations, torn the last shreds of democracy from the machinery of oppression, and was making merry over the fools who had deluded themselves into the belief that you could break the little wheels, one by one, from a rolling mill.

We were having trouble with Martin. The boy, formerly a devoted Party worker, was weakening under the constant pressure of danger and had begun to drink. For a while he seemed to take our remonstrances to heart,

[8] Socialist Party of Germany.

and promised to quit. But things went from bad to worse. He was no longer dependable, and after he had failed to show up again one day—for a street appointment at that, where punctuality was of the utmost importance—I told him I would have to report him to the Party.

"As you like," he said. "The whole thing is over anyway."

I looked at him, speechless.

"Karl, don't deceive yourself," he said. "We are beaten. We can't even save the pieces."

"So that's it! You want to get out of it? Now, when everything is at stake! Now, when every man is indispensable to the Party you want to make your peace with the Nazis?"

"There's no point to it any more," he said. "It's hopeless. What can we do? Get out a few measly sheets when their papers circulate by the millions? Keep a few thousand comrades together in the Kampfbund,[9] when the SA has over a million members? Fight with revolvers against tanks and airplanes?"

"We don't have to fight against tanks and airplanes today. When we do, we'll have tanks and airplanes too. The point now is to show the masses that we——"

He stopped me with a weary gesture.

"I'm so sick of the sound of the word 'masses.'—It's no use. It's no use discussing it with me any longer, either. You may be right. But I can't start all over again from the beginning. I had imagined everything quite differently."

[9] An anti-fascist organization of workers who may or may not be Communists.

"We don't have to start all over again from the beginning. And a few months from now you'll be ashamed that you wanted to throw up the sponge."

"Maybe. But my heart's not in it any more. It hasn't been for weeks. I just didn't have the courage to tell you and the others."

"I suppose you know what you are doing, Martin. I can't force you. Only I thought you were a better Communist."

He shrugged his shoulders unhappily. We parted without shaking hands.

It was a pity. He had not been a bad comrade; not long enough in the movement; not enough political experience. But was it any wonder, in this witch's cauldron of terror and demagogy, that comrades should go astray? They saw the outward impotence of the Party, functionaries hunted down, workers either wearily resigned or bending their ears to the promises of the new prophets. To save oneself from being confused and blinded by the effective mass management of the new régime one needed not only conviction and strength of character; more than anything else one needed an indestructible scientific insight into the mechanism of class relationships.

Martin's defection was followed shortly by another blow. After contact with the district leadership had been restored, Werner had been sent to reorganize the district of G., where, one after another, three groups of functionaries had been arrested. Werner, who had been invested with special powers by the Party, was to build up a new corps of functionaries. Barely a fortnight had

elapsed when he too was arrested. The papers carried a brief notice to the effect that the Communist Party had been growing very active again among the miners of G. and that the authorities had succeeded in apprehending several of its leading members, who were now faced with prison terms of from three to ten years.

I saw Anton almost every week. He was in charge of anti-fascist work among the intellectuals, and gave me a far from encouraging picture of conditions in the colleges and universities and among the former liberal intelligentsia generally. The students were for the most part ardent Nazis; the professors—except for those who had previously committed themselves as anti-Hitlerites —had lost no time in jumping on the bandwagon to save their jobs. A few only had resigned rather than submit to spiritual *Gleichschaltung*. Much the same situation existed among the doctors and lawyers, the artists and writers. So great was the dread of persecution and unemployment that most intellectuals feared to continue even their personal contacts with former radical friends. They were, like the good Lord, on the side of the heaviest artillery. Anton told me they were failing us on all sides. It was no unusual thing for him to telephone a former sympathizer, only to be answered by the faint click of a cautiously replaced receiver. If they were asked to hide a hunted comrade in their rooms it usually turned out that every corner of the house was unfortunately occupied.

However, they were not all like that. Many colorless middle-class families, to whom we had formerly paid

scant attention, acquired political convictions in the course of these months and helped us with more than sighs and empty phrases. A Catholic engineer fed and lodged a Party functionary in his home for three months and supplied us with funds to help other comrades to safety. A young tutor with whom Anton had engaged in many futile discussions on "social reform versus revolution" came to him of his own accord, and told him that he could no longer close his eyes to the necessity of a proletarian revolution. He became one of our best workers among the students in his college.

The Nazis took advantage of the summer months to secure the ground they had won. They forced the German Nationalists [10] out of all important government positions, tried to ingratiate themselves with the Reichswehr, and split the air with their programs for reemployment, salvation of the German peasantry, labor camps, and the national community. The peasants hoped, the workers waited; but the campaign of propaganda, conducted on a colossal scale and backed by all the resources of government power and government funds, met with a rapturous response from the youth of the middle classes.

I came originally from that milieu myself, but for years I had lost all touch with it. The enthusiasm of these young people reminded me of 1914, and it made me sick. The sight of their marching columns conjured up the image of these blindly bleating calves being led to the

[10] The German National Party or Deutsche Nationale Volks Partei, headed by the industrial magnate and publisher, Dr. Alfred Hugenberg, had the great majority of seats in the first Hitler cabinet.

slaughterhouse which the stay-at-homes would once more call "the field of honor." I felt contempt for their readiness to sacrifice themselves—for what? I hated them as the embodiment of petty bourgeois stupidity, as docile cannon-fodder, as submissive slaves to the masters of the moment.

Political brawls and battles had served as my only point of contact with them. Anton tried to persuade me that these misled young people, with their idealistic leanings, formed the strongest bulwark of fascist ideology. Through them, he insisted, you could best study the political strength and weakness of the Nazis, and the contradictory currents within their movement. They constituted the sensitive barometer by which the hopes and disappointments of the Nazi mass following could be gauged. He insisted that I ought to meet some of the students and young clerks who were heart and soul with the new régime, and when I declined he called me a "sectarian with organic leanings toward left deviations."

I arrived at his office one day to find Franz Helling there, whom I had not seen in months. Helling had, under Party instructions, been working within the Nazi organization for years. Illegal existence was nothing new to him. His double life had given him not only vast experience in underground activity, but a realistic sense which I lacked. I preferred to make a wide detour around every brown uniform I saw—not out of fear, but scorn and loathing. He was always in the midst of SA- and SS-men. I hated them. He not only hated them —but understood them.

"You've got inhibitions," he said to me, when Anton

broached the subject again. "You work with your emotions when you ought to be using your brains. Come along with me tonight, so you can see them as they are among themselves."

There was no gainsaying Franz. The principle of leadership, he declared, had soaked into his blood. Anton and I were more inclined to call it his Berlin brass.

He took me along to a book dealer's, where a group of young people met regularly. There were eight or ten young men present when we arrived. Most of them bowed with a slight, cultured click of the heels when Franz presented me under a false name. A tall, flaxen-haired young man in his early twenties, the openness of whose expression was heightened by his thin, threadlike eyebrows, gave an enthusiastic account of his aviation experiences. As he told them, they were like stale echoes of the reports sent from the front by war correspondents about the "happy" and "tragic" adventures of the soldiers which the German newspapers used to run under the standing caption: "Incidents Grave and Gay of Our Boys in Gray." With the authority of an expert, he discussed the strength of the French, British, and Soviet air fleets, and how long it would take Germany to equal and surpass them. Helling lured them into a political discussion by professing grave concern over the possibility of a military alliance against Germany.

"Impossible," said the flaxen-haired youth. "England will never fight us till the Bolsheviks are overthrown. She knows perfectly well that such a step would give the Reds control not only in Central Europe but in Asia too."

"And suppose she does fight us?" another interposed. "We fought the whole world once and beat them on the battlefield. If it hadn't been for the treachery of the Novembrists——" He did not have to finish. Everybody knew what he meant.

"Well," grinned Helling, "we mustn't be ungrateful. The good old SPG's built a few fast pocket cruisers and sanctioned some nice military budgets too."

The argument now raged hot and heavy. One of the Nazis, who had been turning the pages of a book, rose and advanced to the center of the room.

"Have you ever," he exclaimed, "known any party, either inside or outside of Germany, as spineless as the SPG? Have you ever in all the world's history come across statesmen so utterly lacking in statesmanship? Whatever they did, they did with an uneasy conscience. Everything had to be squeezed out of them—whether it was sanctioning a few armored cruisers or raising the tariff. And then they had to have a little political concession here and a fat private bribe there to appease their international-pacifist souls. There wasn't a single principle they didn't violate. *Realpolitik* à la Stresemann, they called it."

"That's true," said the book dealer. "I never could understand why all those millions of workers stuck to them to the bitter end."

"Because," replied the student, "they played on the people's basest instincts. They turned the nation into a stockholder's company. They couldn't express their mercenary ideals except in marks and pfennigs. They debased their former revolutionary principles to the

stomach and wage level. It's incalculable, the harm they've done to the racial substance of our people."

"Yes, and don't forget the harm the others have done," one of his friends reminded him. "The reactionary groups who, when they spoke of the Fatherland, meant their own pockets; and finance capitalists that didn't give a hang about the people's needs except as they contributed to their own profits. The Marxists didn't have to invent the class struggle to set us at each other's throats. The yoke of interest-bearing capital was a fact." They all felt for their "fellow countrymen." Carried away by honest enthusiasm, they would have liked to include the peasant and worker, the soldier, the scientist, and the private employer in their fraternal embrace.

On the way home I met a crowd of people emerging from the Sport Palace, where they had been attending a political rally. Noisy and gay, their faces radiant, they were looking toward the dawn of a new era. These were the people Hitler meant when he said, "They have found happiness again."

CHAPTER II

COLUMBIA

MY position was growing precarious. For a week now I had been noting various signs which convinced me that the street was under surveillance. A stocky individual, recognizable twenty yards off as a plain-clothes bull, kept bobbing up. One morning I caught sight of him as he was leaving the superintendent's apartment, another time as he stood deep in conversation with the porter of the house next door.

I made up my mind to quit the place as soon as I could get a new address to my contact man with the subdistrict bureau. Meantime I redoubled my precautions.

On July 17, at five-thirty in the morning, the doorbell rang. I rose noiselessly and set fire to the letters lying ready in the bedroom stove.

A knock sounded at the door. "Open up!"

I stood motionless. The knocking grew louder.

"Open up! It's the police!"

I waited till the flame had died down and the glow was extinguished. Then I opened my bedroom door and called sleepily, "What's wrong?"

"Open the door! Secret police!"

I cast another glance about the apartment. Everything

in order. Then I went to the outer door and unlocked it. There stood a solitary detective.

"Herr Billinger?"

"Yes."

"May I speak to you for a moment?"

"Certainly."

He stepped into the entry and faced about. From the shadows of the staircase, where he had been hiding, a second man emerged.

I had imagined the scene of my arrest a hundred times over, wondering how I should come through it. Now everything was quite simple.

"You used to live in —— Street?"

"Yes."

"You were last employed by the firm of ——?"

"Yes."

"That's right, then. Kindly hand over to us all material connected with your illegal Party work."

I feigned blank astonishment. "What do you mean?"

"Better not make any trouble. We know all about you. You've continued to do underground work for the Communist Party, and you're in possession of certain forbidden material."

"I know nothing of any underground work and I have no forbidden material. You can look for yourselves."

For two hours they ransacked the apartment—nosed through my books, unscrewed the toilet seat, sifted the ashes of the kitchen stove, emptied the garbage can, poured a bag of salt into a pot. One of them actually ferreted out of the kitchen closet a list of names, coded

as a milk bill, of people enrolled for a course in Communism. I watched the proceedings indifferently, as though I had nothing to do with all this.

The fruitless search ended, they ordered me to accompany them—where, they didn't say. One on either side of me, each with a hand in his coat pocket, they steered me to the subway.

The car was packed with petty tradespeople, laborers, uniformed Storm Troopers. No one noticed that I was a prisoner between two detectives. I considered the possibility of flight. The crowded train would have been in my favor, preventing my captors from shooting. But there were too many volunteer helpers about, ready to rush to their aid. And I knew too well what lay in store for me if I should be recaptured.

We left the train at Potsdamer Platz. That meant the Gestapa [1] then—in Prinz Albrechtstrasse. The neighborhood of the building was alive with detectives, SS-men and police. The plain-clothes men were careful to betray their calling by no outward sign. They didn't even wear swastikas on their coat lapels, and, when they met on the street, greeted each other by lifting the hands at their sides in a barely perceptible salute.

A double guard was stationed outside the building, and an SS sentry posted on every floor within. My escort led me up the broad staircase, higher and higher, till we were directly under the roof. There they pushed me into a corner and ordered me to wait.

I took advantage of the time to rehearse once more

[1] Abbreviation for Geheimes Staatspolizei Amt—Government Secret Police Headquarters.

the details of strategy in the scene to come. I went over in my mind the questions I might be asked, the answers I should make, what I might say without implicating comrades or harming the party. I still had in my watch the address of a sympathizer, with whom I had been talking the evening before. I tore it up and swallowed the pieces. So far, so good. Only the thought of a still uncoded list of 180 Kampfbund comrades which I had hidden in my apartment plagued me.

Half an hour later one of the detectives returned, made several fruitless telephone calls for a typist, and finally sat down at the machine himself.

"Once more I warn you to tell the whole truth. We've been watching you for four months. Here are the documents in your case."

He pointed to a thick portfolio lying in front of him.

"You're a Communist?"

"I was a member of the Communist Party of Germany."

"How long?"

"Since 1923."

His forefinger picked out the letters laboriously, one by one.

"You deny, then, that you belong to the underground Communist Party?"

"I do."

"What were your functions in the Party?"

"No special functions. I wasn't fitted for organizational enterprises and confined myself to theoretical work."

"Did you speak at meetings?"

I remembered two meetings at which the police had taken my name. "Twice, from the floor in a general discussion."

"You've been in Russia?"

"Yes." (My passport had a Soviet visa.)

"What were you doing there?"

"Working in the Leningrad electric plant."

"You worked for the Russian munitions industry, too."

"I did not."

"You took part in the collectivization of the German peasants on the Volga."

"I did not. I was not, as a matter of fact, even in the Volga region."

"You're on friendly terms with a Bulgarian student connected with the three Bulgarian scoundrels who set fire to the Reichstag?"

"I don't know any Bulgarian students."

The forefinger typed on.

"Empty your pockets."

I obeyed. He went through my letter case and read my mother's letters which I carried with me.

"Aha—so you've been planning to return to Russia."

"No."

"I beg your pardon!" Triumphantly he handed me a letter in which my mother begged me to come and see her before I went to Russia. The letter had been written in 1931 and, luckily for me, was dated.

"What unit did you work with?"

"Former unit No. 2026."

"Who was the unit organizer?"

"A man named Rudolf."

"You refuse to give us his last name?"

"I don't know it. The functionaries of our unit were all changed in January, and the Party's instructions were that comrades should be called by their first names only."

"Where is he now?"

"I saw him last in January, 1933. I don't know where he lives."

He eyed me derisively. "Your memory's going to be considerably improved while you're here with us. Come with me."

He led me down stairs and along corridors till we reached a door marked: "SS GUARD."

"Wait in there," he ordered, and pushed me inside.

I found myself standing in a room large enough for a meeting hall. Some SS guards sat around a table opposite the door, playing cards and drinking beer. They ignored me. Revolvers and blackjacks were heaped on the table. Straw-palleted cots stood along the wall at the left.

As I glanced to the right, my heart leaped to my throat. Their backs to the room, a line of about thirty prisoners stood facing the wall. An SS guard, under twenty, paced back and forth behind them.

"Can't you stand still, you ——, when you're told to stand still?" he bellowed at an old man, kicking him with all his might in the back. The old man's head crashed against the wall. He fell to the floor. The trooper promptly seized him by the back of the neck, pulled him up and punched him in the face. "You

weren't too old for the Commune, were you, you dirty dog?"

The old man made no answer. The others stood like stone images.

"What are you standing there for, you blockhead?" he shouted suddenly at me. "Come over here and don't budge from the spot."

Behind us we could hear the card-playing troopers thumping on the table. Messengers came and went. Guards were relieved and flung themselves down on the cots. The telephone rang incessantly. Every telephone conversation began and ended with "Heil Hitler!"—even if it was only an order for more beer. Fresh prisoners were brought in a never-ending stream. Most of them entered silently; a few clicked their heels, flung up their arms and tried their luck with "Heil Hitler!" No one answered them.

The second man to my right began gasping softly. I tried to get a glimpse of him without moving my head. He was a sturdy fellow of twenty-five or so—a worker, to judge by his clothing—and his face was livid green. A few minutes later he started swaying, then suddenly collapsed. Our guard was just then talking to the card players and did not notice the incident. A trooper who entered the room at that moment caught sight of the man lying on the floor.

"Think you can get a good day's rest here, do you, you son of a bitch?"

He seized the man on the floor, pulled him to his knees, and struck him a terrific blow in the face. Blood spurted from the man's mouth and nose. Our guard rose

from the card table and came over. "You're drunk, you bastard," he said. The two guards kicked the groaning man in the stomach, back, and face. Dragging himself to his feet, the man tried to stand up. His head drooped, his legs refused to support him. To keep himself from collapsing again, he dug his fingernails into the plastered wall. You could hear the nails crunch and break off as he dropped again like a sack to the floor.

Toward noon we heard a commotion in the corridor outside—loud talking, shouting, running back and forth. Finally the door burst open to admit a number of Black Shirts.

"Here's the bastard who rode with the driver."

From the confusion of questions and answers it was possible to glean the information that a truckload of illegal literature had been seized by the Secret Police.

"Damn it all, I know that fellow! You've been here before, haven't you?"

"Yes, sir," came the reply in a clear, boyish voice.

"What were you arrested for the first time?"

"I was accused of distributing pamphlets."

"And this time?"

"I was standing at the corner of Müller- and Seestrasse, and a chauffeur offered me five marks to help him drive his load."

"Never mind the fairy tales. You knew perfectly well what was in those boxes."

"No, he didn't tell me a thing. And I didn't ask any questions, either. I was glad enough to earn the money."

"Now look here, my boy, what did you do it for?" It was the voice of an older trooper speaking. "Now they

won't believe what you told them before, either. You're done for now."

"I've been unemployed since I left school. They wouldn't accept me for the labor camps because I'm a Communist. What am I supposed to do?"

One of the troopers in the group surrounding him replied with a blow that knocked the boy to the floor. "Leave him alone, Max," said the older man quietly, apparently unable to suppress his pity.

The pamphlets were passed from hand to hand. A trooper started reading aloud from one of them:

ENEMY PLANES OVER BERLIN

An Important Message to all Germans

by

DR. JOSEPH GOEBBELS

"What a bunch of bastards!" another cried. "Just turn the page."

The first man gasped as he went on reading:

THE BRUTAL SLAUGHTER OF REICHSBANNER AND RED FRONT LEAGUE COMRADES IN NOWAWES BY HITLER'S BROWN MURDER-HORDES

A Documentary Report Issued by the Berlin-Brandenburg District of the Communist Party of Germany

In a fresh access of rage they began again to beat the boy, from whose lips not a sound broke.

We continued to stand at rigid attention until seven that evening, chins in, heels together, eyes fixed on the white-plastered wall. To prevent dizziness I picked out a small black spot on the wall in front of me on which I focused my attention. Standing thus, unable to see what went on behind us, we were nevertheless being familiarized with the first educational measures practiced by the Third Reich on our unfortunate comrades.

At seven one of our torturers snarled, "Company, about—face! Right—face! Forward—march!"

We were led through a long corridor into an inner court, and marched at double quick time into a number of police trucks that stood waiting for us. The Green Minna [2] was closed, and the trucks rumbled off. A small barred window at one side admitted a narrow ray of light, and I watched the street signs rushing by us in an effort to discover our destination. It was not until we were halted by traffic for a moment that I was able to get my bearings. I found that we were at the Halle Gate, headed south—which meant that they were taking us either to General-Pape-Strasse or to the Columbia House. After a drive of half an hour or so the column halted. A sign outside our little window bore the name Columbiastrasse.

We were at the Tempelhof Flying Field, facing the building which had once been a notorious military prison but had since been taken over by the Black Shirts as one of their various torture chambers. The door of our truck was flung open.

"Get out!"

[2] German for "Black Maria."

Driven by kicks and blows, we were herded into the corridor of the first floor and ordered to fall into line. One by one each of the prisoners was led into a room whose door promptly closed behind him. While the rest of us waited outside, the SS-men entertained each other for our benefit with vivid descriptions of what lay in store for us. I watched the line in front of me growing smaller and smaller.

"Next!" The two men pushed me into the room. I saw an SS guard sitting at a table. Other guards surrounded us. The guard at the table wrote down my name, age, and so on. Then he ordered me to hand over my hat, coat, watch, handkerchiefs, fountain pen, pocket knife, belt, and shoelaces. The articles were checked off on a printed form and stuffed into a paper bag. I was beginning to nurse the silent hope that I had cleared my first hurdle. The man at the desk was looking through some papers.

"So you can't remember the name of your unit organizer," he said, smiling pleasantly. Then without warning he bellowed like a bull, "Trying to put something over on us, are you, you horse's ass? Who was he?"

I could feel all my physical fear melting away. I was conscious only of the working of my brain as it registered the blows that cracked down on me. They picked me up from the floor.

"We'll have another talk tomorrow," the man at the table said genially. "You'll tell us everything, my friend." Again the smile became a bellow. "Get out, you bastard!" I was hurled out of the room.

"Next!"

We were kept waiting in another corridor till all that day's prisoners had been dispatched. The guards on patrol talked in loud voices.

"Is that son of a bitch in sixty-two alive yet?"

"They just took him to the State Hospital."

"And Barricade Fritz?"

"Sick with the clap. Has to get injections all the time."

"What are you doing tonight?"

"My girl's calling for me. My nuts are hot. I haven't been out in three days."

One of the guards halted in front of a prisoner.

"What are you here for?"

"I don't know."

"Jew?"

"Yes."

"And you don't know what you're here for, you Assyrian son of the desert? Wait—I'll pay you a special call tonight."

It was late at night before we were led to our cells. The guards took advantage of the opportunity to wallop us again. Those in the rear kicked us with their heavy boots so that we surged forward. Those in front beat us back with their fists and leather whips.

In a long bare wing of the building, the jailer opened door after door.

"No. 876."

"Here." The door slammed shut.

"No. 877."

"Here."

"No. 878."

"No. 879."

"No. 880."

Locked in my cell, I heard the numbers being called—to 900 and beyond. The tread of the sentry sounded at irregular intervals in the corridor outside.

I groped my way about in the darkness. Four steps from the door to the back wall, two and a half steps across. A wooden stool—the only object I could discover—stood in the right-hand corner. The barred window, high in the wall, framed a small, pale square of the night sky. Though I had eaten nothing all day, I was conscious of neither hunger nor fatigue. All the energy of my body seemed concentrated in my head, and my thoughts ran riot.

How would Käthe hear of my arrest? How would she take the news? Would she be calm and courageous or would her impulsiveness betray her into follies and blunders? If only they didn't find that list! No one knew where it was. How could I get in touch with the outside world? Had Michael wired promptly? He might wait too long and then they'd catch Otto at Halle. How would the comrades discover my whereabouts? How inexcusable not to have coded the list the moment I received it! A hundred and eighty comrades—many of them married. It was well hidden—but suppose they tore the furniture apart and found it! I couldn't stand it—I'd kill myself. . . .

Yes, that was a comfort. I'd kill myself. I clung to the notion—as though my death could atone for my carelessness.

I heard footsteps in the corridor.

"Where is he?"

"Cell 128."

They passed my door. Farther down a cell door was opened and closed again. The jailer had apparently admitted some SS-men into a cell.

From the lower end of the corridor a fearful cry rang out, followed by a long-drawn gasp—again and again and again. . . .

They were throttling a comrade to stop him from screaming. Presently the jailer opened the door, and I heard them say, "Down to the cellar."

A stumbling on the stairs—then silence again, till the moans of the tortured man rose from below. I had never heard men cry; it was unbearable. I stuck my fingers into my ears to keep out the sound.

The guard roused us at six next morning. Naked to the waist, we were ordered to line up in the corridor outside.

"Right face—forward march!"

At the head of the staircase we were joined by prisoners from other wings.

"Mark time—march!"

Through the noise of the tramping feet I heard my neighbor whisper, "How long have you been here?"

"Since yesterday."

"How are things outside?"

"Quiet."

"Party?"

"Yes—and you?"

"Of course."

"How long have you been here?"

"Ninth week."

Going down the narrow staircase we were separated. The man on my left, who had been brought in with me the day before, was on the point of leaning over to whisper something to me when a trooper, who had been watching us unobserved, let fly with a long artillery whip.

"Let me see you jabbering together again, you crooks, and you'll be ripe for the cellar."

The lash had cut straight across my companion's face.

In the corner of the small square that formed the prison courtyard a ditch had been dug and a board laid across it—our latrine—where, ten at a time, crowded close together, we took care of our needs. The others stood lined up in front of us, facing the latrine.

I took advantage of the precious opportunity to look for acquaintances. There in the front row stood Ernst, pale as death, a ragged stubble disfiguring his sensitive face. Not an eyelash twitched as we greeted each other.

For three weeks his people had been hunting for him, ignorant of his fate or his whereabouts, not knowing whether he were alive or dead. He had had a job as assistant in a research laboratory, and I knew he had been arrested in the act of mimeographing a Party newspaper. A Jew, an intellectual, a Communist, caught red-handed at his underground work! His face seemed to be all eyes —the grave and sorrowful eyes of a sage.

A trooper shouted, "Get up!" The row of ten stood up.

As I was buttoning my trousers a prisoner behind me cleared his throat. I pretended to adjust my clothing and turned around. I found myself staring straight into Hans's young face. The lid of his left eye came down in his usual wink, and he could not refrain from murmuring between his teeth.

"A wonderful s—t, no?"

I promptly lost my feeling of desolation. Hans was here—Hans with whom I'd been working in the movement for years—Hans, the shrewdest and most fearless antifa [3] fighter of my section.

After the latrine came the "bear dance." [4]

"Right—face! By row, forward—march! At the trot, march—march!"

In single file we ran round the narrow yard—round and round and round and round. Again I searched for a familiar face among those that passed me—this time without success.

Two of the older prisoners fell out of the ranks, too exhausted to go on. The squad leader promptly stepped up beside them. "Forward—march!"

Once more they broke into a run but, after a single round, one of them collapsed. The squad leader flogged him to his feet.

"Knee bending! Lower—*lower*—that's it. Hands out!"

Across the outstretched arms, already trembling with fatigue, he laid a wooden club. "There! You get all this

[3] Abbreviation for anti-fascist.

[4] The name used by the prisoners to describe the drill which required them to run in a circle for hours at a time within the confines of a small courtyard.

training free of charge here. Never too late to start being a good German."

"I can't stand any more," muttered the old man. "Got a bullet wound in my lung."

"The hell with your bullet wound! It didn't bother you when you were with the Communists, you old swine!"

The élite of the Third Reich were tendering a war veteran the thanks of the Fatherland.

After the "bear dance" we had to wash at a pump without soap and towel. The newcomers then received their green "Bolle" shirts, so called from their resemblance to the uniforms of the employees of the Bolle Milk Company of Berlin. The SS had confiscated these shirts from the dissolved organizations of the German Nationalist Party and used them now as prison uniforms to show their contempt for the German Nationalist "Bolle milkmen."

"Coffee"—a brown brew of some sort—and a chunk of bread, two inches thick and scraped with lard, came at seven. Since there was no mug in my cell I received no coffee. I choked down the dry bread and started to examine my cell. The plaster walls were scarred with signs to mark the passing of the days. Most of them had been scratched in with fingernails, and some of them were as carefully and precisely set down as the columns of a ledger.

By and large, they were simple weekly calendars—six lines scored through by a seventh. I counted fourteen weeks in one place, eighteen in another, twenty here,

nine there. I found too that improvements had been made in the original calendar. Since the prisoner knew on what day of the week he had been admitted, he would mark off the days to Sunday, and then set the days of the following weeks in their corresponding places below. This table, for example, indicated that the prisoner had been admitted on a Friday and had left his cell on Thursday of the fifth week:

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High up on the right wall stood a laconic "3½ years," probably an echo of the days before the Nazi régime when the Columbia House was a military prison. The upper left-hand corner of the door bore in crude letters the words: "Red Front Lives!"

I sought out a small unmarred surface and scratched in my first stroke. It was a Saturday.

A faint sound at my cell door warned me that I was being watched from the corridor. As I made my way slowly to the stool, the iron disk over the peephole, which had been cautiously raised, clattered back and the door opened to admit a Black Shirt. I rose and looked at him.

"Why don't you report?" he said.

Not understanding the question, I remained silent.

"What's the matter?" he roared, his face purpling with rage. "What have you got in your head—brains or s—t? Don't you know the house regulations?"

"No."

"Get out! At the trot, march—march!"

I ran down the corridor. On the window sill, at the end of the hallway, sat the guard with the keys. I stopped and the guard hauled off, with the heavy bunch of keys in his hand, and smashed into my face. "About—face! Forward, march—march!"

The two guards kept me running back and forth between them. Each one greeted me with a punch in the face when I arrived and booted my rear when I left.

"Get in! Do you know the regulations now?"

What was I to say? If I said no, they'd beat me; if I said yes, they would beat me still more the moment I showed any ignorance of the "regulations."

"I only came yesterday," I said.

The guard condescended to explain that, the instant my cell door was opened, I was to stand at attention against the rear wall and report my name, my number, and the reason for my arrest.

"Understand?"

"Yes."

"Say, yes, *sir*, you p——k!"

"Yes, sir."

They went on to the next prisoner.

My cell faced south. At about ten in the morning a slender sunbeam began playing about the walls. It was a beautiful summer. I could hear planes taking off from the Tempelhof Field and landing. Sometimes I managed to catch a glimpse of a plane passing across the narrow opening of the barred window. From the yard came the cries of the SS guards. Cars drove in. Commands. People

running back and forth. The ringing of a telephone.

I began gradually to feel how tired I was. I moved the stool into the sunlight and, completely exhausted, fell asleep. The grating of the iron flap over the peephole woke me with a start. My door was flung open.

I leaped to my feet and reported: "Billinger—No. 880—Communist."

"Don't you know you're not supposed to sleep in the daytime, you s—t ass!" This was a new sentry, who had apparently just come on duty. "Knee bending!"

I bent my knees. The dog knew to the exact millimeter when legs and toes were strained to the utmost. Leaving me in that position, he went out and slammed the door. Fortunately, I could watch the peephole out of the corner of my eye. While it was covered I would rest on my heels. The moment I heard a suspicious sound at the door, I would swing back to my toes again. He kept me waiting for about half an hour before making his second entry.

"What are you here for, you bastard?"

"I was a member of the CPG."

"How long?"

"Till the national revolution."

"Still got the cheek to tell me that?" he yelled, and floored me with a blow to the chin.

At noon there was a thin potato gruel from the field kitchen which had been set up in the courtyard. We were taken down again. As we passed the closed cells I could see chalk writing on the massive wooden doors. Several of them read:

ATTENTION!

On other doors were pasted red paper crosses with the explanation:

CLAP!

On the door of the last cell in one corridor I read, four days running:

MAY NOT LIE DOWN
TO BE VISITED EVERY TEN MINUTES
LIGHT TO BURN ALL NIGHT

In the afternoon—when we had returned to our cells from our meager meal—I heard the guard bellowing in the corridor: "Singers, flags out!" Several cells opened and after a few minutes there rang out from the courtyard below a many-voiced choir: "Aennchen von Tharau, ist's die mir gefällt." . . . "Es ritten drei Reiter zum Tore hinaus." . . . "Wenn du noch eine Mutter hast." [5]

Toward seven in the evening I heard cells opening and closing in my corridor. Footsteps passed my cell but it was not opened. Half an hour later the guard shouted, "Sitters, flags out!" Again cell doors were opened and I heard a group being taken down to the courtyard. When these were back in their cells, I heard a second command: "Standers, flags out!" Again cell doors opened and closed, feet scraped, keys turned, silence.

So the first day slowly came to an end, and slowly I realized that it was only the first.

[5] These are the opening lines of three German folk songs: "Little Anna of Tharau is the one I love"; "Three riders rode out to the gate"; and "If you still have a mother."

At eight the lights went out. I put my coat under my head and tried to sleep on the floor. I would doze off, but again and again would wake up in fright. I had no idea how long I had lain like this, when I heard a cell opening at the end of my corridor. Voices of the guards. Heavy thumping. Cries. Clang. The cell door closed, and another opened. Again blows, cries, and silence, the opening and closing of cells. The sound of the clanging cell doors came nearer and nearer. With growing anxiety I counted, seventeen times, the scene I heard but could not see.

My cell door opened. In the lights of the corridor stood about a dozen SS guards. I stood against the back wall of my cell and reported:

"Billinger—No. 880—Communist."

"Why are you here?"

"I was a member of the CPG."

"How long?"

"Until the national revolution."

"You expect us to believe that? You did underground work."

"No."

"You're lying, you dog."

They beat my head with their fists till I fell down unconscious. When I came to they were kicking me furiously. I tried to stand up. They knocked me down again and left me lying on the floor. I could hear the door of my cell closing behind them.

Later I discovered that these preliminary episodes were part of the judicial technique of the investigating court. From the moment that the prisoners were taken

into "protective" custody, their morale was to be broken by every possible means. These nightly "investigations" were repeated with every change of guard.

Late at night it got very cold. I knocked at my cell door and the SS guard opened it.

"What in hell do you want?"

"It's cold. Could I have a blanket or a burlap bag?"

The guard, a boy of no more than twenty-two, flew into a hysteric rage.

"Do you want me to wipe your ass, too—you Communist swine?"

As punishment for my gall in daring to call the guard I had to take off my trousers, shoes, and socks. The cement floor of my cell was so cold it was impossible to sleep.

In the afternoon of the fourth day I was taken to the investigating judge. His office was on the third floor. As I was going up the stairs the guard kicked me from behind.

"Make it snappy, young man. We haven't got much time."

The investigating judge, an SS officer, must have been in civil life a butcher, a traveling salesman, or a law clerk. His authority was absolute. Methodically and without any "Jewish subtleties" he directed the hearing.

"Jew?"

"No."

"Communist?"

"Yes."

"RFB?"

"No."

"I said—RFB?"

"No."

"Fifty," he said calmly, settling himself back in his armchair. The two Black Shirts standing behind me seized me and rushed me downstairs to the cellar, where the "preparatory squad" was already on hand. From a tin pan they lifted wet horsewhips, which cut sharper after being soaked in water.

"Pants down!"

I stood motionless. In a moment I lay, stripped from the waist down, across a table. Four men held me; three others flogged me. At the first lash I thought I should leap to the ceiling. My whole body contracted convulsively. Against my will I let out a shrill cry. The second stroke, the third, the fourth—not quickly but at measured intervals, spaced so as to keep me from losing consciousness, to make certain that my nerves would register each blow in all its agonizing pain. I was aware of but one racking desire—to be dead, to be dead, to be dead, and have this over, finished, done. My body did not seem to belong to me any more. After ten or twelve lashes I felt the blows only as dull detonations in my head. I no longer had the strength to cry out. The twenty-fifth stroke was followed by a brief pause, during which the men changed places. One of them poured a pitcher of cold water over my head to render me fit for further treatment. Then they started afresh. When it was over they dragged me back to my cell. Closing the door, they said they would be back shortly to return me to the investigation court.

What kept me from suicide during those hours was

neither courage nor cowardice, neither the thought of my wife nor of my mother. It was the realization that within those four walls five hundred prisoners were sharing my fate. It was my sense of unity with the staunch Party workers, with the proletarians defenseless in the hands of their enemies. It was the thought of all the pallid faces, of Ernst, of the young boy caught distributing illegal literature. They stood it—I could stand it too.

I was unable to report for the "bear dance" at six that evening. When they opened my cell I remained lying motionless in my corner, indifferent to what they might do.

"Get up!"

I did not stir.

"Get up!" yelled the guard, kicking me in the stomach.

Resistance was out of the question. I dragged myself up and leaned on the stool.

"Why don't you report, you son of a bitch?"

"Billinger—No. 880—Communist."

"What are you lying around here for?"

"I can't stand up."

"Why not?"

"I've just been examined."

"What do you mean by that?"

I did not answer.

"You mean you fell down the stairs, don't you?"

I did not answer.

"Answer me, you son of a bitch! You fell down the stairs!"

"Yes, sir."

"All right, then."

At seven supper arrived—the same coffee, and the slice of bread and lard. A prisoner poured the coffee into my bowl, which was still dirty from the noon meal. He nudged me in passing. Looking up, I saw it was Hans. Over his gay, impudent face there passed a shadow of anxiety at the sight of my miserable condition. He tried to comfort me by winking his eye.

Late that night—the lights had long been turned out—we received a visit of inspection. A short, full-fed storm-troopleader, named Otto, known far and wide as a notorious drunkard, ordered the cell doors opened, one after another. Closer and closer came the roar of his voice, the slamming of doors. Finally they reached me.

"Billinger—No. 880—Communist."

Troopleader Otto came toward me, staring at me out of his vacant, protruding eyes. He stank of bad liquor.

"What are you here for?"

"Member of the CPG."

"How long?"

"Till the national government was established."

"Why not longer?"

I hesitated.

"You have realized," he said impressively, stressing each word, "you have realized that our Leader—who is our Leader?"

"Adolf Hitler."

"You have realized that our Leader, Adolf Hitler, was working day and night to make the German people happy again."

"Yes, sir."

"Where were you born?"

"In the Rhineland."

Alcohol, the Leader, the German Rhine—German wine, blonde girls—his sentimentality won the upper hand.

"The Rhine remains German," he declaimed.

"Yes, sir."

"And when you return to the Rhine, will you be a loyal German citizen?"

"Yes, sir."

A little more, and he would have embraced me. His men escorted him out, steadying him on his feet.

The night was a torment. I could neither sit nor lie nor stand. My coat and shirt were soaked through with blood and water. My body was racked with chills and fever. Tomorrow they would take me out and examine me again. No escape, no help. The comrades dead or imprisoned. Käthe penniless in a foreign country. What would she do? The list at home. Anton arrested. Had he really hanged himself? In a fit of despair? Had they murdered him? We were all lost.

Trucks with new prisoners rattled into the courtyard. The SS received them with shouts and curses and whipped them into their cells. The building was becoming overcrowded. Newcomers were isolated to prevent them from communicating with other prisoners; but those who had already been "investigated" were jammed two and three and even four into a single cell.

Into my cell they brought next day two prisoners;

one was a stranger, the other Hans. Somehow he had managed to get himself transferred to my cell. Hardly had the guards closed the door behind them when Hans leaned over and whispered to me, "Well, here I am. After fourteen weeks in this hole you learn something about it." It turned out Hans knew the place inside out. To me one SS guard was like another; I hated them so much that I did not distinguish their faces. But Hans knew every single man in the guard, his individual peculiarities, and how to handle him.

He had the proletarian's gift of adapting himself to the practical demands of a situation. Despite the terror and the rigid supervision he had succeeded in establishing connections with comrades in other cells. He helped with the distribution of coffee, he belonged to the potato-peeling squad which was privileged to sit in the yard several hours a day, he brushed the uniform coats of the SS officers, and enjoyed the patronage of the cook —an ex-prizefighter with cauliflower ears—because he could kindle a fire in the field kitchen as no one else could.

Yet he was no lickspittle. For all his activity he remained an incorruptible class-conscious worker. Into our cell he brought with him a pallet, crusted with dirt, blood, and excrement, and insisted upon my using it. He consoled me with the assurance that, since I had already signed my protocol at the Gestapa, my examination was at an end and I was here only to be gleichgeschaltet. His knowledge of the routine processes of our incorporation into the Third Reich was complete to the last detail.

After breakfast he returned with a blanket. Heaven knows where he had managed to get it. What no one else could do, what no one else dared do, Hans did.

It was he who finally initiated me into the mystery of "flags out." I had noticed the six-inch iron rod sticking out of the cell wall near the door, but had no idea what it was and certainly no desire to experiment with it. It turned out that when you pushed this rod it projected into the corridor. From its end hung a metal disk. It was the equivalent of raising your hand in the classroom; it meant you wanted out. So for the first time I was able to respond to the guards' calls, "Sitters—flags out!" or "Standers—flags out!" Hans explained the reason for the two categories. It took much less time to lead out and bring back five hundred standers than five hundred sitters. The guards, in order to save time, separated the two functions.

That evening we were lined up in the yard in square formation. An SS officer called the names of two Jewish prisoners. They stepped forward. Their faces were pale and bruised. One was a man of fifty, the other thirty or thereabouts.

"Well, kike," sneered the stormleader, "what's your profession?"

"Writer."

"Where did your writing appear, Cohen?"

"In various newspapers."

"Come on—don't be bashful—what newspapers?"

"The *Berliner Tageblatt* and the trade-union papers."

"Aha—what did you write about?"

"Cultural matters."

The SS-men roared in laughter.

"Ikey writes about German culture!"

"Did you write about peace and the League of Nations, too?"

"Yes."

"Are you a pacifist?"

"Yes."

"All right, yiddle, now you're going to be a fighter. Here—take the broom."

The guards grinned in anticipation of the forthcoming spectacle.

"And you, Egyptian son of the desert, what's your profession?"

"Physician."

"Party?"

"CPG."

"You did abortions for the Communist whores, I suppose?"

The man didn't answer.

"Come on, kike, take your sword." He forced a stick into the prisoner's hand. "When I count three, you begin. The loser goes to the cellar. One, two—three."

Neither of the men stirred.

"Well," bawled the officer, "how long do I have to wait?"

The older of the two raised his broom—and lowered it again. The younger stood motionless. The guards, armed with their whips, stationed themselves behind the pair.

"For the last time—go!"

Still the men did not move. The SS began to rain blows thick and fast over their heads and necks and backs, while, like a maniac, the officer kept yelling, "Forward! Forward!"

Hesitantly—appalled by what he was doing—then more rapidly, to escape the onslaught of the guards, the older Jew struck the younger a blow—and another, till at length he was laying about him in a frenzy, his face racked with agony, his eyes glaring with madness. The younger man never so much as lifted his arm to ward off the blows about his head. Neither did he stir under the horsewhips. Erect and silent, he stood till he collapsed. The faces of the watching prisoners were gray and sunken.

The third man in our cell, Richard M., was a man of forty-two, a registered member of the Social-Democratic Party for twenty years, an electrical engineer in the employ of the Berlin Traffic Company since 1924, and, more recently, a member of the Betriebsrat.[6] That was all the information he gave us at first.

Everyone guarded his secrets carefully. No one trusted his neighbor. Hans was one of those comrades predisposed by his temperament, youth, and personal experience to see in any Social-Democratic functionary a conscious traitor to the working class. For him M. simply did not exist. He never addressed a word to him. When he managed to get hold of food for our cell he would shove M.'s share toward him in silence. Occa-

[6] The shop councils within the factories, legal before the establishment of the Nazi government.

sionally he would relieve his mind by exclaiming, without so much as a glance at M.: "Defeat Hitler—elect Hindenburg." Don't let yourselves be provoked by the Kozis." [7] "Let your ballot be your answer." He was repeating Social-Democratic election slogans. M. said nothing.

One day several former police officials of the Social-Democratic Party, who had just been arrested, were being "measured" by the troopers in the cellar. As their screams rose to our ears Hans muttered spitefully to M., "Now you're reaping the reward for your labors of love."

For the first time the Social-Democrat lost his temper. "You paved the way for them, didn't you? You preferred to make a united front with them rather than with us."

"Better ten times with Gröner [8] than once with the Communists," Hans replied, quoting a speech by Schöpflin, former Social-Democratic deputy.

"What about your Red Plebiscite?" M. retorted.

"Who dissolved the Red Front League? Who gave the orders to shoot workers? Did you expect us to back the Social-Democratic scoundrels into the bargain?"

Both workers, both victims of the fascist hangmen, they suffered in the same cell in mutual hatred and rancor. The history of the German labor movement in the last fifteen years was not to be wiped out in a day or two.

[7] Contemptuous abbreviation for "Communists" used by Social-Democrats; from the German word *kotzen*, which means to vomit.

[8] War minister in Bruening cabinet, supported by the Social-Democrats.

"Air-raid alarm!" roared the sentry in the corridor.

"Quick!" Hans ordered. "Lie down! Head under the stool!"

We flung ourselves flat on the cement floor. Hans grabbed my soup bowl and inverted it over my head. The Social-Democrat, equally familiar with the proper etiquette, seized his tin mug and pressed it to his nose. Thus we lay motionless till the end of the "alarm" was sounded. My comrades explained to me that this "air-defense" drill had been devised by the aviation guard of Columbia House as an amusement for the Black Shirts.

That night our corridor was visited five times by an "inspection" squad. From one of the open cells we heard a guard trooper cry, "Damned if it isn't Hail-Moscow Georgie! Rotten luck for you, Georgie, my finding you here. Still, remember Weberstrasse. Do you remember, you louse? Well, I've got you now. Come on!"

They flogged the anti-fascist down the corridor and stairs into the cellar.

When we lined up outside our cells the following morning, the guard surveyed the results of the night's "investigation."

"What's that on your head?"

"I fell downstairs," replied the man addressed—a tall, skinny worker whose starved face looked like a death mask as a result of the night's manhandling.

"What stairs and when?"

"The stairs to the yard when I went to the latrine."

"How many steps?"

"Five."

"You'll have to be more careful next time—understand?"

"Yes, sir."

The sentries, highly diverted, grinned at each other.

"Are you a Jew?" the guard asked a dark-haired worker.

"No, sir."

"Easy enough to say. Prove it."

"My parents are Catholics."

"Baptized Jews, I suppose."

"No, sir."

"Prove it," bellowed the guard. Some of the other SS-men, scenting a good joke, joined the group. The worker, completely at a loss, remained silent.

"Are you circumcised?"

"No, sir."

"Unbutton! Let's see."

The man obeyed.

"Jews, step out!"

A tall, fair man stepped forward.

"You a specialist in circumcision, Münzer?"

"Yes, sir."

"Take a look at that."

"He's not a Jew."

"You trying to help out a coreligionist, Münzer?"

"No, sir. He really isn't a Jew."

"How many more strokes coming to you, Münzer?"

"Two hundred."

"A hundred off, if you tell the truth."

You could see the man's thoughts speeding to the cel-

lar—toward the two hundred lashes still due him. A hundred off. He was silent.

"Well, have you thought it over?"

"I can't tell."

"Want me to sharpen your eyesight for you?" threatened the guard.

"He may be a Jew," said the man slowly.

"All right, brethren. Now you'll both get it for having lied in the first place. Payment due tonight."

Still harder to endure than the mistreatment itself were the advance announcements of brutalities to come. A genial Bavarian among the Black Shirts had raised this pleasure to a system. He would order certain comrades—against whom for some reason he nursed a private grudge—to fall out of line, would eye them appraisingly as a butcher eyes a cow to determine its fitness for slaughter, and proceed to make notes in his notebook:

"No. 524—day after tomorrow."

"No. 578—next Tuesday."

"No. 619—tonight. Fall in!"

The prisoner, certain that the Bavarian would make good his threat, would wait day after day, hour after hour, for the appearance of the "inspection" squad.

The pressure of this life was unheard of. Stouthearted workers, courageous intellectuals, broke under the strain. Captain Stennes, former SA leader in Berlin, who had revolted against Hitler in 1931 and who was imprisoned with us, opened his veins. The guard found him before he had bled to death and bandaged the

wounds. When the captain tried to tear the bandages off they gave him a cellmate to watch him constantly. A forty-seven-year-old metal worker, who had survived four years of the horrors of war as a front-line private, found himself unable to endure the horrors of Columbia House, and managed to hang himself without rousing his cellmate.

I had never in my life seen so much anguish, deadly terror, despair, and suffering. I had never thought men capable of such monstrosities.

It seemed to be endless.

We were forbidden to write or receive letters. Nobody knew what he was charged with or what lay in store for him. We were denied the most elementary rights of common criminals.

Outside, the new Germany celebrated one national holiday after another. The officers were constantly ordering the prisoners out into the courtyard to beat and brush their uniforms, polish their boots, and wash their stolen ("requisitioned") motor cars, till everything sparkled. Off duty and on, the "heroes" of the "revolution" were in great demand.

Every day new prisoners were brought in, gleichgeschaltet, trained to be good Germans, and murdered.

It seemed to be endless. . . .

I do not know what would have happened to me without Hans. He diminished the horror of our hell by acquainting me with its mechanism. Columbia was

under the jurisdiction of the Polizeiabteilung Wecke, z.b.V.[9] This is the élite outfit of Goering's secret state police. The SS-men were especially picked; both by inclination and training they regarded all Jews, Communists, Socialists, and pacifists as so much offal; the foulest crust of bread was too much for them. The mere idea of feeding us, instead of exterminating us like the plague, was for them an insufferable form of kindness. Their conduct was a compromise between the imperious internal needs of the Third Reich and the need for conciliating foreign opinion. Much as they would have liked to murder half of the German people for the sake of the volksgemeinschaft,[10] their relations with other countries prevented them from achieving this ideal. But they made the best of these circumstances. They were highly qualified specialists who murdered without leaving proofs of their crimes. In many cases they left the last act to the prisoner himself. He committed suicide. They merely—on the basis of a carefully developed technique—tortured him to the point where there was no other way out for him.

I soon found out the meaning of red paper crosses on the cell doors with the chalk inscriptions: CLAP! They were actually cases where the loins and genitals had been injured during the floggings in the cellar. ATTENTION meant that the prisoner had been beaten to the point where he was in danger of dying and re-

[9] A corps of tried and trusted Black Shirts. Wecke is the name of their notorious commander; z.b.V. stands for *zur besonderen Verwendung*, "for special service."

[10] Literally "people's community"; one of Hitler's slogans regarding the national solidarity of all classes and groups.

quired medical treatment. I also discovered the meaning of the male chorus in the courtyard and the meaning of the court plaster on the left temple of prisoners.

It was the Polizeiabteilung Wecke, Goering's élite, which fostered the cult of the folk song. Daily we could hear from the courtyard:

Es ritten drei Reiter zum Tore hinaus, kling, klang,
Feins Liebchen blieb traurig allein zu Haus, kling, klang.

This cultural work had at the same time a practical purpose. The singing society was obliged to begin its activities at the very moment when the guards in the cellar were at work. The massed voices of the chorus drowned out the shrieks and groans of the tortured prisoners. If the singing society was mobilized at eight in the evening it was, as a rule, in the interests of pure art for the SS. But if they sang in the daytime it was another story; under the gay tunes of old German folk songs stubborn prisoners were "prepared" for the investigating judge. However, for the sake of truth I must add that after the cellar was made soundproof by double doors and all windows had been walled up with bricks, the chorus sang chiefly at night. With German soulfulness the SS troopers abandoned themselves to sentiment as they ordered their chorus, consisting entirely of prisoners, to sing their favorite ditty:

Wenn du noch eine Mutter hast, so danke Gott und sei zufrieden;
Nicht allen auf dem Erdenrund ist dieses hohe Glück beschieden.

On a number of prisoners I observed court plaster, which was invariably pasted on their left temples. At the end of two weeks, at the regular morning hour when all the cells were opened, the guard finally opened the cell at the end of the corridor which had been closed and was marked with the chalk sign MAY NOT LIE DOWN. Out of it came the boy arrested for riding on a truck of illegal literature. His face was white, his ears as translucent as a dead man's. On his left temple he carried the court plaster of Columbia.

The German tends to be systematic in everything he does. The SS-men were splendid physical specimens, powerfully developed and well trained. It was inevitable that their activities among the prisoners should be raised to a system. The Columbia guard troopers had their own rules of sportsmanship. Into the beating of the prisoners they brought the spirit of athletic competition. The goal was to knock down the prisoner, no matter how strong he was, with one blow to his temple. This sport, which went on day after day, had only one disagreeable after-effect. It split the victim's face to the bone and blackened his temple. But a gay SS hospital orderly overcame this defect with his ever-ready court plaster, which he pasted over the bruised spot.

"There," he would encourage his patient. "All you need is three dabs of iodine on the back and you'll be for service again"—an ironic phrase invented by German soldiers to describe the treatment they received from illiterate doctors at the front. In this case the "three dabs of iodine" were administered in the cellar with the heavy leather whips soaked in water used by

the German artillery on their horses. Whipping, too, had its rules developed as a result of long practice, high animal spirits, and the craftsman's pride in his handiwork. Bored with the routine of daily beating the prisoners, the SS-men raised their work to an art. The idea was to see how long you could beat a man across his naked body without breaking his skin. Any damned fool could go on for a long time without breaking the skin if he used a blackjack, but the wet whip called for real skill.

There were twenty-eight strokes on my wall calendar when, late one afternoon, the guard shouted, "No. 880 —flag out."

I pushed the iron rod. "Watch," Hans whispered. "You're getting out." The cell door was opened.

"Into the corridor!" I didn't even have time to nod to my cellmates.

Ten prisoners were already lined up outside, some of them trembling visibly with hope and anticipation. The burly G.—one of the most popular figures in the workers' revolutionary movement in Berlin—was pulling off his green "Bolle" shirt. Up to that moment I did not know he was at Columbia.

"Where does the tour take us now?" he inquired coolly of an SS-man. The guard shrugged his shoulders.

After an endless wait our belongings were returned to us. We were all convinced that release was at hand. My neighbor was rummaging through his bag and muttering to himself.

"Anything missing?" asked the guard.

"I can't find my chewing tobacco," the old man grumbled.

"Where you're going," the guard replied, "you won't need chewing tobacco." None of us took the implied threat seriously. We were getting out of this hell—that was the chief thing.

It was dark by the time we found ourselves clambering into a truck in the courtyard. No one knew where we were going. We were still hoping to be released.

Seven Black Shirts, armed with pistols and rifles, distributed themselves about the truck. At the last moment some whips were handed in. It was then that our hopes died, and the same thought must have flashed through all our minds: they were going to shoot us while "attempting to escape."

Before the truck started, the troopleader, having taken his place in front beside the driver, delivered a brief address to us:

"Anyone who makes a single suspicious movement as we drive through the city will be shot. There won't be enough left of the bastard to put into a coffin."

It was easy to sense the nervousness of the SS. They obviously feared the indignant populace might assault the truck and free us by force.

The truck drove through the city at a furious pace, avoiding as far as possible the livelier streets. It delivered us at the gates of the Plötzensee Prison. After Columbia, this gloomy place seemed to me a haven of peace.

Plötzensee was the jail normally used for prisoners awaiting trial. I racked my brain in an effort to determine what evidence the Secret Police might have gath-

ered, upon which to try me. The protocol I had signed would certainly not suffice.

Three days later the mystery was solved. A large group was assembled for transport to a concentration camp. On August 15 I was transferred, together with 127 other prisoners, to the concentration camp at Hubertshof.

CHAPTER III

HINDENBURG'S ALMS

"HEADS high and a stiff upper lip!" an elderly police sergeant encouraged us as our train neared the station of Hubertshof. "You'll get out some day."

When we stepped out on the platform we were turned over to a detachment of the Ninety-sixth SS, in charge of the concentration camp. The stormleader, displeased with the police sergeant's "laxity" and intent upon showing us without delay that things were run differently here, went to the trouble of kicking out of the train with his own boot a prisoner who took too long about finding his bundle. Their rifles ready for action, the SS-men escorted us to the camp, which we reached about seven in the evening.

As soon as we'd been driven into the yard the gates were locked and sentries armed with automatic rifles were posted. There were no prisoners to be seen. The yard was surrounded by buildings on three sides and cut off on the fourth by barbed wire and a fence. A wooden shack flaunted a huge red cross: "First Aid Station." Black Shirts off duty looked us over in the hope of discovering old acquaintances among us; they swore and threatened, and kicked us from behind.

Even at first sight we could see a marked difference between the SS-men at the camp and those at Columbia.

In Berlin they had been mostly sons of the urban middle classes, with a mingling of the intelligentsia and *lumpen-proletariat*.[1] Here at camp the majority were obviously recruited from the ranks of the rural population. They were less dandified and could hardly boast the sadistic refinements of their Berlin brethren. But what they lacked in finesse they more than made up for in honest brutality.

Two officers—a stormbanner leader (four stars in his collar) and a stormleader (three stars)—engaged in conversation at the door of the Administration Building, now turned their attention to us. Having allowed the guards time to vent their spleen on us, they sauntered over.

"Hm—a fine crowd they've sent us! Which of you were Communists?"

Hands went up everywhere.

"Which of you belonged to the Socialist Party and the Reichsjammer?" [2]

About twenty responded.

"Jews, step out!"

Three men fell out of line.

"What do you do for a living?" inquired the officer of the first.

"Attorney."

"Political organization?"

"I was a member of the SPG."

"Aha—functionary?"

[1] The lowest strata of the proletariat, paupers, demoralized, criminal, without any class-consciousness and therefore peculiarly susceptible to fascist demagogy.

[2] Pun on *Reichsbanner*, the former military organization of the Social-Democrats—the pun signifying here something like Reichs-whimper.

"Reichstag deputy."

"Splendid!" cried the officer. "Tell me, what does your International say to the fact that we don't even ask for permission to hang you?"

The Social-Democrat was silent.

"Answer me."

"I don't know."

"Then I'll tell you. Lie down! On all fours—like a little dog. All right—pay attention now: Fido—how does the Second International talk?"

Silence.

"Fido," he repeated sternly, "how does the Second International talk? Bark, you dog!" he shouted.

"Wow, wow," barked the Reichstag deputy, one of the best-known figures of the former Reichstag and at one time a member of the cabinet.

The guards held their sides with laughter.

"You used to s—t on the German workers," the officer said. "Here we'll put you in your element. I hereby appoint you director of the latrine."

A Black Shirt appeared. "The first ten men to the Personnel Department," he reported to the officer.

Moving at a trot, we crossed the yard to an office where a couple of SS-men registered and fingerprinted us, one at a time.

The procedure never varied. At the command "Next!" one of us would knock at the door, open it and enter. Once inside the office, we were obliged to say, "I beg leave to come in."

"You're in already," one of the troopers would bawl. "Who gave you permission to come in?"

Whereupon the bewildered prisoner would attempt to back out. A couple of Black Shirts standing outside would toss him in again. Back in the office, he would be greeted by a second storm of blows, and thus would be kept hurtling back and forth till his tormentors tired of the game. This was one of the minor forms of entertainment devised by the troopers in the Administration Department, in order not to fall behind their comrades on guard duty.

After "playing the piano" (being fingerprinted) we were placed on the scales.

"Again," said the guard, as I stepped off the scales.

Unsuspectingly I obeyed.

"Down."

"Again."

He accompanied his next "Down" with a blow on the ear that knocked me from the scales.

"There," he remarked complacently, "next time you'll be quicker."

While the remaining prisoners were being dispatched the guards on the courtyard drilled us in the rudiments of military field exercises.

"Up! Down! Up! Down!"

Over and over they made us fling ourselves, face down, into the mud, crawl on our bellies, jump up, run, and throw ourselves in mid-course to the mud again. The guards came to our aid with rifle butts and their boots. Slackers were mercilessly beaten.

After an endless series of torments we were dismissed with the promise, "You'll be gleichgeschaltet tomor-

row," and were assigned to our sleeping quarters. I was put into Company Eight.

The prisoner in charge showed me where I belonged, and turned out the light. I found myself standing in the darkness of a cellarlike room whose oppressive air made breathing difficult. In undressing, I bumped my head against a post.

"Take it easy," whispered my neighbor good-naturedly. "Takes time to get used to these quarters." I was glad he was still awake.

"Are you hungry?" he asked quietly.

"Yes."

"Here's a hunk of bread."

He thrust into my hand a dry crust, which I ate ravenously. We had been given no food all day.

My bed consisted of a wooden frame with a straw pallet and a blanket. For the first time in four weeks I was able to remove my stinking underwear.

Outside, the sentry's searchlight played about the building. I drew the blanket over my head and fell promptly asleep.

It was still dark when we were awakened by the blowing of a whistle.

"Get up!"

The squadleader on duty was in good spirits. "Out of your stink-boxes!" he cried, snapping on the lights.

In the twinkling of an eye everyone was up. Beside me, above me, below me, prisoners were crawling out of beds, shaking up pallets, folding blankets together, running to the washroom, dressing, fetching their

brown brew in mugs and army plates, devouring their morning slices of bread. It was all the work of a few minutes. The narrow passage between the two rows of bunks swarmed like an ants' heap. It was impossible for us newcomers to get so much as a foot on the ground. Before I had fully grasped what was going on, the orders of the guards and the squadleaders were ringing out:

"Outdoor squads! Fall in for work!"

"Dyke Number One! Forward—march!"

"Dyke Number Two! Forward—march!"

"Dyke Number Three—make ready to march!"

"Indoor squads—fall in for inspection!"

I looked about helplessly.

"What are we supposed to do now?" I asked a bunkmate, who was swallowing his last bite of bread and hurrying out.

"Have you been assigned to duty yet?"

"No. We only got here last night."

"Line up outside the First Aid Station," he said and was gone.

I dressed as rapidly as possible and made my bed. Two members of the company remained behind—an old man, long past sixty, obviously no longer fit for heavy outdoor work, and a prisoner assigned to cleaning duty. The old man seated himself at the table, which was forced in between the two rows of bunks at the lower end of the room, whetted a bread knife against the table's edge, and began cutting copies of the *Völkische Beobachter* [8] to the proper size for use in the latrines.

[8] Official organ of the German government, personally owned by Hitler.

The other swept the passage, which was strewn with wisps of straw, breadcrumbs, dust, and bits of paper. Neither of them said a word.

"What are you here for?" I asked the old man, hoping to draw him into conversation. He threw me a sidelong glance.

"If you really want to know—I was caught smoking at the cinema."

Realizing my mistake, I tried to efface the bad impression I had made.

"I didn't ask out of curiosity. I just wanted to get the lay of the land here."

"You'll get it soon enough," he muttered. "Take your time."

Disheartened by the rebuff, I went out. Outside the First Aid Station the new prisoners were already lined up, standing stiffly at attention though there was no guard in sight. Nobody bothered about us. In whispers we agreed that, by comparison with Columbia and other SS barracks in Berlin, life here at camp seemed to offer no special terrors.

Long after the outdoor squads had departed and the indoor squads returned from the morning inspection, we were still lined up outside the First Aid Station. At about ten, a squadleader (one star on his collar) approached us.

"Have you 'played piano' yet?"

"Yes, sir."

"Come along, then. Left—face; forward—march!"

He led us to the rear yard and put us in shape through a three-hour course in trotting, field exercises, and fall-

ing to the ground. He taught us the Hitler salute and must have drilled us a hundred times over in the proper manner of greeting any SS officer who happened to visit our sleeping quarters.

"The first one to catch sight of him springs up and cries, 'Attention!' Then the rest of you jump to your feet and stand at attention. Is that clear?"

"Yes, sir."

"Down."

We threw ourselves, face down, to the ground.

"Company—wheel!"

We rolled from our stomachs to our backs.

"Company—wheel!"

We rolled from our backs to our stomachs.

"Now—the moment one of you sees even the shadow of my uniform, he's to report."

He retreated a few steps and tried us out.

"Attention!" yelled the prisoner who first caught sight of him.

"Too slow. Back again! What's the matter, did they p— in your eyes last night? How near do you want me to come before you can see me?"

He continued to train us along these lines until noon.

At one o'clock the prisoners left in camp lined up by companies outside the kitchen and filed past a huge cauldron, from which two prisoners ladled a helping into each tin dish. The whole's week's menu was posted on the kitchen door:

Monday—Peas and potatoes.
Tuesday—Turnips and potatoes.
Wednesday—Beans and potatoes.

Thursday—Cabbage and potatoes.
Friday—Fish and potatoes.
Saturday—Noodles and potatoes.
Sunday—Rice and potatoes.

What we got that noon was potato gruel. What we got every other day for our main meal was also potato gruel. That was all we ever got.

Hungry though I was, I couldn't choke the stuff down and poured most of it into the barrel placed outside the dining room for that purpose. I was all the more surprised to see that most of the prisoners were not only swallowing their food ravenously but posting themselves outside the kitchen for a second helping. The "capitulation" here seemed general. There were quite a few, in fact, who managed to get themselves third and fourth helpings.

From one to two was rest hour. The prisoners either sat around in the dining hall or, forbidden though it was, stole back to their sleeping quarters. But when I attempted to join my company, I was halted by a prisoner who stood as though by accident in the doorway.

"You can't come in here now," he told me. "It's not allowed during rest hour."

"But you're here," I said. "And others have gone in before me."

"How long have you been in camp?"

"Since yesterday."

"Where do you come from?"

"Berlin."

"Were you at Columbia?"

"Yes."

He became more friendly.

"What were you arrested for?"

"Smoking at the cinema."

He laughed. "You seem all right, brother. Come in."

Inside there wasn't a soul to be seen. But from the upper tier of bunks a thin cloud of smoke rose to the ceiling. I clambered up and found bed after bed occupied by prisoners who were reading or smoking or sleeping. Hidden from view here in the "third story," they were warned by a system of signals from outside when danger threatened.

The sleeping chambers had been installed in what had once been a vaulted wine cellar, and each of them accommodated about a hundred men. Every inch of space had been utilized. Ranged along the walls to the right and left stood the bunks, built by the prisoners themselves—six feet long, thirty-six inches wide, twenty-eight inches high—rising to the roof in tiers of three, one on top of another with no space between. It took long practice to learn to negotiate these bunks. The two rows of bunks were separated by a passage five feet wide. A window facing the yard, well fortified with iron bars and barbed wire, admitted some light but could not be opened.

I had been given a bunk in the middle tier, and I did not discover until later that this "second story" was avoided by experienced prisoners as the least desirable of the three. It rose to about breast level and couldn't be "camouflaged"—that is, secured from the sight of officers on tours of inspection. The lowest tier had the advantage of complete darkness. If you drew your legs up

you were pretty safely protected from the imposition of extra tasks and from the incessant calls for inspection, especially since this lowest tier could be adroitly screened by articles of clothing hung on the bedposts.

The popularity of the topmost tiers was accounted for by their inaccessibility. To reach them you had to work your way up by means of wooden blocks nailed to the supporting beams—in addition to which, these wooden blocks were generally missing. The prisoners would break them off deliberately to make the upward climb more difficult for the authorities. This third story was in great demand by day but sleeping there was a torment. The indigestible black army bread and the daily potato soup did their work well. Every night the smells of a hundred closely herded men rose and hung dense under the ceiling.

The prisoners' few possessions were kept in cardboard boxes at the heads of their beds. Scrupulous order prevailed. Anyone who hid in a neighbor's bed during the day was morally bound to leave it immaculate. Theft of a prisoner's property was considered a serious crime.

"Have you got a smoke?"

I turned to find a comrade crawling down from above.

"No. I had to hand everything over."

"Wait a minute—I'll get hold of something."

He reappeared presently with two cigarette papers and a little tobacco.

"Here—roll yourself one."

But seeing how awkwardly I set about it, he rolled the cigarette for me.

"Been assigned to duty yet?"

"No."

"Where do you come from?"

"Berlin."

"Do you know Fritz B.?"

"Possibly."

"He's in the Fourth Company. I'll point him out to you this evening."

At two the kitchen whistle blew. The indoor squads went back to work, the newcomers lined up once more outside the First Aid Station.

"Who knows anything about treating eye diseases?" the squadleader asked.

A doctor stepped forward.

"Good. You can take over the potato-peeling squad. And God help the man who leaves an eye in one of them."

We peeled potatoes in a shed till evening roll call. The kitchen knives distributed for that purpose were carefully counted and collected again at night.

Inspection was held in the rear yard. All the prisoners fell in by company and received their orders for the following day. Labor squads were redistributed, artisans assigned to special duty, and the names of those prisoners called whose hearing had been scheduled for the following day and who were therefore barred from outdoor duty.

"New men, fall out!"

We stepped forward.

"Any of you barbers?"

Two men raised their hands.

"Barber, two men for you."

The barber—a prisoner—took them in charge.

"Any mechanics?"

Nine or ten responded.

"I don't need that many. You and you and you—that's enough. From now on you're to work in the auto repair shop. Garage man!"

A prisoner came on the run.

"Here are three for you."

After a certain number of us had been selected in this fashion for indoor duty the rest of us were assigned to outdoor squads.

Inspection was followed by a free period of half an hour before bedtime. The life of the prisoners was compressed into that half hour, which they spent in the huge barrack hall that served as both dining and recreation room. Here they sat about in the evenings, played cards and chess, smoked, and talked.

The bunkmate who had rolled the cigarette for me in the afternoon beckoned to me.

"Wait here," he said. "I'll get hold of your fellow Berliner."

It actually was Fritz B. We greeted each other as casually as possible.

"I'll have to get you into my squad. We've got a crackerjack *Schieber*.[4] I'll talk to him. He'll fix it up tomorrow."

A whistle sounded at seven-thirty. Fifteen minutes

[4] The word Schieber was popular during the inflation period to describe those who, through all sorts of trickery, managed to pile up fortunes. But the word also refers to the foreman of a gang of workers. Here it is used admiringly, since the Schieber's mental agility was employed to the advantage of the prisoners.

later the sleeping quarters lay in darkness. Outside, the guard patrolled the main corridor.

I was falling asleep when I grew aware of a figure creeping silently into my bed.

"You're Billinger, aren't you?"

"Why?"

"I attended your school for functionaries in Bernau last September. Remember the tall fellow from Frankfurt? He's here too. Watch out for him. He's been squealing."

"What's become of the other comrades?"

"We got out a paper until June. Then the whole local group was nabbed. That jolly girl who was always carrying on hanged herself in prison."

"Where's Redel?"

"They haven't caught him yet. But they've arrested his wife and mother, and they're holding them until he gives himself up."

"How was the morale among the comrades?"

"The old ones were sticking tight. But some of the newer Party members are upset and critical. A few deserted but they didn't give us away."

"Where do you work?"

"In the shoe shop. Come and see me tomorrow evening. I'm off now. Good night."

"Good night."

Shortly after the rising whistle had blown next morning, Fritz appeared in our company quarters.

"What squad were you assigned to yesterday?"

"To Dyke Number Two."

"Come quick. One of our men has reported sick. Our Schieber will take you in his place. I spoke to him."

A Schieber was silently chosen by a group of prisoners from among their number as their trusted leader. It was his business to carry on negotiations with the guard and to decide all "organization questions," one of the most important things being that of the "socialization" of extra bread rations. By tacit agreement he was relieved of his share of the work, which the other prisoners took over. In return, however, he was called upon to exercise all his skill and ingenuity, all his resourcefulness and inventiveness, in dealing with the Black Shirts. If his work failed to satisfy the labor squad he was forced to retire in favor of a man better qualified to handle the problem.

After subjecting me to a sharp scrutiny the Schieber took me aside and said, "Fritz recommended you. You can join our squad. But if you have any idea of trying to escape, say so at once. I can't take the responsibility for anything like that just now."

He accepted my assurance that for the present I entertained no intention of flight.

The march to the place where we worked was a delight. I found myself once more enjoying the sensation of stretching my limbs and breathing the fresh open air. No sooner had we left the little town behind us when the Schieber took his pipe from his pocket.

"May we smoke?" he asked the SS-man marching at his side.

"At ease—march!" the latter ordered. We might smoke and talk to each other.

The comrades of the work squad were all prisoners of long standing. They had been in custody for months and many of them had been confined in several other concentration camps before having been brought to Hubertshof. The Schieber picked his men carefully, and his squad enjoyed an enviable reputation among the prisoners. It was known to be trustworthy and solid.

Fritz walked beside me and gave me pointers, the most important of which was to do nothing to make myself conspicuous—either as a good prisoner or as a bad one. The moment I got back to camp that evening I was to change my trousers, and eventually to borrow from some other prisoner a pair of old ones. I was under no circumstances to wear a hat. That would brand me as an intellectual in the eyes of my fellow prisoners and attract the notice of the Black Shirts. I was to exercise the utmost caution in camp. The administration had established a systematic spy service in each company. He gave me the names of the two informers in my company who were sailing under false colors. I was on no account to reveal to any stranger the reason for my arrest. "If anyone asks you why you're here, tell him you said *du* [5] to an old woman."

"Do your people know where you are?" he went on.

"No, I haven't been able to write yet."

"Write tonight. The Schieber will get it out."

I cast an involuntary glance in the Schieber's direc-

[5] The familiar form of address. Here indicating a personal rudeness, for which an arrest would be an absurdity.

tion. He was walking at the end of the column now, deep in conversation with the SS-man. Fritz followed my glance.

"He's all right, I'm telling you. He's got them all where he wants them." I looked skeptical. "You can take my word for it. He knows how to handle them. The things that fellow's done——! Well—never mind. You'll see for yourself."

A two-hour march brought us to our destination. Fetching our tools from the construction shack, we built a fire and set to work. There were only three men to guard us.

I was unaccustomed to the work but did not find it difficult. The Black Shirts paid no special attention to us; they sat around the fire and talked; nobody drove us, and the tempo of the work was fairly slow.

At the end of an hour we breakfasted—for the first time on a slice of larded bread. At one we lunched on the second slice, and at four or thereabouts we started back. The Schieber walked beside me for a while.

"Party?"

"Yes."

"Expecting anything special?"

"Not just now. I ought to send a letter. Everything would be all right then."

"Take a run out to the latrine after bedtime this evening. You can give me the letter there. But put the address on a separate scrap of paper. No date. And if anybody comes along, wipe yourself with it."

Back at camp, we were fed with the same stuff from the cauldron which the indoor squads received at noon.

It had gone sour. Before long there was a general rush for the latrines—diarrhea.

The Reichstag deputy was there, working like mad. A Black Shirt entered. "Why don't you report, director?" he demanded.

"What am I to report?" the "director" stammered.

"The number of your clients."

Making a hasty count, the deputy reported, "Latrine occupied by thirty-eight clients." It wasn't until a roar of laughter went up that the harassed man realized that the Black Shirt was only having his fun with him.

I retired into the company quarters, climbed into the upper tier of bunks and wrote to Julius. He was to get hold of the list, code it and destroy the original, notify the Party, and turn my work over to Otto. He was also to write Käthe that she was on no account to return because of me.

The Schieber was waiting at the latrine, where I gave him the letter and the address.

In the course of the days that followed we newcomers were put through the process of *gleichschaltung*,[6] known also as "Hindenburg's alms." At each evening inspection the officer on duty would call the names of those who were to be examined the following day. The average daily quota was ten men. They were ordered to line up outside the Administration Building promptly after rising next morning, and to wait there till they were summoned upstairs. The waiting was an impor-

[6] "Coördination" or "bringing into line"; *cf. gleichgeschaltet.*

tant factor in the tactical plan designed to shatter both body and spirit.

My comrades in the work squad described to me what went on at these ceremonies, and gave advice as to how I should conduct myself.

"The minute they pull you across the table," counseled Richard Schultz, a huge forester, "squeeze as hard as you can till you dirty your pants. Then they'll stop using the blackjack. That's what I did. When it gets too bad for them, they'll let you go."

Schultz was a native of Silesia, feared in his home town as a notorious poacher and smuggler. As a Party courier he had crossed the Polish border undetected again and again, until an affair with a girl had brought him to grief. His "bride" had been secretly informed that he was playing her false, and in a jealous rage had betrayed him to the Nazis while he was en route with a batch of literature.

"Keep your hands off the women, boys," he would say. "There's not one of them worth a damn."

There was constant friction between him and Kummerer, a gamekeeper whom Schultz met for the first time in our camp and who couldn't forgive Schultz his poaching.

"A fine comrade you are!" Schultz would jeer. "A proletarian mustn't eat roast rabbit, I suppose? That's only for the capitalists, what?"

All the others took sides with Schultz, and Kummerer was furious both with the forester and himself. His professional pride was always at war with his class consciousness.

Our conversations were mostly about the possibility of being released from "protective custody," and experiences in previous camps and prisons. When I told them I had been at Columbia they asked no further questions. The reputation of Columbia had spread to every worker's family, every penitentiary, every concentration camp. Nobody in our work squad mentioned his previous political activities; nobody gave the slightest hint what he intended to do when he got out. These things were not discussed. But the men told each other in great detail how they fared at each stage of their imprisonment. They argued as to where there were more beatings, in the small or the big camps. They explained with great precision just why the short but stocky SS-men were more powerful floggers than the tall ones; and they laughed when they recalled how they squirmed out of this or that tight spot. I could hardly bear it. Only later I understood that this was not the result of insensitivity or resignation. It was the superior equanimity of people sure that their hour would come. They reacted differently from the intellectuals; and their calm reaction was a thousand times more dangerous for the oppressors than any individual indignation. They could wait—for years, if necessary. They would forget nothing. Their life had taught them to subordinate every private emotion and to act as a mass. Some day they would take revenge, systematically and with the precision of a machine.

Between the evening meal and inspection, I limped over to the shoe shop.

"Can you hammer down a nail for me in a hurry?" I asked Felix, the comrade from Bernau.

"Sit down and take your shoe off," he replied. The guard was deep in an adventure magazine. "There's nothing to worry about here," Felix said softly. "He won't bother his head about us. What did they give you for supper tonight?"

"The menu said cabbage and potatoes."

"That stuff! How do you like our sanitarium food?"

"Hogwash."

"That's where you're wrong. The hogs won't eat it. They tried to feed them the potful that went sour yesterday, but the beasts wouldn't touch it. You get a marvelous view of what goes on from this place."

"Do you people get different food?"

"I should say so. We take what we want from the SS cauldron."

"You seem to get along pretty well here."

"You bet we do. These are the soft jobs. The tailors over there are still better off."

"What do you make here?"

"Everything the gentlemen require. High boots, sword belts, uniform caps, free of charge, *and* free delivery. The material's bought by the camp. So maybe you can imagine what goes on here. Yesterday I earned twenty cigarettes and sixty pfennigs."

"How?"

"Very simple. You see, I have no right to hand anything out. The finished articles are supposed to be delivered at the Administration Building and paid for there by the Black Shirts. But when one of them comes

along and gives me the wink, I make it my business to stroll over to the latrine, and he takes what he wants. There's always something in it for me. Do you know any trade?"

"Electrical engineering."

"No good. They have no use for it here. But I'll try to find a place for you in the shop. You'll be well taken care of here."

At this point a trooper walked in.

"He wants his boots," Felix whispered. "He can whistle for them."

"Boots ready, shoemaker?"

"Just finished them ten minutes ago. I'll take them right over."

"Too long to wait. I'll take them myself."

"I can't very well let you do that. They'll hold me responsible."

"Oh, rot! Hand them over."

"I really couldn't. Stormleader Nolte issued strict orders again today that everything was to go through the administration."

"Cut it out," said the Black Shirt, furious now. "Hand those boots over."

The guard, looking up from his book, said, "You know perfectly well, Weicholt, that the shoemaker's not supposed to hand anything over."

"Is that so? What about the dining-room set in the carpenter's shop? Does that go through the administration, too? And the club chairs for the adjutants?"

"I'd advise you for your own good to shut up," the

guard roared. The SS-man went out, slamming the door behind him. Felix grinned.

"Why didn't you give him the boots?" I asked. His face hardened.

"He was one of the worst when they killed the fellow from Hamburg. We've sworn vengeance on him."

"When did this happen?"

"Four or five weeks ago. A perfect picture of a man, I tell you. And what a comrade!"

"Why did they do it?"

"Refused to be gleichgeschaltet. A fellow from Company Two, who saw the whole thing with his own eyes, told me about it. I'll tell you some other time. Inspection's any minute now."

"Schinderknecht" [7] was on duty that evening. His real name was Meisel. Having served for twelve years in the imperial army, where he had risen to the rank of a corporal, he had eventually been rewarded for his faithful services with a post as jailer. Two years earlier, however, having reached the age limit, he had been pensioned off by the Social-Democratic Braun government. He considered this a personal affront, to be avenged on all Social-Democratic prisoners. Anyone laboring under the delusion that such a man would retire at sixty-five and spend his last few years in peace does not know the Prussian "twelve-year man." Schinderknecht offered the Nazis in charge of our camp his services. He was given the rank of squadleader and—without pay, "solely for the honor of the thing"—

[7] Literally, "hangman's flunkey."

devoted his days from morning to night drilling prisoners. Having cultivated the art of baiting prisoners for years, it had become second nature with him. He was hated, but despite his obscene threats and invective no one took him seriously. This was due partly to his stupidity, but chiefly to the fact that he was no favorite with the Black Shirts either, who took advantage of every occasion to make him a laughingstock.

That evening Schinderknecht had been assigned the task of assembling a new work squad, and went about drafting his men from other details. When he reached us, the Schieber stepped forward and reported, "Dyke Number Two, thirty-five men, full strength."

"You can kiss my tail," yelled Schinderknecht, "with your full strength. You, you, you and you—over to the Börwege squad."

"The embankment administration," persisted the Schieber, "ordered thirty-five men, and we can't give any of them up."

Schinderknecht planted himself in front of the Schieber, roaring so that the veins in his neck turned purple. "Then where do you expect me to get my men from, you bastard? Want me to jerk them out of my p—k?"

"Sergeant," replied the Schieber tranquilly, "that's something no one could ask of you."

Uncertain what to make of the reply, Schinderknecht eyed the Schieber suspiciously. He was greatly mollified, however, by the form of address. He never failed to react to "sergeant."

"If," continued the Schieber, hastening to take ad-

vantage of the situation, "if I may presume to advise the sergeant . . ."

"Well?"

"There are still ten men in the bunker. They could be put to work by day."

"What ten men are they?"

"From Company Three."

"How long have they been in the bunker?"

"Fourteen days."

"I'll have a look. Guard!"

A sentry came running up. "Take charge. I'll be right back."

He returned before long with the ten prisoners, made a note of their numbers for the new squad, and had them taken back to the bunker.

I learned from Fritz after inspection that the bunker was the camp prison—a windowless room about thirty feet square, where the prisoners lay on the bare cement floor, when there was room for them to lie at all.

Two weeks previous, pamphlets about the camp and its most vicious tormentors had been discovered in Company Three. There had been a succession of fierce "examinations" but no one had squealed. To break the morale of the company the stormleader had ordered ten men into the bunker, with the threat that they would all remain there till the culprits confessed.

Everyone knew that he was in dead earnest—in the literal sense of the word, since more than one prisoner had already been driven to suicide by the unbearable conditions of life in the bunker. Here was an oppor-

tunity to get the incarcerated men out in the daytime at least, and our Schieber had availed himself of it.

"That was a good job," Fritz told him after inspection.

"We haven't heard the last of it yet," the Schieber replied. "Wait till the old man finds out they're working. I'll have to think something up."

What he could possibly think up, nobody knew. But he had his own contacts.

Everything happened as he had foreseen. When the stormleader in charge of the camp police was informed next day that the ten men from Company Three had been put to work, he raised hell with Schinderknecht. At inspection that evening Schinderknecht stopped the Schieber and said bitterly, "Fine piece of advice you gave me, you dumb dog. Now I'm in the devil's own mess with the old man."

"In your place, sergeant, I should talk to the administration. Orders are that all men fit for work should be assigned to outdoor duty. We need the money," said the Schieber in the tone of one who was conscious of his responsibilities.

Schinderknecht, who was primarily interested in carrying out the camp commandant's order to assemble the new work squad in full strength, swallowed the bait for the second time.

"Whom do you think I should talk to?"

"Stormleader Spindler," the Schieber egged him on. "Spindler and nobody else." Schinderknecht walked on. The Schieber stood looking after him with a grin.

The dissension between the administration and the

police department affected the entire camp, split the SS officers into a "radical" and a "moderate" wing, and constituted a determining factor in the fate of each one of the prisoners. Without any knowledge of its basis its manifestations were inexplicable, and seemed to rise from purely personal causes. It was obvious, for example, that some of the SS officers disapproved of the maltreatment of prisoners while they were being gleichgeschaltet. When one of the troopleaders caught sight of the bloodstained back of a prisoner in the washroom one morning, he shook his head ostentatiously. And it was no secret that the camp commandant had, on more than one occasion, interrupted the activity of the flogging officers of the Police Department in charge of the hearings, when he felt that the screams of the beaten men had been ringing too long in his ears. Most of the prisoners explained the difference in attitude by classifying one group as the "decent fellows" and the other as "the beasts." But when the subject came up at work the following day, I found that our Schieber had a different theory.

"Do you know what our camp really represents?" he said. "The camp's a stock company. And we're the capital." Some of the men laughed. "It's no joke," he went on. "The concentration camps all over Germany have been formed into a stock company, and they've got to finance themselves. The municipalities pay two marks a day for every one of us. And the administration gets from fifty to eighty pfennigs a day more from the private contractors to whom they farm us out. But the camp itself has to provide the salaries of the SS

officers and the guards. The government says it has no money. Naturally, the administration's interested in holding on to every prisoner as long as possible. The more prisoners they have and the fewer who are incapacitated the more profit they make. What do you suppose Spindler in the Administration Building cares whether we get a dose of Hindenburg's alms every day or not—so long as the swine don't beat us to the point where we're out of commission for a week afterward? Because that runs straight into money. And I know of at least twenty cases where the police of the locality from which the prisoners came have suggested their release. The municipalities have no money either—they don't want to keep on paying forever. But the administration writes back that the conduct of Prisoner X has been unsatisfactory and that he's not fit for release—though they've never so much as laid eyes on Prisoner X."

The Schieber was right. Now that I had the clue I was able to recognize the political differences among the Black Shirts as a form of economic war. The camp had attracted a swarm of parasites—at least thirty SS officers and no fewer than a hundred and fifty SS-men. Most of them had been unemployed and would have been forced to subsist on the wretched state dole if the camp had not offered them the opportunity of power and gain.

Some of the officers were members of Goering's secret police. They were paid by the Prussian government and were not dependent on the camp for their income. These were the floggers who confined prisoners to the bunker

for weeks at a time and abused them savagely at the hearings. These were the "radicals" who had no interest in the permanent existence of the camp and could give their feelings free rein. Under their dominance fell a certain number of guards who were impressed by their dash.

The "moderates," on the other hand, were bent on turning the camp and its prisoners into a permanent source of revenue. It worried them to have rumors of camp abuses spread outside and stir up the populace. They wanted "law and order" in the camp, stabilization, two and one-half marks per prisoner per day, plus their own maintenance, augmented by every conceivable form of bribery and corruption.

The officers whose income came directly from the camp were interested in all the opportunities it afforded for making money, especially the higher officers who did not live in the camp but had apartments or houses in the beautiful little town of Hubertshof. These officers were now the lords and masters of the entire valley in which our camp was located. They were now Society in this region, and it was considered a great honor to be invited to the teas and dinners given by their wives and mistresses. Just as the business man separates his life at the office from his life at home, so these officers moved in two distinct worlds; and just as it is bad form for guests to talk shop with a business man in his home, so no reference was made at the gay parties of Hubertshof to the day's routine at camp. The larger the camp became, the more its activities expanded, the richer these

officers became and the higher their social ambitions rose.

All this was not unknown to the prisoners in the camp. Especially in the workshops, where valuable materials were handled, they had much to tell about the bribery and corruption which sustained the social life of Hubertshof. Once the comrades gained confidence in me as a newcomer they talked freely about their various experiences in this regard.

"Troopleader Kall was raising hell today. The hide he bought for shoe leather eight days ago is all gone, and only four pairs of soles to show for it. 'They're a bunch of thieves,' he kept yelling. 'All grabbing as much as they can get.' But he got his own pair of boots out of it too."

A fat cabinetmaker told with considerable relish the story of how the camp commandant's house had been furnished.

"First they bought oak, solid timber, recorded in the accounts as construction material for the camp. They bring me the measurements on paper, and I start working. Dining-room table, chairs, china closet, buffet. I put five men on the job. A week later they ordered a bedroom. The commandant's in a hell of a hurry. Comes to our shop every day to see how we're getting along. When the stuff is finished, nobody comes for it. I notify the administration once, twice, three times. Nothing happens. The stuff's in my way. I can't tackle anything else. Finally I ask the commandant myself why the furniture hasn't been sent for.

" 'A few days more,' he tells me. 'We're just moving

and we haven't decided yet how to place the things.'

" 'So that's it,' says I to myself, 'he's moving again. And it's only two months ago he moved into a new house.'

"Another week goes by. He comes to me and says, 'Listen, Kuleke,' he says, 'very awkward business. But I can't use the furniture. We've taken a larger place that's partly furnished, and the oak pieces aren't suitable. My wife wants Caucasian walnut. What are we going to do now?'

" 'Oh,' says I, 'very simple, sir. We'll just make Caucasian walnut.'

" 'Yes,' says he, 'but now that I've gone to the expense of paying for the oak furniture . . .' As a matter of fact it didn't cost him even five marks. He doesn't pay for the work and the wood's paid for by the camp. 'Now that I've gone to the expense of the old furniture,' says he, 'it'll be a little more than I can manage. I'll have to buy the wood all over again.' As if he bought the wood the first time. Anyway, I saw the lay of the land.

" 'May I offer a bit of advice, sir?' I says. 'Why don't you sell the oak furniture or exchange it for Caucasian walnut?'

" 'I've thought of that myself,' he says. 'But these days who's going to pay for such solid work? Do you know anybody?'

" 'Mm . . . yes . . .' I says. 'I might know somebody, but there's a catch in it.'

" 'Let's hear it,' he says.

" 'Herr Commandant,' I says, 'if there's anyone from

whom you can get your money it's from Strauss' furniture store in Market Street.'

" 'Well,' he says, 'it's an awkward business. I've already told my wife that it can't be done. After all, Strauss is a Jew.'

" 'That's the catch,' I said.

" 'It's an awkward business, very awkward,' he says, shaking his head.

"Next day he comes back. 'Kuleke,' he says, 'do you know this Strauss?'

" 'Sir,' says I, 'for the past thirty years.'

" 'Hm,' says he. 'I've talked it over with my wife. She's for it. But not a soul's to find out. Now listen—I'll take you along in my car tonight and you can talk to Strauss. But the furniture belongs to the camp, you understand, not to me. It seems that three hundred marks and the Caucasian walnut would be a fair price.'

That evening he has his chauffeur call for me, and we drive to Market Street.

" 'We'll wait a little way up the street for you,' says he.

"I go in to Strauss. His old woman opened the door.

" 'Ach, Herr Kuleke,' she says. 'Think of seeing you again! How good it makes you feel when the old customers find their way back!'

" 'Good evening to you, Frau Strauss,' says I. 'Is the old man home? I'm in something of a hurry. My car's waiting.'

" 'Right away, right away,' says she and calls the old man. He's a fine fellow—there's no getting around it.

Many's the good turn he did me without letting the old woman know.

" 'Glad to see you again, Herr Kuleke,' says he. 'Did you come through all right?'

" 'It's all right, Herr Strauss,' says I. 'Listen, Herr Strauss. I've got a deal for you. I have a dining-room set and a bedroom set of solid oak, first-class workmanship. Trade me Caucasian walnut for them and pay me three hundred marks into the bargain, and you can have them.'

" 'Do you call that a deal?' says the old woman.

" 'Can't be done, Herr Kuleke,' says he. 'Who's going to buy solid oak from *me* these days? You know as well as I do what's going on.'

" 'Herr Strauss,' says I, 'I haven't got much time. The camp commandant's waiting for me down there.'

"They both jump up; she runs to the window and peeks through the curtain.

" 'I can't do it and I won't do it,' says he.

" 'Jacob!' says the old woman. 'Do you want to ruin us? Take the furniture from the commandant.'

"Old Strauss said nothing more. The commandant got his three hundred marks and his Caucasian walnut."

CHAPTER IV

THE DAY OF REST

SUNDAY was of all days the most dismal. The work squads, which during the week labored outside the camp, were kept inside where there was no room for them. The officers drove off in their newly acquired motor cars. Some of the guards were on leave till early Monday morning. Sunday belonged to Schinderknecht.

He began the day at five-thirty in the morning with the command, "Morning prayers!" The morning prayers consisted of making the beds. Schinderknecht did not acknowledge the existence of such a thing as merely "making" a bed in our camp. Elsewhere beds might be "made;" in our camp they had to be "constructed" in such a way that blanket, straw pallet, and bed were one monolithic unit. We had to fold the blankets so that the sixteen gray stripes lay on top; but the main thing was *how* they lay. The blanket had to be perfectly level, one smooth plane from head to foot. This was a painfully laborious task, especially since the bunks were narrow and the pallets unevenly worn out through months of use. The beds formed one solid oblong across the room with only planks dividing bunk from bunk, one plank being the border between two bunks. It was impossible to "construct" your bed from the side without crawling over your neighbor's. We therefore had to crawl up on our hands and knees and start the "construction"

from the head, working down inch by inch toward the foot with infinite care and patience until, in the passage, we were able to put the finishing touches to the whole thing.

Schinderknecht marched through our quarters, looking sharply about him with a trained eye, and examined test cases. Armed with a yardstick from the tailoring shop, he measured doubtful cases. Wherever a gray stripe failed to show in its proper place, wherever the surface of the blanket was not perfectly smooth, he lifted his heavy boot and kicked apart the painstaking toil of an hour. It was only after he had finished his inspection of our sleeping quarters that we got our usual morning brew called "coffee" and the chunk of bread. But we were rarely allowed to breakfast in peace. His military whistle shrilled its summons.

"Boot inspection!"

Polish was never issued to us. We could scrub our boots with paper; we could wash them with water; for all Schinderknecht cared we could lick them—all he was interested in was that we should appear with clean boots. We had to line up in the courtyard with boots in hand while Schinderknecht passed us in review. It was not enough for the boots to be clean; they had to be presented for inspection in strict accordance with Prussian military regulations, one in each hand, the sole up, and turned in a perfect semicircle the moment Schinderknecht looked at them. "Ever been in the army?" he would growl if a prisoner deviated from the prescribed ritual. "No? That's what I thought. Well, never mind. I'll teach you yet. We've got plenty of time for that."

After boot inspection he hustled us back to the dining room. No matter where you were you were not allowed to walk when Schinderknecht was on duty. You had to trot.

The dining room was far too small to hold all of us. There were seats for two hundred. The rest—five hundred and more—stood leaning against the walls and tables, some of them trying to patch up the rags they wore, others sunk in brooding silence.

In fifteen minutes or so the second command would ring out.

"Spoon inspection!"

Once more we lined up in the courtyard, tin spoons in our hands; once more Schinderknecht marched past us showing us how a German soldier is supposed to clean and present his spoon. This would be followed by bowl inspection. After bowl inspection we had to clean the sleeping quarters of the SS guard, the guard house, the courtyard, and the street in front of camp; we had to peel potatoes and empty the latrines. In this way our Sunday mornings were whiled away. Schinderknecht's experience as a jailer had taught him that nothing is so beneficial for the correction of delinquents as uninterrupted activity. His favorite proverb was: "Idleness is the mother of all vice." And if he was in a good mood he would add, "Up with the cock, boys, long live the Fatherland!"

After lunch he took a nap. It was the only peaceful hour of the day. We crowded as near as possible to that side of the yard which was close to the wooden fence.

Through some of its cracks and holes we could look out on the street and watch the passers-by.

Despite the fact that for months visitors and letters were strictly forbidden, the prisoners' wives knew what went on in the camp. Often, when we were marching through the streets from our day's work back to the camp, a whisper ran through our ranks: "The Priegnitz girls are here."

With expressionless faces, pushing their bicycles before them, the workingwomen of the Priegnitz region would move toward our squad with their eyes glued to the faces of their husbands and fathers. A few steps and our squad was past them. For these brief glances they had traveled for hours in the bitter cold.

From several near-by dwellings it was possible to look into the camp yard. An elderly couple of Social-Democrats which lived in one of these was not afraid to let unknown women into their home and give them field glasses with which they could scan the courtyard for their relatives.

But the best sources of information were the SS guards when they got drunk in the saloons of Hubertshof and boasted of how they were "coördinating" Jews and Marxists in the camp. The next day these stories passed from mouth to mouth in the town.

The prisoners' wives and daughters knew about the usual course of our Sundays; they knew the regular hour when Schinderknecht took his afternoon nap. It was for this hour that they waited in the vicinity of the camp. From one o'clock on a procession of women passed by the wooden fence—not too close, so as not to be

driven away by the guards; and not too fast, in order not to miss that moment for which they had come from their towns, villages, and farms. They could not halt for a minute. "Keep moving, keep moving," the guards ordered without interruption. The women obeyed; but at the street corner they turned around and came back, slowly, as slowly as possible; perhaps they would be lucky enough this time to catch a glimpse of the beloved face behind the barbed wire. They were not afraid of the power-drunk boys with the cocked machine rifles. They did not wear swastikas to put the guards in a friendly mood; they addressed no word to them; they honored them with no request.

In one place the prisoners had pushed aside a loose board in the fence. Every one of us would have liked to station himself near the opening, but we were hundreds. The only thing we could do was to walk round and round the yard so that each of us passed the opening at least once. Slowly the two lines moved on both sides of the fence. Face after face appeared for a moment and disappeared again behind the wooden fence.

At two o'clock Schinderknecht showed up again, dissatisfied with himself and the world. He reproached himself for the un-Prussian weakness of sleeping in bright midday. He appeased his conscience only by four hours of military drill. At six o'clock in the evening, when at his command seven hundred men, like puppets on a string, threw themselves face down in the mud, a warm note crept into his voice again.

"That's better. Once more. Up! Down! Up! Down!"

As we stood out in the cold one Sunday morning,

waiting for Schinderknecht to finish inspecting seven hundred pairs of boots, one of the gate sentries appeared with a black-clad gentleman who wished to speak to the officer on duty. Schinderknecht accompanied him to the Administration Building. On his return he questioned us as to our church affiliations. A considerable number of the prisoners were Protestants, a smaller percentage Catholics and Jews; the majority were freethinkers, subscribing to no creed, men who had withdrawn from the church.

Schinderknecht informed us that hereafter the Catholic priest would deliver an address, to be followed by a brief service, every Sunday morning.

"Who wants to attend?"

There was no response.

Schinderknecht repeated the question. Still no one stepped out. This seemed to dispose of the problem of saving the soul of Hubertshof once and for all. The Catholic shepherd waited in vain the following Sunday for his sheep. He refused to be discouraged, however, and obtained permission from the administration to address the Catholics. He took as his text: "I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance." He spoke effectively. The prisoners interpreted his choice of text as a thrust at the German Christians,[1] which delighted them. When the priest promised to take care of their families, thirteen men declared themselves ready to attend the Sunday services regularly.

[1] German Christians are the members of the newly organized Nazi church.

The Black Shirts were none too pleased with this victory of the Catholic Church. They sent for Köhler, a young evangelical pastor of Hubertshof and a member of the Nazi party, who tried his luck the following Sunday. He delivered a spirited sermon on the return of the German people to the truth faith under their leader, Adolf Hitler. We prisoners, too, he said, were fellow countrymen, led astray by Jewish and Marxian agitators. Now that the whole world was uniting once more against the peace-loving German folk, no one had the right to continue to stand aloof.

Despite the all-powerful brown uniform of God's representative on earth, not one prisoner stirred when Köhler called upon those who wished to seek refuge in the church to step forward. Even when he repeated his invitation in the form of a thinly veiled threat the prisoners remained motionless. The uniformed parson took his departure, leaving it to Schinderknecht to urge upon us the new-German forms of Christian love.

The Nazi minister's fiasco was the talk of the camp. The Black Shirts found it impossible to swallow the insult. As the week wore on, spies began circulating the report that tobacco would be distributed at the conclusion of the evangelical service the following Sunday. A few of the curious who decided to put in an appearance did indeed return with little paper bags of coarse tobacco. This brought results. Two hundred believers—Protestants, Catholics and freethinkers, all anxious to hear the word of God—attended the next Sunday's service. Unequal to this sudden wave of religious fervor, the German Christ was forced to substitute apples and

nuts—hastily sent for from home—for tobacco, one nut or half an apple per prisoner. Hoots and jeers met the returning "churchgoers" and for a week thereafter they were made the butts of all sorts of practical jokes. The following Sunday saw a small group of twenty standing outside the First Aid Station—which for some reason the Nazis considered a fit spot for religious instruction.

There followed a stubborn battle between the Catholic and the Protestant pastors for the souls of the prisoners. As an individual the Reverend Herr Zimmerman was as far superior to Brown Shirt Köhler as Bruening to Roehm. But Köhler was in a position to compensate for his lack of intelligence by the authority of the camp administration, of the Black Shirts, and of Reichsbischof Müller. It did not take the Catholic Church long, however, to realize how conducive tobacco was to the growth of religious sentiment, and the holy mother succeeded in overcoming her political handicap by distributing a superior mixture, from which cigarettes could be rolled.

CHAPTER V

ESCAPE

AFTER drill on one of these dreary Sundays I found the prisoner Kirsch sobbing in his bunk. "What are you crying about?"

He refused to answer at first. It took considerable coaxing before I could prevail upon him to unburden his mind.

"I can't stand it any more," he said. "I'm going to run away. I don't care what happens."

"You're crazy," I said. "How are you going to get out of here? They're just waiting for a chance like that."

He shook his head, and refused to say another word. I tried to talk him out of the idea, to explain the senselessness of such a project. All I got in response was, "Yes, yes. You're right. I know that myself. But I can't stand it any more."

I talked the thing over with Fritz and the Schieber, and we agreed that we would have to get Kirsch into our work squad, where we could keep an eye on him and preserve him from a complete collapse.

The same night Kirsch was caught by the sentry as he was trying to crawl through the barbed wire. The sentry, a South German peasant boy who had found his way into camp heaven knows how, had passed the story on to a comrade, from whom our Schieber heard it after work that evening. We contrived to be put on cleaning

duty in the guard room and, through the mediation of the contact man, to interview the sentry himself.

"I don't know what to tell you—I don't know what to do. Should I report him or shouldn't I report him? I feel sorry for him—but if it gets out, then I'll catch it. I was standing in the sentry box and suddenly I hear something rustling in the wire. 'Hey there,' I yell, 'I think you're going the wrong way.' I jump at him and grab him by the arm. He just stands there quiet and never says a word. When I flash my pocket searchlight, I see he's crying. I feel sorry for him. 'Get in,' I tell him. But he shakes his head. 'I have to go home,' he says. 'My wife can't manage alone. There's nothing planted for the winter,' he says. 'I have two small children. I have to go home.' For a minute I didn't know what to do; but duty's duty. 'If you keep your mouth shut,' I tell him, 'I won't report you. Now get in!' So he goes in."

The Schieber convinced the sentry that the story couldn't possibly get out if he held his own tongue, and the sentry promised not to report the matter.

Kirsch was to be transferred to our squad at inspection Tuesday evening. One of our men wanted to go over to Dyke Number One, where a townsman of his worked. To all appearances Kirsch had concurred in the plan. But things turned out differently.

At about eleven on Tuesday morning two sentries, armed with rifles, came tearing along on their motorcycles and held a hasty conference with our head guard, who drew out his whistle and blew a shrill note to call us together.

"Fall in, fall in!" he cried nervously.

There was something in the wind.

"Count off!"

We were all present.

"Forward—march!"

We returned to camp at a quick march. Somewhere along the road word leaked out that a prisoner had escaped. Kirsch!

Back in camp we came upon a scene of wild confusion. The flight of a prisoner had thrown the Black Shirts into a panic. The guard was doubled, the prisoners driven to their sleeping quarters and locked in. Every available car, bicycle and motorcycle was sent out in pursuit of the fleeing Kirsch.

In our bunks we were supplied with additional details. Kirsch had vanished in the forest—just when nobody knew. It was some time before the prisoners themselves realized that he was no longer among them. They called his name and hunted for him till the sentries finally caught on to the fact that he had escaped. Now they thought they were up against a conspiracy of the entire work squad. They tore their rifles from their shoulders and rounded up the prisoners. Arms raised high, the men were driven at a trot back through the two neighboring villages to camp—a weird sight which the townsfolk watched in awe and silence.

On receipt of the news the commandant had ordered all work squads back to camp. We could hear him now, bellowing to the sentries in the courtyard outside, "The camp is to be held at all costs!"

When, a few hours later, the first scouting parties returned from their unsuccessful search, a general inspec-

tion was called. Each prisoner in Kirsch's company was obliged to fall out as his name was called and report what he knew of the runaway, whether he had been on intimate terms with him, whether Kirsch had spoken of his plan of escape.

The squad in which Kirsch had worked was sentenced to an indeterminate period of more rigorous discipline. They were to receive only two slices of bread and two glasses of water daily, and to be deprived of the customary half hour's leisure in the evening. At the same time certain changes for the worse were made in the living and working conditions of the rest of us. Smoking at work and card playing in the evening was forbidden, we were to be deprived of our ten A.M. slice of bread, and three successive Sundays were appointed as fast days. We were forbidden to go to the latrines during working hours.

"You can use your shoes, you thieves!" yelled the officer on duty. "You don't deserve to be treated like human beings."

Anyone guilty of the slightest offense that day was flogged by officers and troopers.

The spies were ordered to find out who Kirsch's accomplices had been, both outside the camp and in. The administration was convinced of the existence of a carefully matured and far-flung plot. Neither the official investigation, however, nor the activities of the informers bore any fruit. Kirsch seemed to have been a reticent person who had no close friends and whom no one would have credited with the spirit to do what he had done.

I was on tenterhooks lest the story of his previous attempt come to light and involve both the Schieber and me. But the guards kept their own counsel.

That night the commandant had his henchmen spread the report that if Kirsch returned of his own volition, or could be apprehended with the assistance of the prisoners, the restrictions imposed upon us would be withdrawn. Anyone providing information as to his probable hiding place would be promptly released. At rising time next morning Schinderknecht enlarged on the theme.

"I tell you one thing—when the fellow's caught, it'll be up to you to give him such a lacing that he won't stir from the spot. The commandant knows you had nothing to do with his flight. But he's got to impose the penalties. You've got that good-for-nothing to thank if your grub's been cut. And that's just a starter. There'll be worse to come."

As a result of the administration tactics the feeling of the prisoners—who, despite the disagreeable consequences of his flight, had all been for Kirsch at first—underwent a gradual change.

"Rotten thing to do—getting us all into this mess. If we can stand it so can he. That's comradeship for you. It's no way for a worker to act." Such was the view, skillfully stirred up and disseminated by the provocateurs, which found more and more frequent expression among the prisoners.

The majority of us, who continued to regard Kirsch's flight as a set-back for the Black Shirts and a moral victory for the prisoners, were naturally powerless to express our sympathy. When we returned from work

that evening we found that the artificially stimulated antagonism against Kirsch had made still further headway. The story now ran that he wasn't a political prisoner at all, but a criminal, and had spent several years in prison for theft; also that the commandant would be glad to rescind the penalties against us the moment he was convinced that no one supported Kirsch.

"Do you know what the commandant said in the tailor shop today?" inquired one of our company spies eagerly. " 'I'm curious to see,' he said, 'whether the prisoners have sense of honor enough to wash their hands of the bastard. If I were sure of that,' he said, 'I'd listen to reason. Otherwise I'll have to try different measures.' "

Our one hope was that Kirsch would get away. Even if he traveled only by night, he could reach the border in three days. When, on the morning of the third day, we marched off without having had any news of him, we believed him to have reached safety.

On our return that evening, however, Kirsch was standing chained in the yard, his face swollen horribly. Some of the workshop prisoners had pitched into him the moment he had been brought back.

The provocative tactics reached their height that evening when the most formidable of the stormleaders conducted the inspection himself.

"The administration," he said, "considers the punishment of Kirsch to be the affair of the prisoners, and will not interfere. But we expect from you such drastic action as will discourage anyone else from following his example. We grant you the privilege of taking the law

into your own hands, and trust that you will take advantage of it."

Inspection over, a group of twelve or fifteen men gathered about the troopers, while the spies sped busily back and forth between them and the Administration Building. They were organizing the punitive squad. Our Schieber assembled a few of the most dependable comrades in the latrine, in an effort to evolve some plan by which we might protect Kirsch. It was decided to inform the administration through Schinderknecht that Company Eight was itching to thrash Kirsch. Let them hand him over to Company Eight. We would first station a group at the entrance to our sleeping quarters to guard against invasion from certain elements in other companies. Then we would stage a mock beating for the benefit of the two spies in our own company, which ought not to present too many difficulties if we placed Kirsch in the third story and, under cover of the darkness, belabored the pallet. At any rate, that seemed our only chance. The Schieber went in search of Schinderknecht, while we others rounded up our staunchest comrades in the Eighth and acquainted them with the plan.

The bedtime whistle sounded before the Schieber returned. There was nothing we could do. By order of the commandant Kirsch had been taken to the sleeping quarters of Company Two and placed right at the entrance, where he would be visible from the main corridor and accessible to all comers. The spies were going about, discouraging any possible action in his favor. Word passed from bunk to bunk that anyone coming to Kirsch's defense would be accorded similar treatment. The sentry

in the main corridor had been withdrawn. At seven-thirty the lights went out. The stillness was deathlike. At eight the stormleader of the police department made the rounds. It was the first and last time he ever appeared below. Without uttering a word he made his way slowly through passage after passage till every company had been visited.

Our nerves strained at the breaking point; we lay in the darkness. Sleep was impossible. Near us we could hear one of the men praying softly. Never before had the atmosphere of the cellar seemed so sinister.

An hour and a half must have elapsed in this fashion, when suddenly word was passed round that one of our two company spies had stolen out.

By the wan light glimmering into the main corridor from the courtyard, we could see a group of prisoners gathering at the entrance to the sleeping quarters of Company Two. Clad only in socks and underwear, they were armed with boards, belts and straps. A command in an undertone—and they made a dash for Kirsch's bunk.

In mortal terror Kirsch shrieked for help. Next moment they wrapped the covers round his head and silenced him. We could hear the hasty blows. The bunk was too narrow. They got into each other's way. They vanished as silently as they had come. The prisoners lay quiet as the grave.

Half an hour later they returned.

"Cowardly sneaks!" a prisoner from Company Four said loudly. In a jiffy they had him out of his bunk and on the floor. Then they went back to Kirsch and dragged

him out to the corridor, muffled his head in a blanket and started beating him as though he had been a block of wood.

"Help! Help! Help!" Kirsch groaned.

A command from the darkness and they vanished. Some of the men from Company Two carried Kirsch back to his bunk.

The sluggers returned a third time and a fourth. Kirsch was barely alive when at last they left him lying naked in the corridor. The spy stole back to his bed. His job was done.

Only then did the sentry appear in the corridor.

"What's been going on here?" he said. "Leave you alone for a minute, and you think you can do as you please." With that he went off to summon the first-aid attendant.

The latter, a good-natured youth who had at one time been a member of the Social-Democratic Workers' First Aid Association, arrived with his kit to bind up Kirsch's wounds. He started bathing the face of the unconscious man, but had to stop and vomit. The guard sent for the camp doctor—a Nazi and a special prisoner who had been placed in the concentration camp for embezzling funds from the Physicians' Federation. This was the Third Reich's customary procedure in dealing with cases of petty internal corruption. It did away with the publicity of a legal suit. Since the disgraced Nazi's sole object was to rehabilitate himself with all possible speed, he proved an ideal doctor for the camp administration. He issued official death certificates for prisoners who had been killed by torture; these certificates generally cited

brain fever or a kidney ailment as the cause of death. It was his habit to denounce as malingerers prisoners who lay in bed with a high fever and, on more than one occasion, he had substituted a slap across a sick man's face for an examination. He now had Kirsch carried to the First Aid Station, where the prisoner lay all night. Next morning he was transferred to the city hospital. That was the last we ever heard of him.

As dawn approached the dreadful oppressiveness of the night began to wear off. Instinctively the comrades drew closer to each other. The provocateurs were silent. The administration officially repudiated the punitive squad, and the rumor circulated that the affair would be investigated. There the matter ended.

One of the comrades had some information about Kirsch's flight. He had started by traveling eastward toward the border, but had changed his plans after the first night because he could not bring himself to flee abroad without having seen his family once more. The camp administration had of course notified the local Nazis of his region, and they captured him before he had so much as set foot in his village.

We made it our business to identify all those who had taken part in the flogging of Kirsch. The ringleader had been an eighteen-year-old stoolpigeon named Hartwig, the lover of Senior Stormleader von Zaskowsky. It was he, too, who had stripped Kirsch of his shirt and pants as he lay in the corridor. A few of the others had availed themselves of the opportunity of indulging—not alone with impunity but by official invitation—in their old trade of thuggery. These were out-and-out lumpen-

proletarians they had somehow sneaked into the ranks of the workers' organizations, though they belonged more properly among the Black Shirts. Three or four political neutrals had been taken in by the lies of the administration and were honestly incensed over the fact that we should all have to suffer for the sake of a "rascal and vagabond" like Kirsch.

The punitive squad had also included one Social-Democrat and one Communist. It was important to us to discover what had prompted them to do hangman's service on the person of their comrade. The Social-Democrat maintained that such incidents as Kirsch's attempted flight would merely serve to delay for weeks and months the release of other prisoners and aggravate the difficulty of prison conditions for us all. It was to the prisoners' interest, he said, to steer clear of anything which would stir up the Black Shirts. Order in camp must be preserved—each of us must be prepared to "do his duty"—in other words, to take the burden of forced labor willingly upon his shoulders. When we pointed out that he was making the Nazi cause his own, he denied it indignantly. Not at all. He was a Social-Democrat, now as always.

The Communist worked in the auto repair shop, where he came into frequent contact with the Black Shirts. He was often drafted to drive the cars of the officers, and, being a skilled mechanic, was soon enjoying all sorts of special privileges. The troopers would slip him an occasional bottle of beer, he smoked cigars bought for him by the officers, and he was excused from reporting for inspection. Having been thoroughly cor-

rupted by these methods, he had deserted the cause and was now chiefly concerned with winning the good will of his new masters.

The prisoners who had participated in Kirsch's "punishment" were shunned like the plague by the others. No one talked to them, they sat by themselves during the noon hour, and the feeling of hostility against them, instead of abating with time, seemed to increase.

CHAPTER VI

"YOU ARE NOT MY JUDGE"

STOOLPIGEON HARTWIG was paid off in the washroom one morning. He was felled by a blow on the head as he stood over the washbasin. The room, crowded to capacity a moment before, was cleared within a few seconds and the detested toady left lying in a puddle of soapy water. Recovering consciousness, he reported to his "friend" Stormleader von Zaskowsky that he had been attacked by prisoners. Zaskowsky raged and did everything in his power to obtain an investigation, but apparently met with resistance on the part of the commandant and some of the other officers. Many of them undoubtedly disapproved of his sexual relations with the informer and may have been apprehensive, too, of an open revolt in camp. In any case Zaskowsky's efforts came to nothing and the person or persons who knocked out Hartwig remained unidentified. But another prisoner, an old man of almost seventy, fell a victim to Hartwig.

Old Karel, as everyone called him, was no longer fit for anything but potato peeling. Seated on a bench in the courtyard one day, he caught sight of the stoolpigeon carrying a breakfast tray into the Administration Building.

"So that scoundrel's on his feet again," he said aloud.

Two minutes later he was called before Zaskowsky. Hartwig was standing beside him.

"What did you say in the yard just now?" the stormleader inquired.

"I was surprised to see that this scoundrel here was back on duty."

The officer picked up a blackjack and ordered the old man to lie down across the table. At a sign from Zaskowsky, Hartwig threw himself at old Karel, forced him to the ground, and held him there with his knees. The stormleader proceeded to blackjack him.

The old man crawled down the stairs and knocked at the commandant's door, something which no prisoner had ever dared before.

"What do you want?"

"I've just been beaten by Stormleader von Zaskowsky."

"Why?"

"I said I was surprised to see the scoundrel Hartwig was on his feet again."

"Then you got what was coming to you. Get out, or I'll give you another dose."

"It's with your consent, then, that prisoners in camp are mistreated?"

"Don't be insolent!" the commandant bellowed.

"Herr Kommandant," repeated the old fellow imperturbably, "it's with your consent, then, that prisoners here in camp are mistreated?"

The commandant gasped. "Just what do you want from me, anyway?" he shouted.

"I'd like to ask you whether everything that goes on

here in camp goes on with your knowledge and consent."

"That's none of your damned business! Am I answerable to you for what I do?"

"Herr Kommandant," said the old man, "some day you'll be called to account for what goes on here in camp." He turned and walked out.

Old Karel went to his company quarters, wrote steadily for a time, then returned to his place among the potato peelers. The others cast timid sidelong glances at him. What was going on in the old man's mind? We knew he had been arrested for having asked, on the occasion of one of the innumerable Nazi drives for money, whether begging wasn't forbidden in the Third Reich.

At noon he was called before the commandant. Supported by two prisoners, he dragged himself across the yard. The commandant asked him why he had written his will.

"Because when you're in the hands of murderers, you never know how much longer you've got to live."

The commandant changed the subject. "Why are you giving us so much trouble?" he asked. "You're an old man. I'd like to spare you any further punishment."

"You can't punish me. You're not my judge."

"If you're going to be so pig-headed I'll have no choice but to put you in the coop."

"That's up to you."

"I can't allow you to send this letter off. It's likely to create a false impression of my camp. But in view of your age and your blameless record, I'll make an excep-

tion in your case and allow you to see your family some Sunday noon."

"I don't have to be treated any differently from the other prisoners."

"How long since you were arrested?"

"Eighty-seven days."

"What for?"

"For disrespect to the Third Reich."

"I'll see what I can do for you. But I'll expect you to refrain in future from any further breeches in camp discipline."

The old man's health declined rapidly from that day. His strength was ebbing. He spent most of his time on the pallet and would thank us with a friendly "God bless you, lad," when we slipped him a morsel in passing that was fit for his gum to chew.

One Sunday a visitor was announced for old Karel—the retired country pastor whose sexton he had been for half a lifetime. Two prisoners carried the old man to the First Aid Station where, in the presence of the SS officer on duty, the pastor was waiting for him.

"Well, Karel, how are you?" he asked encouragingly.

"I'm nearing the end, Your Reverence."

"Are you in pain? Are you ill?"

"This man here," said old Karel, pointing to Zaskowsky, who was the SS officer on duty, "this man here beat me."

The pastor's startled gaze turned from one to the other. Zaskowsky's face remained expressionless.

"This man beat me with a blackjack," old Karel continued, as though he were telling a tale that concerned

no one in the room. "And what he did to me he does every day to other prisoners."

"If you make another statement of that kind," Zaskowsky said, "I'll have to withdraw permission for this gentleman's visit and report you to the commandant."

"The commandant knows all about it and does nothing. What goes on here in camp shrieks to high heaven."

"Karel," said the pastor quickly, "don't upset yourself. I'll go to the government and ask for your release. I'll tell them you've been a good man all your life."

"A release is no good to me any more. I don't want to go on living in times like these when the truth can't be told and rascals hold the power."

The stormleader rose. "I'm sorry," he said to the pastor, "but I'll have to cut your visit short because of the prisoner's insolence."

"Insolence!" exclaimed the old man, unbuttoning his shirt with trembling fingers. "Here—look here."

His sunken chest still bore the bruised and livid traces of the blackjack. The pastor gazed in horror at the marks of the Third Reich.

"How could you bring yourself to lay hands on this old man?" he stammered, beside himself. "This is absolutely revolting."

"I should be sorry to have to detain you here in camp," the stormleader replied. "Weigh your words more carefully next time. Now go."

Old Karel was carried to the coop and kept there until an ambulance from the city hospital came to remove him a few days later. His old friend, the pastor, had at least spared him the necessity of dying in that dark hole.

CHAPTER VII

DER SCHIEBER

THREE weeks after my arrival I was "coördinated," together with seven other comrades, by the camp Police Department. Our names were called at evening inspection, and we were ordered to line up outside the Administration Building at six-thirty the following morning. The SS officers of the Police Department arrived at ten, went to lunch at twelve-thirty, and returned at three. We stood and waited. The first men were summoned upstairs at six. We heard chairs overturning, roars, blows—then we saw the prisoners, pale as death, descending the stairs, accompanied by two troopers. They were led off to the coop.

My turn came last. Two stormleaders were seated at their desks in the small, freshly painted room. The wall confronting me bore in black letters the words:

"THE COMMON GOOD TAKES PRECEDENCE OVER THE GOOD OF THE INDIVIDUAL."

Above one of the desks hung a photograph of Roehm, above the other a photograph of Goering. Between them stood a plaster bust of the Leader, his lovelock falling over his forehead, his natty moustache clipped short. I took everything in at a glance. The two troopers at the door locked it. The "examination" began.

The first few seconds are the hardest for the prisoner.

Worse than the nerve-racking twelve-hour wait, worse even than the certainty of physical torture to come, is the uncertainty as to what the Secret Police may know of his Party work, legal or underground. Documents may have come to light, imprisoned comrades may have made statements incriminating him. Because of new evidence unearthed by the police he may find it necessary to make certain admissions here which will lend greater plausibility to his denials elsewhere. Yet any concession, however slight, may serve to place him and other comrades in a hopeless situation. Better not start anything. But they will beat him to death if he refuses to talk.

It is all much easier after the first question has been put, for that question marks the beginning of a concrete struggle in which the blackjack ceases to be all-powerful. The prisoner can use his head, can put his brains and his eyes and ears to work. He promptly perceives the gaps in the incriminating evidence, he gathers from the questions what the Secret Police are chiefly interested in, and it does not take him long to gauge the examining officer's capacity for understanding the essence of underground Party work. Ninety times out of a hundred the petty bourgeois gone mad entertains the most idiotic notions of what the Party is like.

"You did subversive work among the Reichswehr [1] of Küstrin."

I felt relieved. The comrades I had worked with either had not been caught or else had refused to talk. And we had no spies in our ranks. My heart leaped with joy. They were on the wrong track.

[1] Regular Army.

"No."

The officer jumped up and punched me under the chin. I fell across the desk of the other stormleader, who kicked me so hard in the back that I was hurled into the middle of the room. That was the signal for the waiting troopers.

They grabbed me, one of them forced my head between his legs, and while they held me in that position the heroic officers administered the Hindenburg alms with their blackjacks. I set my lips and made no outcry. After a while they stopped.

"Hm," the first officer grunted, "I'm in a sweat and you haven't dirtied your pants yet, you scoundrel!"

This was his way of paying tribute to my self-control.

"Why did you join the Communists instead of coming to us?"

"When I joined the Communist Party the National Socialist Party wasn't known."

"And why didn't you come over to us later?"

"I didn't believe in the socialism of the National Socialists."

"Do you believe in it now?"

"No."

The second stormleader made a threatening move in my direction, but the first one motioned him away. He had evidently had his fill of flogging for the day, and decided that some "conversation" would offer a little variety.

"Why don't you believe in it?"

"Because I can see that the National Socialist Party is fighting only against the revolutionary workers."

"But we've dissolved the German-National Party, the Center, and all the Jewish parties too," he said. "And we've sent a number of capitalists who've infringed on the rights of the workers to the concentration camps."

I made no reply.

"Is that true or isn't it?"

"It's true—but capitalism itself hasn't been touched." I sensed that the "discussion" was nearing its end.

He regarded me for a moment through half closed lids, and it seemed to me he was himself dissatisfied with Hitler's "socialism," but it irked him to have a Communist give expression to his own critical ideas.

"The curtain hasn't fallen yet," he remarked at length. "The second act's still to come." Then, promptly regretting having taken me so far into his confidence, he bellowed, "Get out of here!"

The two guards at the door kicked me so violently in the buttocks that my knees, striking the steps outside, began bleeding profusely.

Back in the company quarters the comrades surrounded me.

"All over? How was it? What did they want to know? Do you have to go up again?"

"You see," said Schultz, "it's nothing at all; we never make any fuss about things like that."

During the night those parts of my body which had been beaten swelled painfully, pustules formed under my shoulder blades, and I could barely control the muscles of my legs and back.

Next morning my comrades rubbed me down with the lard which they had scraped from their bread for

that purpose, and put my shoes on for me. They all advised me not to report sick nor to stay behind in camp, but to go to work as usual. So I hobbled along with the rest of them. Schultz did his best to cheer me up and make me forget my pain, carrying my tools and talking about everything under the sun. But when he saw I was too wretched to be diverted his own mood clouded, and he walked beside me in silence, smoking his pipe.

"What do you think?" he said at last. "Should I write my girl or not?"

"Does she write to you?"

"She's written three times. You can read the letters if you like."

He reached into his coat pocket and got them out for me.

"Later," I said. "After lunch."

I did not work that day. The Schieber told the guard I would take care of the fire, but it was he himself who hauled the stumps from the forest and piled them up. The guard offered no objection.

While two of them paced back and forth, talking, the Schieber drew the third into conversation.

"Training for National Socialism," he said to the guard, pointing to me. The guard, a boy of not more than twenty, eyed me in silence. "How many of us do you think are National Socialists when we leave camp?"

"Well," replied the other slowly, "we can hardly expect you to join us while you're still in camp."

"But that's the one reason for the camp's existence. You're supposed to train us here to be useful members

of the Third Reich. Or else you might as well shoot us."

"We know that the best of you'll come round when you see that we're really accomplishing something."

"That kind of thing, you mean?" asked the Schieber, pointing to me again.

"Oh, you'll find brutes wherever you go."

For a time neither of them spoke.

"What were you before you came here?" the guard asked me, handing me a cigarette. "Communist?"

"Yes."

"I guess you're all Communists in this squad."

"Yes."

The other two guards approached the fire. The Schieber went for fresh wood.

At noon Schultz gave me his girl's letters to read.

DEAR RICHARD: Wrote you a lot of letters but tore them up, because I know everything's over between us. Just wanted to tell you that I don't know myself how I could have done it. Wasn't right in the head. Don't have to tell you how sorry I am. You won't believe me and you don't have to, either, but it's the truth. They wanted me to tell them even more but I threw them out of the house. Haven't gone to M. since then to do the washing. Dear Richard, if you'd only believe me. I know everything's over and I don't want a thing from you. They got me worked up and I believed it all. Went across the mountains twice to see your mother, but she wouldn't let me into the house. Dear Richard, your pipe still lies on the shelf. And half a package of tobacco. Shall I send it to you? I could send you a little butter too and some cakes. But I guess you're too proud to go on taking anything from a person like me.—Regards from BERTHA.

DEAR RICHARD: Brunner, who is now the leader of the local Nazi group, says to tell you if you make a petition they'll have the local group sign it. Because your mother's sick and your brother-in-law in L. is Stormleader now. You don't have to worry about your mother. I go over there every second day to look after her. It's old age and all the excitement. I'm so glad she talks to me again now. The first fever is now dying down here. You can understand why I don't want to write much about that. The butcher's going to take me to L. next Sunday, and I'll write you what your brother says.

Dear Richard, you didn't answer my letter. I couldn't expect you to, either. If you only knew what I'm going through, you'd at least write a few lines this time. I don't want another thing from you, if only you get safely out again. You can go with anyone you like. I told your mother so, too. They wanted me to take away your picture in the uniform, but I grabbed it out of their hands and put it back on the cupboard again.—With regards, BERTHA.

DEAR RICHARD: Your brother wasn't home. I left a letter for him. Brunner says if you'll join them, he'll see that you get out. He says he'd rather have you than all the lukewarm scum who are reporting to him now, and he says it's time for you to face facts. But I know you've got your own ideas. Your mother says too, he knows his own business. The Count's head keeper came to see her last week and asked for you. He said, when you're out and if you join the Steel Helmets, you can work in the woods again. Dear Richard, the people don't speak badly of you, only of me. It serves me right and I don't deserve any better. If I'd known how everything was going to turn out, I'd have thrown myself into the river long ago. Marie, who's to blame for it all, married Ziegler. He's got the business in his own name and he's president of the Nazi league for the middle classes. But it's going to be dissolved, they say.

Dear Richard, this is the last letter I'll write you if you don't answer. You didn't even send me your regards when you wrote to your mother. My head's in a jumble, I've been bawling so much. You might at least send me your regards.

—BERTHA.

Schultz was watching my face as I read. I handed the letters back.

"You can read it too, if you like," he told the Schieber, who was sitting beside me.

"Have you been going with her long?" I asked.

"Over three years."

"Why didn't you marry her?"

"Can't marry everyone."

"Is she a comrade?"

"No. She wasn't interested in politics. She's whatever I am."

"How did she happen to give you up?"

"That's a mystery to me, too. I'd never have believed it of her. I had something to do for the Party in Tarnowitz and spent the night in P. as usual. She'd been suspecting for a long time that I was going with some woman there, and when the Nazis went to her place to look for me, they told her they could find me without her help. Everybody *knew* with whom I spent my nights so often. They kept on razzing her till she got so wild that she said I hadn't been home in three days. Let them go to the other woman in P., she said. They'd be sure to find me there."

"It's your own fault, Richard," the Schieber broke in. "You go with her for three years, you don't marry her, you fool around with other girls, you don't take the

slightest trouble to make a comrade of her. What else did you expect?"

"Lousy thing to do just the same—give me away when she knew what the Nazis would do to me."

"She must have lost sight of that for a moment. Did you ever bother to explain politics to her? No, you treated her as the Nazis treat their women—good for the bed and the kitchen and the laundry and, for the rest, keep your mouths shut. That was her way of defending herself. You've got no kick coming. She loves you, and I say you ought to help her instead of climbing up on your high horse. If you write to her now and treat her like a comrade instead of a petticoat, I'll stake my head that she'll never betray you again."

I added my persuasion to the Schieber's, and Schultz was apparently pleased to have Party comrades, whose judgment he respected, advise him to do what he would have been glad to do of his own accord, had his pride not forbidden. He had been afraid, too, that the Party would frown on any continued association with her. He was very cheerful on the way home, and when the guards called for music, struck up with an old army song in which the soldier dreams of returning home and marrying his sweetheart.

The impressions I had gathered in the hell of Columbia were confirmed here in camp—the workers were far better able to cope with the situation than the intellectuals. It was not a matter of personal courage, with which the latter were as well supplied as the former. The difference lay in the fact that fascism

seemed to the intellectuals an impenetrable wall, closing them in—a monster in whose ugly face no human feature could be detected. The workers, on the other hand, could see through the black SS uniform to the wearer beneath; they saw the swaggering brass buttons but under them the son of the debt-ridden innkeeper of Niederwellingen or the broken-down assistant cashier of the Savings Bank of Frunsbüttel or the former captain of the Seventh Uhlans who after the war became a traveling salesman for wines and cognac. Fascism, the abstraction, dissolved for them into a series of concrete parts—SS guards, filthy food, "examinations," blackjacks, coop, forced labor—and it was not at all impossible to adopt certain defensive measures against one or another of these parts.

All sorts of elements, for example, were represented among the guards, with many of whom personal contacts could be established and exploited to our advantage.

This was a gift which the Schieber of our squad possessed to a marked degree. He profited by his three-year experience as a war prisoner, and knew all the tricks. He started activity in the morning before we marched off to work, prowling around to see that we got the "right" guards. The Storm Troopers liked to be assigned to his squad. Fritz, an ardent admirer of the Schieber's, told me of various episodes which had won the latter his enviable reputation among the lower ranks of the Black Shirts.

One day on the march to work a guard shot and wounded a doe on a private estate. The incident had

been reported to the local game warden, and the camp administration investigated. The Schieber and his work squad were compelled to file past the whole line of SS guards, to identify the culprit; but not one of them gave the guilty guard away. Five members of the squad were locked up in the coop for eight days, then were again confronted with the guards. Again no one squealed.

This made a profound impression on the rank and file Black Shirts. Once they felt sure that the prisoners would not betray them to the officers, they fell into the habit of relieving the tedium of guard duty by going off for an occasional glass of beer or lying down under some bush for a nap, trusting to us to waken them when we heard the drone of an inspecting officer's motorcycle. In this way, of course, they were putting themselves more and more completely into the power of the prisoners, who availed themselves of the opportunity to get whatever they could for themselves. Hence, various major and minor breaches of discipline on both sides served to build up in the course of the months a silent community of interest between certain of the troopers and certain of the work squads.

We, for example, passed a group of road workers every day on our two-hour march to the dyke and struck up friendly relations with them. If we had our "own" guards with us, they gave us permission to "relieve" ourselves. The road workers would hand us their tobacco pouches so that we could fill our pipes, and would give us bread and sausage from their knapsacks. Every morning two girls working at a near-by tobacco factory would pass us on bicycles and would throw us

a box of cigarettes. A number of the peasants, too, despite their fear of persecution, would slip things into our hands. The women were more courageous than the men. Several times the camp administration and the Secret Police had found it necessary to warn the populace against any dealings with us.

"Like to have your wife pay you a visit here?" the Schieber asked me one day.

"I don't know where she is. Besides, what's the good of having one look at her across the length of a room?"

"Listen. I've got two of the guards to the point where they're willing to let a few of us send for our wives to come to the forest here. All we've got to do now is to bring the third one round. The three are on duty together every Friday. If your wife can't come, maybe you could make an appointment with one of the comrades, so he could take your people a message from you. Write at once and give me the letter after evening inspection. Only be sure it's addressed to someone you can trust."

I had heard nothing, of course, in reply to my letter to Julius. The thought of the uncoded list in my former apartment still tormented me. Nor did I know whether my work had been turned over to Otto, whether Otto was still at liberty, whether Käthe had been notified of my arrest. After some reflection, I decided to write. Käthe was abroad. I wrote to Anna of my old Party unit to come.

Schultz approached me while we were at work.

"Did the Schieber tell you?"

"Yes."

"Are you going to have yours here?"

"I'm going to try."

"I'd like to write Bertha too. What do you think?"

"Certainly write her—if you can be sure she'll know how to handle herself in case anything should go wrong."

"You can be sure of that."

"Good. Then write."

"Will you have a little time for me this evening?"

"Yes, at seven—in the company quarters."

Four men in our squad decided to run the risk of writing.

A letter to Bertha wasn't a simple matter. Schultz had his own decided views as to what he wanted to write her. The letter must not be too short, but it must not be too long, either. It must be conciliatory in tone, yet it must leave everything open and commit him to nothing. His masculine pride was in the ascendant again when he started dictating, and I had to drive home a few harsh truths before I could make any headway with him. He finally professed himself satisfied with the following composition:

DEAR BERTHA: Received your three letters, for which I thank you. I'm glad you're looking after mother. I hope she'll be better soon. I won't have anything to do with the petition of Brunner and my brother. Let them write one if they like, but I won't have anything to do with it.

You write me that you're very much worried about me now. [We wrangled violently over that "very much"—Schultz objected to it, but I insisted.] You should have worried sooner. You could have spared us both a great deal.

But what's done is done. You've got to think about the future now. Can't write much in a letter so I'd like to see you. But no one must know about it—*no one,* do you understand? —only mother, not even my brother. You can't come to camp, because visitors are forbidden just now. You couldn't come anyhow, because we're not married. We can talk that over too. But you can come to the forest where we work. Better bicycle as far as T. and take the train when you get there. For fifty pfennigs you can park your bicycle in the baggage car. From the Hubertshof depot you ride along the Graumütz road to milestone 21.4, then turn left into the forest. Go on riding till you come to a clearing and stay on the left-hand path till you reach the water. Arrange to get to the forest by noon. Between the clearing and the water someone will ask you, "What time is it?" Then you say, "I'm sorry. My watch stopped." Then he'll say, "Are you going much farther today?" Then you say, "That depends on how soon I can get my business done. Maybe you can tell me how to get to the dyke?" Then he'll take you there. Don't forget the words. You've got to answer twice and ask once. Tell mother to give you the fare and to take it out of the money I got from Koszinsky in February. Come next Friday if you don't hear from me again. Dear Bertha, I'll be glad to see you again. I hope everything will be all right.—Auf Wiedersehen, RICHARD.

He vetoed emphatically my suggestion that he sign himself "Your Richard."

We could rely absolutely on one of the guards. He was engaged to the sister of a comrade and was under her influence. It was through him that the Schieber learned what went on among the Black Shirts and the

members of the camp administration. It was he too who smuggled the letters out. He had a friend in his outfit—an intelligent fellow who came from a Social-Democratic home, from which he brought an interest in politics. We could talk to him as though Hitler were not yet Reichskanzler nor the Schutz Staffel an organ of the government. Nor was he entirely convinced that the Third Reich was destined to endure for more than a thousand years. We were not sure of the third guard, who was afraid of getting into trouble.

During the noon recess, when we all sat around the fire, we propagandized the SS guards. It was a pleasure to watch the comrades turning and guiding the conversation to the point where they wanted it. It was an indescribable sensation—listening to the old arguments of our meetings in the Friedrichshain and the Pharus Hall here under the very rifles of the Black Shirts, and noting their effectiveness. The work of the Party hadn't been in vain; the "Commune" stood fast.

"I hear you get paid by the stagger system now," Fritz remarked.

"Yes," one of the guards admitted. "The administration hasn't got the money to pay us all in full on the first and the fifteenth."

"And you've been cut again, too."

"Only temporarily—we're supposed to get our old pay again next month."

"What old pay? What you got at the very start? You've been cut twice already, haven't you? What do you get now?"

"Twenty-five a month," one of the prisoners cut in.

"Nothing of the kind," blurted the guard. "Thirty."

"But you got ninety at first."

"What does a stormleader get?" a comrade asked.

"Two hundred and fifty a month at least," suggested another provocatively.

"No," said a guard. "Not now any more."

"Your stormleaders are pretty young. Can't have been in the SS very long."

"Do you have Märzgefallene [2] among your officers too?"

"Well," the Schieber said, "one thing I've got to admit. You people are faster workers even than the SPG. Their bureaucrats had to sweat like galley slaves before they got to the top. But if your friend is a Nazi group-leader you can get your three stars for the asking."

"While the old fighters can stand guard at thirty marks a month," another prisoner added.

"Well," said the Schieber, "the government can't get everything done at once. First, they've got to expropriate the Jewish department stores and lease them to the small shopkeepers. Then comes the turn of the corporations and trusts. How far have you got with them?"

"Oh, Tietz [3] is selling newspapers now in Potsdamer Platz," a prisoner said.

A shout of laughter, in which the three guards joined.

[2] *Märzgefallene*—literally, "those who fell in March," a name given by the workers to those careerists who rushed over to Hitler in March, 1933, though they had previously passed themselves off as Democrats, Liberals, Social-Democrats, States Party members, etc. There is also a veiled reference to "fallen women," to which these political prostitutes are compared.

[3] A wealthy and prominent owner of a department store.

"Go ahead and laugh," one of the guards said. "This is just a starter."

"Sh!" said the Schieber. "Haven't you read that there's to be no talk of a sequel? No second revolution?"

"That's all right—we don't need a revolution like Russia's or the kind you want to start," a guard said. "You've got to admit that there was less blood shed in our revolution than in any other."

"We'll be able to tell whether that *was* a revolution when we see what you do with the power. Damned little, so far."

"Twenty million people lost their lives in the Russian revolution," a guard said. "What for? Do you really believe the workers there are living in clover? You've been in power there for fifteen years and the people haven't enough to eat. A cousin of mine in the building trade went to Russia to work. He and sixty others made a contract in Berlin to have part of their pay turned over to their families in Germany. They were promised a place to live and God knows what else. But when they got to Russia there weren't any rooms. First the company paid for them at a hotel—that cost more than what their wages came to. Then they had to live in barracks. The food's rationed, and the unrationed food's so expensive that a worker can't buy it. And the Russian workers grumbled because the Germans got more on their cards than they did. You can hardly blame them for that. Then, six months later, the company told them they couldn't go on paying in valuta. If they didn't want to work for rubles, they could go back. My cousin came back with twelve others. They all quit the Com-

munist trade union. Do you call that Communism or Socialism by any chance?"

"Didn't he have anything else to tell?" said the Schieber. "How about unemployment in Russia? Whom do the factories belong to? And why aren't there enough rooms? Didn't he see anything of the cities that are being completely rebuilt, or the millions of peasants who are being turned into industrial workers?"

"That may be," the guard admitted. "But we can't have anything like that here. We've got too much industrial activity as it is. That's why we've got unemployment. Our problem is to transplant the city people back to the land. With all their slaving, the Russians will be in fifteen years just where we are today. And then the whole merry-go-round starts going the other way again."

"We haven't got too much industry," said the Schieber. "We've got far too little. There's too much of it only for private profit. In the Soviet Union every factory that's built means more wealth for the workers and peasants. But for every new factory that's built here, two old ones are closed down and the workers dismissed. The capitalists can't get rid of their junk because the people are too poor to buy it. Have you changed that state of affairs?"

"It's being changed, you can bet your boots on that," the guard said. "The capitalists know perfectly well that there's a new spirit abroad and that they can't go on doing as they please. Hitler'll see that justice is done to the people."

"Justice!" said the Schieber. "Look at it! Ninety-

five per cent of the prisoners in camp are people who've been struggling for a better existence. They wanted justice for themselves and their children. They were fed up with living at the mercy of the masters. Your justice consists of locking them up and treating them worse than criminals. Your papers say that all the foreign news stories about the mistreatment of prisoners are atrocity lies. Yet you see what goes on here under your very eyes. What about Schmitz, whom they beat to death? What about Heisten, who died in the First Aid Station? Keller hanged himself in the coop; the guards literally tore that fellow from Hamburg to bits. I don't have to go through the whole list for you. And the government knows it and tolerates it, but hasn't the courage to admit it. Is that your justice? Is that the moral renascence of the German people? Don't you realize that all this is bound to be avenged some day?"

The Schieber had spoken in such dreadful earnest that the trooper's face twitched with emotion.

"Yes," he burst out, "but what would you have done to us? At least we have let you live. You'd have killed us all."

"We don't have to kill any workers," said the Schieber. "They belong to us. We've got the courage to acknowledge our revolutionary code before the whole world. In our concentration camps the parasites'll learn to work—the fine gentlemen who grew fat on our labor. We won't abuse them, but neither will we conceal the fact that we'll shoot them if they work against us. As long as you're in power, the prisons'll be filled

with revolutionary workers. You'll take care not to do away with the concentration camps. You can't serve two masters, and because you serve the capitalists, you're bound to persecute the workers."

The Schieber took out his watch. "Well, time to work."

The letters had been written. The third guard had finally agreed to close his eyes to whatever went on. We waited in hope and anxiety for Friday. Anything might happen to ruin our plans—a letter seized, an unexpected change in the guard, an inspecting officer, treachery.

The Schieber forgot nothing. He even organized the line of retreat, in case things went wrong. Schultz, famous for his persistent "capitulations," took only one helping of potato gruel.

Friday came.

Never before had we followed so intently the progress of morning inspection and the assignment of the guards. We were given the right ones, which did away with the principal danger. Hardly a word was spoken on the march, and for the first time the squad worked as though they were performing voluntary labor. The inspecting officer kept us waiting longer than usual but we heard him approaching at last. "All is in order," the guards reported. Shortly afterwards the Schieber went to get wood and did not return till just before the noon hour.

"Yours is here," he whispered to Fritz. "To the right there, behind the pine trees in the hollow."

"May I step out, please?" Fritz asked the guards, and walked slowly toward the pines.

The guards and the prisoners maintained appearances. Not one of them betrayed by the slightest sign that anything unusual was afoot. The Schieber sent me for more wood.

"Go out on the road and relieve Kessler," he said. "I sent mine down there into the brushwood. I won't be gone more than an hour. If anything goes wrong, whistle on your fingers."

I remained on the lookout for Anna and for Schultz's girl. The forest was very still. It was a clear day in late autumn. The gossamer threads of cobwebs glittered and swayed in the sunlight.

Bertha came at a quarter past three. She had made poor train connections and arrived fifteen minutes before we had to return to camp. She walked beside Schultz as far as the highway, weeping hysterically. He kept patting her shoulder and said nothing.

On the way back to camp Schultz said to me, "Even if I had to spend a day in the coop for every minute she was here, I would not regret it."

Anna did not come.

Everything remained quiet at camp. Other comrades in the squad were beginning to talk of sending for their wives when trouble broke out in the first watch.

Since there was no money to pay their wages a number of troopers were dismissed. The commandant made a speech to the dismissed men on the sacredness of duty. To be a German, he said, meant to do a thing for its own

sake. He promised them reinstatement as soon as the camp should be enlarged. The troopers listened to the speech in silence. Next morning the following inscription was discovered, smeared in tar on the door of the guard room:

"We're fighting not for German honor.
We're fighting for new millionaires."

By order of the commandant ten of the dismissed troopers who had already left camp were arrested and brought back. They all protested their innocence but were locked up in the coop till they should be ready to confess. The incident had far-reaching consequences. The inquiry shifted from the troopers to the prisoners and many facts were brought to light. The officers discovered that discussions between prisoners and guards, although strictly prohibited, had been carried on in almost all the work squads; that the prisoners bought tobacco and cigarettes in the villages although forbidden to carry money with them; that the ban on smoking had been violated with the knowledge and connivance of the guards; that letters had been smuggled in and out of camp. The administration was furious. Some of the guards were replaced; twenty-five of them were kept in camp as special prisoners. All the work squads were broken up and reassembled. Our Schieber fell a victim to the "reorganization."

The camp police did not forget that, despite flogging and confinement to the coop, the Schieber had refused to name the guard who shot the doe. Now they took their revenge. He was accused of having provided the

CPG with information about the camp and was ordered to name his accomplices among the troopers. At first they promised him immunity from punishment if he would tell what he knew. He only replied, "I had nothing to do with any of it. But apart from that, I wouldn't betray any SS-man." They beat him till he couldn't move.

I was assigned to another squad where I was a stranger and knew none of the comrades. The comfortable tempo at which we'd worked in Dyke Squad Number Two was a thing of the past. The guards beat us when we did not fill the handcars or drag them uphill fast enough. Not a word was spoken all day that was not absolutely essential. That evening it was rumored about camp that the Schieber had been shot. His words, "I wouldn't betray any SS-man," went the rounds.

Two days later he was removed to the standing coop. This consisted of cells thirty-two inches wide, twenty inches deep, and six feet high, in which the prisoner could only stand upright. A few small holes at face level provided him with air. Gerhart Seger, a prisoner who escaped from the concentration camp at Oranienburg, has called these cells stone coffins. At Hubertshof they were wooden coffins, built from the commandant's specifications in the camp carpentry shop. The floors were planed off at a sharp angle to prevent the slightest possibility of the prisoner's crouching on the ground. Indeed, the prisoner could not really stand upright. He had to slide forward, knocking his head against the door. After the first few hours his ankles would start swelling,

and when the coffin was opened twenty-four hours later he would fall out like a sack of potatoes.

In such a cell the Schieber, who must have been seriously ill from the abuse he had been subjected to, was kept for three days and three nights. The camp police were determined to drive him to suicide, but they did not know that the guards opened his door at night and let him out so that he could move his limbs. They brought him sandwiches and coffee, too, and rubbed him with alcohol. They were afraid he might still tell what he knew.

Three days later he was examined again. He stuck to his original statement. They put him into the penal work squad and commended him to the special "care" of the guards. It wasn't long before he'd been made Schieber of the penal squad by tacit agreement. He had managed to get around the new troopers too.

CHAPTER VIII

FORCED LABOR

THE work was having its effect on the prisoners. Those who had been unemployed for years had an opportunity at camp to use the skill their fingers had all but forgotten. In the satisfaction of working they lost sight of the fact that they were doing forced labor, that sentries with cocked guns were standing behind them, that instead of going home at night they would find themselves being driven back to the dark cellars.

Nowhere was this condition more clearly apparent than in the shops. The imprisoned carpenters, shoemakers, mechanics, and barbers were glad to be able to put their minds on their work. They enjoyed showing that they were adepts at something, and professional pride sometimes made it difficult for them to obey the unwritten law of the CPG in camp: Practice sabotage wherever possible. As a matter of fact, the situation developed a certain community of interest between the prisoners in the shops and the lower ranks of the Black Shirts. The prisoners were glad to escape the heavy outdoor work which, with the approach of cold weather, grew harder and harder to bear; the Black Shirts appreciated the fact that they were getting service for nothing.

The incident of the town delegates was characteristic

of the whole situation. When the Hubertshof Nazis first heard that their old wine cellars were to be turned into a concentration camp their enthusiasm knew no bounds —first, because of the honor being shown their town, and second, because of the business they hoped to reap. There would be visitors—for the prisoners as well as the Black Shirts—who should prove a source of profit to the inns and shops; and a permanent SS guard of over a hundred and fifty men—not to mention all the officers—was bound to spend plenty of money in town.

But a shadow fell over their rosy hopes when the camp started setting up its own shops. Instead of patronizing the local barbers at twenty pfennigs per head the Black Shirts were shaved in camp free of charge. They took their boots for repair to the camp shoemaker and their belts and holsters to the camp saddler. The camp tailors mended and pressed their uniforms and the camp machine shop not only repaired the cars of the Black Shirts but was soon getting outside trade as well. Instead of developing into a source of revenue for the tradesmen of Hubertshof the camp became a competitor —a cutthroat competitor at that, since it paid no wages.

The patriotism of the Hubertshof tradesmen turned sour. Complaints that the Black Shirts neglected to pay their bills at the cafés, and that Hubertshof young ladies were pregnant, multiplied. One day a deputation from the local chamber of commerce appeared at camp to lay its grievances before the commandant. Raising their hands in the Nazi salute and opening their petition with "Heil Hitler!" they asked that the camp shops be abolished. The commandant had the m locked up, kept

them in camp for forty-eight hours, and threatened them with six months' "protective arrest" if they should ever again dare to criticize his camp arrangements. The guards carried the tale to the camp shops, and prisoners and Black Shirts rejoiced together over the rout of the Hubertshof petty bourgeoisie.

The Communists were fully aware of the dangers attendant upon any indefinite period of incarceration. They realized the importance of upholding the prisoners' morale, of seeing that they never lost sight of the fact that every stitch of work they did was done for Hitler. The workers' fighting spirit was best kept alive by organized sabotage, which was practiced in every conceivable form—working at the slowest possible tempo, damaging tools, loosening nails from the tracks so that the handcars would overturn, releasing the handcars too abruptly so that they jumped off the tracks and sank into the mire of the slopes. This sabotage was practiced under the very eyes of the guards. The workers, thoroughly conversant with tools and material, knew how best to render them useless.

A prisoner's political quality could be judged by his attitude toward the work. Given that touchstone you needed no other gauge to determine which were Communists, which Social-Democrats, which politically undeveloped. In sabotage as in everything else, the Communists formed the active, the Social-Democrats the passive—or at any rate the hesitant—element; and it was not long before my new squad was going through that same sifting process which was characteristic of all the work squads.

In reorganizing the outdoor squads the administration had deliberately shuffled us about to prevent the cementing of new bonds between prisoners and guards. Since supervision was more rigid, political migrations from group to group were barred for the time being. Of the nine men in our squad five were Communists, three Social-Democrats, and one a nonparty student who had been arrested in the course of a block raid in his home town when the police discovered in his room several copies of the pacifist periodical *Die Weltbuehne*. The squad members were strangers to one another. During the first few days scarcely a word was exchanged save what the work necessitated. Yet by the end of a week the political line of demarcation had been drawn with the sharpness of a knife stroke. Berger and Petersen, who worked side by side, were the first to clash.

"You slave as though you were being paid for it," said Berger.

Petersen, although not a very bright fellow, was certainly not toiling away at his job in order to make a good impression on the guards. He worked as he had always worked—speeding up his tempo without realizing what he was doing and thus forcing his neighbors to keep pace with him. That happened once, twice, three times—till finally Berger felt himself compelled, as a matter of principle, to counter with passive resistance. Two or three others followed suit. When the suspicions of the guards were roused and the comrades were compelled to abandon their sabotage, they flew into a rage and called Petersen a strikebreaker. Petersen became stubborn, and called Berger a loafer. Berger replied that

he was proud to be a loafer, here in camp. "A loafer's a loafer," rejoined Petersen, "here or outside."

"What else do you expect from a Reichsjammer man?" jeered Berger. That was the cue; the Communists took sides with Berger, the Social-Democrats with Petersen.

Relations between the two groups became strained. It was a matter of pride with Petersen to shovel up ten extra carloads daily, while Berger looked daggers at him and muttered threats. The two factions sat apart during the rest periods, munching their larded bread. The pacifist student, not knowing whom to join, sat now with one group, now with the other, trying to make peace between them.

"There's nothing to discuss," Berger said to him. "Just as these boys voted for Hitler in the Reichstag, so they're making common cause with the commandant here. Maybe someone'll drop them a few kind words for faithful service."

Berger's feeling about the Social-Democrats was shared by the other Communist prisoners. The persistently treacherous policies of the SPG had resulted in an accumulation of bitterness, which they vented not only on the Social-Democratic leaders but on the party members as well. Social-Democrat—whether functionary or ordinary member—was to them a concept. A Social-Democrat worker had ceased to be a worker in the true sense of the word. Workers who tolerated Noske and Zoergiebel and Severing and Scheidemann—and not only tolerated them but followed them as leaders—had nothing more in common with the workers' move-

ment. And hand in hand with their hatred of the counter revolutionary SPG went their personal contempt for proletarians who hid from Hitler behind Hindenburg's skirts and watched like old women while their dreams of bourgeois democracy and capitalist international coöperation collapsed.

It was this indeed which constituted the most striking difference between SPG and CPG prisoners. The Communists had no feeling that they had been beaten. They had realized all along that, unless the workers succeeded in establishing a united proletarian fighting front, Bruening, Papen, and Schleicher would prove to be Hitler's forerunners. They had seen that fascism in its purest form would prove to be the logical outcome of the SPG policy of the "lesser evil." Hadn't they said so a hundred times over to their Social-Democratic colleagues? The concentration camp merely confirmed the accuracy of their political predictions.

For the Social-Democrats, however, a world had gone to pieces. They felt that they had been betrayed—betrayed by Hindenburg, their candidate for the presidency, whom they had been taught to revere as the prototype of the upright, incorruptible German. Many of them were beginning to doubt the wisdom of the policy their leaders had pursued and a few frankly admitted that their leadership was bankrupt. But, they declared in the same breath, so was the CPG bankrupt. A new workers' party would have to be formed—a party free of the illusions of the SPG, but free also of the CPG's slavish dependency upon Moscow. They would have bitten off their tongues before confessing to

Communists how completely the SPG had failed.

A situation typical of the worker's movement in Germany before Fascism came to power made its reappearance in camp. The Communists were on the offensive, the Social-Democrats on the defensive. It was not the numerical superiority of the CPG workers which determined the attitude of each but the logic of the political situation. Serious discussions were rare—not only because of the strict supervision (which could have been evaded while we were at our outdoor work) —but because the Social-Democrats were loath to defend a position which was all to their discredit, and of which the Communists would have taken ruthless advantage.

Discrepancy in age was another factor. The Social-Democrats were mostly older men, over forty, while almost all the younger prisoners belonged to the CPG. An older Social-Democrat—particularly a German Social-Democrat who recalled with pride that his party was backed by a tradition of sixty-five years—did not relish taking instructions from a younger Communist.

Petersen, for example, had been affiliated with the SPG since 1902. He felt that he was a veteran of the workers' movement; even before the war he had been thrown out of factories and blacklisted by employers for the sake of his party. And now a youngster of twenty-six like Berger came along, and wanted to tell him what class consciousness was! He who had been fighting when the CPG did not exist! It was ridiculous.

I often found myself thinking what first-rate workers these Petersens were going to make—after the revo-

lution. Conscientious, hard-working, well-trained—ideal shock brigadiers for the building of the German socialistic society, yet willing truck horses for the Third Reich too. Their class consciousness had been swamped in the decade-long opportunism of their party.

Though they had bracketed both parties as "Marxian-Jewish" the Nazis made a sharp distinction between SPG and CPG. The differing standards by which the Nazis judged the two groups spoke louder than any words on that score. Of the seven hundred to twelve hundred prisoners in camp—the number varied with admissions, transfers to prisons and other camps, and releases—not more than a hundred to a hundred and fifty were Social-Democrats. Social-Democrats were arrested not in their capacity as members of the SPG but as heads of factory councils, as town councillors, as trade-union secretaries, and so forth—except for a few cases which involved personal malice or business rivalry. The Communists were arrested as Communists—not as well-known functionaries but simply as members of the CPG. It was true, of course, that the Secret Police were always on a feverish hunt for CPG functionaries, and a question which recurred at all examinations and which the prisoners evaded, wherever possible, because of its consequences, was: "Your function in the Party?" The mere fact that a man was a Party member or suspected of sympathizing with the CPG was sufficient to warrant arrest.

There was a marked contrast, too, in the treatment accorded the prisoners. Non-Communist lawyers, physicians, and other professional men—unless they were

Jews—had nothing to fear in the way of "coördination." The commandant was uncertain as to just what attitude he ought to take toward these people. They had connections at home and abroad and you never could tell when they might get the administration into a mess. After all, the government must have had its reasons for pensioning Noske and for letting Loebe and Severing run around loose, giving interviews to foreign correspondents. These intellectuals were assigned to easy indoor jobs—a Social-Democratic lawyer had been installed in the office to work on briefs for the Black Shirts, and a well-known writer was acting as bookkeeper for the Mail Department. They were zealous in the performance of their duties and had no special cause for alarm, unless, as I said, they were Jews. Jews, whether Communists, Social-Democrats, or pacifists, were treated with impartial cruelty and isolated like pests.

Apart from the Jews, the hatred of the SS officers was focused upon the Communist intellectuals. They regarded them as the most formidable corruptive element among the German people; they had delivered into the hands of the workers the intellectual weapons for the class struggle and were hopeless material for the National-Socialistic training. Communist intellectuals were "coördinated" with particular ferocity and assigned to the heaviest outdoor tasks, the guards were ordered to keep an eagle eye on them, and they were held responsible for all breaches of camp discipline, no matter who committed them.

There were exceptions to this rule. Some of the SS

officers were especially bitter in their persecution of the *pacifist* intellectuals. "Scum," they called them, and "seditious conspirators." To many of these mercenary types, Germany's "emasculation," as a consequence of the Social-Democratic pacifist "fulfillment" [1] policy, was the worst crime perpetrated by the November criminals. Some of the officers were readier to overlook an RFB-man's possession of an army revolver than the discovery of a copy of *Die Weltbuehne* in a student's library. They sometimes went so far in their admiration of the manly conduct as to show a certain respect for the Communists, who had stood up to their opponents in countless clashes at political meetings and demonstrations, refusing to retreat either before the SA or the Social-Democratic police. One day when a cache of arms seized from the Communists was being hauled into camp, an SS officer, eyeing the weapons, was heard to remark, "Those fellows have guts, at any rate. You've got to hand them that much!" But they laughed the "Reichsjammer" and SPG to scorn—"heroes of the ballot box," they called them.

There was, on the whole, little difference to be noted in the treatment accorded the various political groups by the lower ranks of the Black Shirts. Uneducated, lacking all knowledge of or interest in politics, trained to blind obedience, most of them were fit for nothing but flogging, rifle practice and beer swilling. Their conversation was concerned exclusively with wages, furloughs, saloons, and women. Except when they were

[1] The policy of certain of the German political parties, advocating fulfillment of the terms of the Versailles treaty.

being hounded by the officers they left us in peace during working hours. Many of them were perfectly willing to let us loaf on the job. They were not interested in helping the private contractors—who hired us from the camp at fifty to eighty pfennigs per head—to get rich on the proceeds of our labor.

Yet we were never safe from their brutality. The most fantastic rumors of plans for revolt or assassination sufficed to transform them into wild beasts. In a state of permanent uneasiness as to what was going on in camp and in the minds of the prisoners, and with the need of silencing by renewed demonstrations of courage both their secret misgivings as to their "revolutionary" activity and their fear of its consequences, they responded automatically to every provocative scheme devised by the officers. Schinderknecht—who enjoyed a minimum of authority over them—had only to go storming about the yard in the morning before we were marched off to work, shouting that he had got wind of an escape to be attempted that day, and the guards would be reduced to frenzy for a week. Then they would drive us to work at the points of their rifles, deny us permission to urinate save at a distance not to exceed five paces from the spot where we were working, and forbid all conversation.

The fact that the camp inmates included both Communists and Social-Democrats from the same towns and factories—workers and functionaries who knew and hated each other from of old—formed another obstacle to any understanding between SPG and CPG. There was one Social-Democrat, for instance, who in his

capacity as president of the factory council in a large machine shop in Central Germany had made it his business to drive all Communists from the factory and to throttle every attempt of the personnel toward strikes. He had been branded repeatedly in the Communist press as a strikebreaker and agent of the bosses, and the Communists had never forgotten it. Exchange so much as a word with a scoundrel of that caliber? Not if they knew it!

Still greater was their loathing for an SPG prisoner who had formerly been a high government official, executing the emergency decrees of the Bruening-Papen régime. His Communist fellow townsmen in the camp recognized him the moment the Secret Police brought him in, though he presented a far more proletarian appearance than in the good old days when he had been drawing down a monthly salary of a thousand marks and had cut unemployment relief from ten to six marks a week. Yes, it would have been an easier matter to discuss the past calmly, to join hands in preparing for the future, had it not been for those hated faces which kept conjuring up afresh the bitterness of the last few years.

When a well-known SPG functionary was released the Communists liked to speed him on his way with ironic comment: "One hand washes the other," and "Honor among thieves"—which incensed the Social-Democrats. Hadn't they been languishing in protective custody as long as the Communists? Hadn't they gone through the same "examinations" and "coördinations"? Hadn't the Brown Shirts and the Black Shirts routed them out of their beds and dragged them off with equal

brutality? In many of the smaller towns and villages, where the Reichsbanner had been composed of workers and led by workers, the fight against Hitler had been conducted under Social-Democratic leadership. They had thrashed the Nazis in meeting-hall battles. Their leaders had been arrested with them and were sharing their present lot. Were they to permit the Communists to sling mud at them? Hadn't well-known Communists, as well as Social-Democrats, obtained their release from "protective custody"? Hadn't B. himself, a close associate of Thaelmann, gone free?

The SPG prisoners were right in that respect. Release, as a rule, proved nothing conclusive about the character of the man released, but served only to emphasize the utter confusion prevailing among the Secret Police and in the Prussian ministry of the interior. For months we tried to figure out, on the basis of such releases as were being put through, the general rules that were being applied to the suspension of custody, till we finally reached the conclusion that there were no rules. How else explain the fact that certain well-known Communists were set free at the expiration of eight weeks, while non-party workers and middle-class people were held for eight months?

If, however, there seemed to be no centralized system, we did in time become familiar with the routine of individual cases.

Prisoners who were turned in by the Secret Police might be set free at the end of a few months—provided there was no evidence on which charges of high treason, seditious conspiracy, or breach of the peace could be

lodged against them. Prisoners arrested either by the local SA groups or the local police—the latter under the jurisdiction of the district prefect—found themselves wholly at the mercy of Brown Shirt malice.

Despite Herr Diels' [2] statement that members of the secret political police must be imbued with a proper passion for their calling, the Gestapa remained a bureaucratic organization, which in the course of a few weeks had swelled to such proportions that no official could possibly find his way through the welter of accumulated documents, orders, and counter orders. Attempts at coöperation with the regular police failed. Working side by side, the various departments of the Gestapa knew neither plan nor system. One department would release prisoners who were being frantically sought by another. It was impossible for the officials to follow up every case. If they failed to unearth evidence for court proceedings they crammed the prisoners into the concentration camps for safekeeping; if the camp examinations likewise failed to produce anything concrete, Herr Diels' impassioned manhunters would lose interest in the case. There was richer prey to be stalked. The Gestapa then had to be reminded that Prisoner X had been under protective arrest for so and so many months.

This procedure opened up vast fields of activity to the Nazi lawyers. Having made sure that the case would in no wise endanger their own position, these servants of justice declared themselves ready to take over the prisoner's "defense"—in consideration of a fat fee. The

[2] Diels, at this time chief of the Gestapa.

money of Jewish families did not stink in their pockets, and they reaped rich harvests from the hunger and privations of working women. If there was no one to interest himself in a prisoner he was a man buried alive.

The fate of those arrested by the district prefects or the local Nazi groups was still more uncertain. The prefect was anxious to impress his chiefs in the ministry of the interior as a "strong man"; he did not care to jeopardize his reputation in his district by recommending more releases than did his colleagues in theirs. He had, besides, to secure the consent of the district leader of the Nazi party, who in turn must apply for the sanction of the local group.

This was where the petty bourgeoisie got their chance to exercise executive authority. They felt that the weal and woe of the new commonwealth had been placed in their hands and, brimming with a sense of their responsibilities, they set about their task of judging the proletariat.

They reveled in the intoxication of unaccustomed power. It would not have been the German petty bourgeoisie—that pulpy class which has never been capable of acquiring power, which was steeped in the servility of generations of oppression passively endured—if they had not taken the most merciless and unscrupulous advantage of the "rights" entrusted to them. At last they were in a position to give full vent to every impulse of personal spite and neighborly vindictiveness.

Our company included three Social-Democrats from the same town, who had been in custody since March, though there was not the shadow of a political charge

against them. A had been manager of the workers' co-operative store, B a small innkeeper, C had no distinguishing mark, political or professional. He was one of those old-time Social-Democrats whose political activity had been confined to drinking a few glasses of beer at party meetings for the collection of dues held in B's inn. The other inn of the town, however, belonged to the Nazi groupleader, who had proceeded without a qualm to place his troublesome competitor B under protective arrest. The position of the coöperative-store manager had meantime been filled by another Nazi. All the efforts of the prisoners' families, all petitions to the ministry had shattered against the "No" of the local Nazi group, which also declined to pardon C, the third man, lest the arrests be stripped of their flimsy political character.

The Social-Democrats at camp suffered under the political criticism of the Communists—under the allusions to special privilege, under the suspicion that in their heart of hearts they would prefer a united front with the SS rather than with the Communists—all of which they considered bitterly unjust. They stuck closer than ever to each other. SPG and Reichsbanner workers, who had long since washed their hands of Loebe and Severing, who had really rid themselves of their democratic delusions, were unwilling to break their connections with their former comrades or the party to which they had belonged for years. When a Social-Democrat was assigned to work in the shops he tried to draw his party comrades in after him. The same thing held true of the Communists, though it did not strike me until

later that throughout my time with the old Dyke Squad Number Two there was not a single Social-Democrat among the thirty-five men in the squad.

One rainy day my new outfit sought shelter in the little construction shack. The guard was warming himself at the fire built by the neighboring squad and the pacifist student felt that here was his chance to establish that harmony within the working class which we all wanted, which we all maintained was imperative, and which seemed to recede farther and farther the more it was discussed.

"If I were a worker," he began diplomatically, "I'd be ashamed to give the SS such an impression of the working class."

Silence.

"You've brought things to such a pass that now you've got to let yourselves be bossed around by twenty-year-old squirts."

"That's still the lesser evil, Michaelis," Berger said to the student.

Petersen promptly swallowed the bait. "Yes—and I'd still rather be here than in Moscow."

"That's all we wanted to know," Berger jeered.

The student eyed Petersen reproachfully. "How can you talk like that!"

"You see how it is, my boy," said a Communist, thumping the student's shoulder. "Bruening was the lesser evil, Hindenburg was the lesser evil, Papen and Schleicher were the lesser evil, and now at last they're coming out with the whole truth—Hitler himself is

the lesser evil. The greater evil—the evil of all evils—is the proletarian revolution."

Though they did not like Petersen's comment the other two Social-Democrats remained silent. The student Michaelis tried his luck a second time.

"How do you ever expect to get anywhere if you can't come to terms even here, with the Black Shirts on top of you both?"

"They don't want to come to terms with us," said one of the Social-Democrats bitterly. "We're the arch-enemy of the working class."

"You're the arch-enemy within the working class," Berger corrected him.

The Social-Democrat ignored him. "We're the chief support of the bourgeoisie. We're twin brothers to the fascists, social-fascists. Why form a united front with blackguards like us?"

"Oh, don't start in on that old tripe again!" Michaelis protested.

"That's not old tripe. That's the official Moscow opinion."

"There's just one small point you're overlooking," a Communist interposed. "We've never called the Social-Democrat *workers* social-fascists—only the Severings and the Brauns and the Grescinskys and the Zoergiebels.[8] We were always ready to form a united front with the Social-Democrat *workers*."

"Yes, yes—that's what you say now. Yet you talked like that not only about our leaders but about the whole

[8] High social democratic state officials notable for their efforts to suppress the Communists before Hitler came to power.

party. To you, we functionaries were the little Zoergiebels. But what's the use of discussing all that? I just want to tell you one thing, and you can tell it back to your comrades in Moscow. You may be able to catch the Russian peasants with your lying policies, but not the German workers. You're not interested in any united front—all you want is to finish off the SPG. That's your main object—before Hitler and after Hitler."

"Damned right it is!" Berger said. "We know that as long as the SPG's free to deceive the workers there'll never be any revolution. That's why we've got to fight you."

"Is that so? Then I'd like to know why you keep on bellyaching about a united front—offering us one hand and cracking us in the jaw with the other!"

"Yes—that would suit your leaders very nicely—if we'd just keep our mouths shut and not tell the workers they were being betrayed. They'd like to make a non-aggression pact with us. But they won't fight the fascists with us."

"There's no point in talking to you people—you don't tell the truth. Your whole united-front policy has just one object—to break the SPG's neck. It wasn't the fight against Hitler you cared about most, but the fight against us. You said you wouldn't deal with our party leaders. A united front, yes—but only from below. No negotiations with the top. That was the *Rote Fahne's* daily cry."

"That's a lie! Didn't the CPG Central Committee turn to your leaders as early as July '32, when Papen

threw Braun and Severing out of the government, and propose joining forces in a general strike? And in January '33, when Hitler was made chancellor, didn't the Central Committee call on the SPG then to rally the working class to a common standard?"

"Yes, you're making an awful hullaballoo about those two offers, after you slandered our leaders day in and day out, and dragged our party through the mud. You thought if you just painted their leaders black enough that the SPG workers would come running over to you. But you found you were mistaken."

"Listen to him—gloating because the workers didn't follow us and didn't beat Hitler! You remind me of little Moritz—perfectly willing to get his neck broken and die, as long as his brother catches hell for it!"

"This chatter's enough to drive a man mad!" cried the student in despair. "Can't you admit that both your parties made mistakes? Bury the past. Put your minds on what's to come."

"Listen," said Berger. "We haven't waded through all that much without learning a thing or two. The SPG leaders betrayed the 1918 revolution; they armed the first fascist volunteer corps against the Spartacus League; they killed Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht; their police presidents had our comrades shot down; for fourteen years they fought with the bourgeoisie against us; and they'd have made a pact with Hitler too if Hitler'd been willing. And now they complain that we don't trust them!"

The third SPG worker, who had been listening in silence up to that point, now broke in.

"There's nothing to be gained by shooting your mouths off," he said, and the dispassionateness of his tone contrasted sharply with the heat and violence of the others. "I could give you a list of your own sins that would be just as long. And so we could go on vilifying each other till tomorrow, and when we got through we'd be clutching tighter than ever to our own ideas. You're convinced that Social-Democracy and the whole Second International is counter revolutionary, and must therefore be destroyed. Good. Let's assume you're right. At the same time you realize that these counter revolutionary organizations still have the support of millions of workers—a majority of the factory workers, as far as Germany's concerned. Without these workers—or against them, rather, there can be no revolution. That you know. And you know too that these workers weren't revolutionary. They were strongly influenced by the bourgeoisie—labor aristocrats, you call them. All well and good. But one thing they weren't—fascists. And you could have won them to the fight against the Nazis if you hadn't employed the stupidest tactics conceivable. When you saw that the workers refused to be stirred by your slogans—when even in July 1932 the SPG workers stuck to their old leaders—you might have realized that you'd have to abandon your united-front policy, 'only from below,' and negotiate with the central leadership of the SPG and the trade unions. For that was your only chance—there was no other possible way of reaching the workers. And you certainly had no more time to lose.

"You underrated the strength of the SPG and its

trade unions. You went raging around about their social-fascist leaders, but you couldn't convince the workers in those organizations that you were right, because you couldn't show them who was really for and who against Hitler except by fighting Hitler fascism."

"Oh, it's our fault then that the SPG workers didn't follow our lead?"

"Of course it's your fault," said the Social-Democrat, his tranquillity unimpaired. "Fault, not in the sense of bad will, but of incompetence. Which, in politics, has the same results."

"So you think we should have formed a united front with Severing and Leipart?"

"Even with Severing and Leipart, if that was your only chance of reaching the workers who were your chief concern. The evidence of your weakness lay in the fact that you couldn't get around Severing and Leipart. And a further evidence of your weakness lay in the fact that they could flatly refuse to coöperate with you —that they could treat you like people whom they weren't obliged to take seriously. You can't take liberties like that except with those whose weakness you've gauged."

Berger could stand it no more.

"You sniveling hypocrites!" he shouted. "First you spend years painting us as criminals and ruffians, do everything in your power to malign us to the workers, and then you get a good laugh out of it because they didn't follow us."

"I'm not laughing at the fate of the working class," the Social-Democrat replied. "At its leaders perhaps,

yes—at the miserable cowardice of ours and the stupidity of yours. To laugh at them is the only way to stave off suicide."

His obvious sincerity mollified even the pugnacious Berger for a moment.

"Go to hell!" he muttered.

"And what do you think's going to happen next?" Michaelis asked the Social-Democrat.

"It's happening already. The workers' movement isn't dead, after all. The CPG's working and many of our small groups are working. The work's bound to bring them together, despite all the stumbling-blocks placed in their way by the bureaucrats of both parties."

"Yes, your Linden Street [4] heroes—safe in Prague now—they're doing a lot to help," Berger said. "I got hold of a copy of your *Neuer Vorwaerts*. I saw how they were fighting fascism. When the Nazi dictatorship's overthrown, good old democracy's got to rule in Germany again. No dictatorship of the proletariat, no Soviet Germany. These scoundrels are laying their plans already to betray the revolution again."

"I have no illusions about Wels and Stampfer and Breitscheid," the Social-Democrat replied. "It's not a question with them of betraying the revolution, because they've always been openly opposed to the revolution. It's merely a question of whether or not they'll ever be able to gain such influence again with the working class as to continue in their old rôles."

"That gang's played out," Berger said. "If only because they're incapable of building up an underground

[4] SPG headquarters were located in the Lindenstrasse, Berlin.

party now and heading the revolution with it later, so they can throttle it again as they did in 1918. If Social-Democrats are doing illegal work against Hitler today, it's no longer for the sake of some wishy-washy Second Republic. No proletarian's going to risk his hide a second time for red, black, and mustard.[5] *We're* organizing and leading the underground fight. We'll lead the revolution, too."

"That suits me," said the Social-Democrat gravely.

[5] The colors of the German Republic under the Weimar Coalition were red, black, and gold, derided as red, black, and mustard by its enemies.

CHAPTER IX

THE STUDENT MICHAELIS

"PROTECTIVE arrest" had thrown the student Michaelis overnight among these workers, whose lives and interests were alien to him. Here in the concentration camp, where they communicated with each other only through signs and monosyllables, he felt more than ever a stranger. He was lonely. He could not share their little daily cares. His miseries were of another kind.

Michaelis belonged to the enlightened bourgeois intellectuals of the early postwar period. They were convinced pacifists and abhorred war as barbarism. They believed in the progress of mankind through modern methods of education. They also abhorred dogma and were tolerant of other people's opinions. They spoke appreciatively of the cleanliness of Italian hotels since Mussolini took the helm, and at the same time defended in conversation the new Russia. They demanded a more social distribution of taxes and profits and greater politeness from the police and postoffice employees toward the public. All they knew about the labor movement was party gossip. Every time they read Helmut von Gerlach or Ivan Katz, they spoke of the insane policies of the Communist Party or of the Moscow betrayal of the world revolution.

The young savant Michaelis was a typical representa-

tive of such opinions. At bottom, everything which was not connected with his specialty was for him a matter of second- or third-rate importance. He gladly left to others the problems of public life. He despised "politics." They were "too dirty" for him. When the workers in the camp tried to make it clear to him that their whole life was an element of "politics," he would say, "You people manage to find the class struggle everywhere!"

At first the workers treated him with good-natured banter. With the gentle friendliness of a man who understood that from the loneliness of his soul there was no bridge to the dull masses, he allowed them to call him "doctor," "professor," and "intellectual heavyweight."

Under prison conditions the student's sense of superiority crumbled slowly to pieces. Physical labor caused him the most acute suffering. It was hard for him to lug heavy tree trunks, to keep up with the workers' rhythm in driving piles into the earth, not to lag behind in trench digging. The swamps converted the Olympian into an illiterate ditch digger who turned to the experienced proletarians for advice and help.

In other practical matters, too, Michaelis had to admit the superiority of the workers. He was dependent on their help in the technique of bed building, procuring tobacco, and getting around Schinderknecht's orders. Since camp life consisted of such mundane matters the student, whether he liked or not, was compelled to realize that at least during his imprisonment the interests of the workers were also his and that it was good to follow their advice and example. Good, he said to himself—for

the period of imprisonment. One must howl with the wolves.

That was the beginning. Once he submitted to the leadership of the workers in regard to the technique of camp life he also began to interest himself in their ideas and mental processes. The better he got to know them the more he abandoned his old prejudice that they were stupid, boring, and spiritually dull. He began to admire their dexterity and shrewdness. The undifferentiated mass of workers was dissolved into many individual personalities. They taught him that his fate was not exceptional. In regard to their lack of understanding, of their inability to consider life from a "higher plane," he gave up his *Weltschmerz,* so dear to the heart of the German intellectual.

With me he often talked about things which he did not dare to discuss with the others for fear they would make fun of him. He said that with me, at least, one could talk as to a "normal person." I was not as "fanatical" as Berger and most other Communists. The opinions which he expressed in conversations with me I have put down as literally as possible in the following pages of this chapter.

Five months today—and still no information as to why I was arrested, nor any prospect of release. History's playing me a trick; it is beating me with my own argument—freedom from party affiliations. If the Communists had triumphed I should probably have been thrown into prison too—with as much justice or injustice. Both sides suspect me because I belong to neither.

The other prisoners know at least why they're in prison. They knew in advance what lay in store for them if their opponents should win. My situation is like that of the small neutral countries in war time, that are buffeted by their neighbors till they make up their minds to join one side or the other. There's apparently no longer such a thing as neutrality in civil war either.

And yet—better to sit here innocent than to have any part in these inhuman proceedings. One section of humanity kills another, deprives it of freedom, tortures it—and they find arguments to prove that they're "in the right" and are acting "for the right." Gruesome—how these people can produce their thinkers and poets overnight to justify any atrocity.

The old questionings about the meaning of life seem to be gaining mastery over me once more. Idiotic—to start traveling through that vicious circle again. Else wrote me that her sister had died and that, once I'm free, we can live together. What that prospect would have meant to me a short six months ago!—study, love, congenial friends, a world opening before me. Now what? Science and thought muzzled—religion profaned by the worst of the bullies of power, the army chaplain—philosophy in the service of militarism—and the education of the young in the hands of the soldiery. What's waiting for me out there, when I'm "free"? The whole of Germany one huge concentration camp, destructive of mind and conscience, and a thousand times more hopeless than this camp because of the presence of "converted" opponents and the enthusiasm of

the poor in spirit. Go abroad? Where? Are there any oases of liberty left? The whole world is full of violence and tyranny.

What is it that still binds me to life—me and others like me who haven't sold themselves?

Had a talk with F. It started with a discussion of Remarque. He conceded the literary quality of the book, but maintained that its content was a complete flop; it failed to point the way to a new life. He contends that to show people the crime and senselessness of war isn't enough to prevent new wars, and called me an idealist—which, to his mind, is synonymous with a Utopian, a star gazer, and a potential agent of the bourgeoisie. I told him that if what he said were true he was pronouncing sentence of death on the human mind, on reason, on philosophy—on everything, in brief, which makes man human and differentiates him from the beast. But he's one of those Communists who answers every argument with a sacred citation. The prevailing ideas of any epoch, he says, have always been merely the ideas of the ruling class, all philosophy class philosophy, all science class science. When I objected that Marxism was a class science too in that case, he assented proudly. Yes, but the proletariat was the rising class, and therefore its science was the most progressive of our times. I replied that the proletariat had risen in one country so far, and had suffered defeat after defeat in the others. Nor could I see wherein the scientific theories practiced in that one country had proven themselves so vastly superior. But he had only contempt

for my "idealistic" notion that the task of science was the investigation of those truths which were pure truths—true for all classes of society.

The camp is an inexhaustible mine for a psychologist. You can study the real worker here, not the colorless ideal figure of the "proletarian" novels.

Last Friday they brought in the owner of a brick factory, arrested ostensibly for paying his workers less than the tariff wage. Some of the prisoners whose homes are in the neighborhood know the man, and his reputation as a notorious cutthroat and blood sucker is apparently well earned. The SS officers egged the prisoners on to beat up the "capitalist" and some of the workers promptly fell for their provocation. They stripped the man of his good suit and proceeded to play their crude tricks on him in the presence of the Black Shirts. Regardless of why this man was arrested (he himself says that his wife is having an affair with the local Nazi groupleader and they both want to be rid of him for a while), here in camp he's a prisoner like everyone else, and the "class struggle" between him and the workers is merely the outcome of the cheap piece of demagogy of the SS officers in charge. How quick the workers are to respond to provocation!

There's no doubt that the working class is more fervently interested in social progress than any other. They were the sole force which, for a time at least, retarded the advance of Hitlerism. Granted. But how disheartening to note the disruption within their ranks! There

seems to be no lessening of the gulf between the two parties. The united front seems farther from realization today than in pre-fascist days. It's difficult to reconcile all this with any faith in the "historic rôle" of the working class.

F. would undoubtedly break in at this point with the argument of "class consciousness." But isn't the Social-Democratic worker class conscious too? He's organized, he's aware of the significance of the workers' party and of trade unions. Which class consciousness is the right one? And how can one and the same class produce a true and a false class consciousness? How is all this compatible with historic materialism?

What is man? Take the case of the SS leader, Kall. He's traveled literally all over the world, he fought in the war, he speaks five or six languages. Now he sits here in camp, steals sausages—intended for the guards under his command—from the kitchen, revels in the platitudes of the *Angriff*, and has the prisoners address him as sergeant, although he is only a corporal. The sum of his life's experience has prepared him for nothing better than contentment with the rôle of a petty officer who embezzles camp funds and engages in the most infamous occupation a man can have—the destruction of opponents delivered defenseless into his hands. How can he so forget, so dishonor his entire past? Can it really be for the sake of the few marks he receives from the camp? Appalling as it seems, I can find no other explanation.

The sex question came up while we were at work yesterday. The little machinist started it when he blurted out in his fresh fashion, "I don't know—it doesn't stand up any more." Everyone declared he'd had the same experience, and it's an undeniable fact that the sex problem has never presented itself here in any serious form. Amazing, after all I've read of prison psychoses. The reasons were debated at length; and the workers, being practical-minded, sought and were satisfied with the most obvious of explanations. They attributed the state of affairs to the wretched food and the hard labor. They argued whether or not saltpeter was mixed with the food —again a materialistic approach. It never occurred to any of them that the heavy spiritual burden laid upon us might play an important, if not a determining, rôle in the situation.

The workers are thoroughly materialistic, their minds centered wholly on the practical and the realistic. They listen to psychological discussions in bewildered silence—when they don't simply burst into laughter.

They attend camp services in order to get tobacco. Not that they're venal or corrupt—not at all. They kid the pastors who think they can be lured on with tobacco. But when I tell them that such conduct isn't worthy of the honor of a freethinker they scoff at my "sensitive soul." "Let the parsons go ahead and buy tobacco for us," they tell me, laughing. "Who cares?"

Admirable—the equanimity of the workers under months of imprisonment. Never in all this time have I heard them utter a word of complaint. When one or an-

other of them is released he packs his cardboard box deliberately and with outward composure, never giving vent to extravagant expressions of joy.

"You might stop by at my house and give them my greetings." That's the usual formula when a worker entrusts a homegoing comrade with a message. They're extremely shy when it comes to their personal affairs. A few who find writing difficult have asked me to write their monthly letters for them. They dictate some such note as the following:

Dear Wife: I am well and hope you are the same. Did you get the relief money this month? Have father send a petition to the relief board to pay the back rent. I got the package with the two shirts and the tobacco. August Heckmann was released last week. Think it will be my turn soon. That's all for today. Greet the children.—With greetings to you . . .

I was surprised by the attitude of the married workers toward their wives. They're proud of their women and like to show me family photographs, especially when there are small children. They speak more tenderly of their little daughters than they do of their boys, and they're as practical and materialistic in their personal lives as elsewhere. Their pride, for example, will be expressed in incidents like the following.

A couple of prisoners were washing their dirty shirts in the cold water of the spring.

"You'll never be able to get them clean that way," called another one, passing by. "Why don't you send them home?"

"Yeah? And what about the postage?" one of the

washers retorted. "My wife gets six marks relief a week."

"Well," the other replied, "mine doesn't get more than that, either. But she sends me a package of clean linen and two packs of cigarettes every month."

On another occasion a prisoner was mending a torn woolen jacket. "That's something I don't have to do," his neighbor remarked. "Mother does it for me at home."

There's undoubtedly an element of middle-class smugness in their pride; yet I should say it is chiefly expressive of the feeling: "I can count on my wife; she'll manage even if I can't help her."

What's been a burning question to me during the last few years—the relationship, that is, between society and the individual—doesn't exist for the worker. He feels himself to be part of a vast multitude, and it never occurs to him that the situation may present problems of far greater importance to the intellectual than the matter of his daily bread. The worker sees his strength multiplied many times over. To him, the class is merely the worker raised to the millionth power. What possible conflict can there be here? The more highly developed the individual the more he has to contribute to the common cause. The thing that's so essential to me—my personality, my individuality—is of secondary importance to them. Well enough—if it can be turned to account—otherwise, an ornament, a caprice.

They don't understand when I tell them that thousands of intellectuals have hesitated to join them lest they be called on to sacrifice everything which, for them, makes life worth living: science, art, literature, freedom

of thought, a certain standard of living. The uniformity, the monotony, the grayness of mass life terrifies us. To which they reply that that's the same old twaddle; there's nothing in it but the petit bourgeois' lack of imagination, his belief that the existing world is the only one possible and will last forever, and his fear of identifying himself with the revolutionary movement. No worker would bother his head about what I read, whether or not I went to theaters and concerts, what I studied—that is my own business. The one essential is that I should be a loyal comrade, using my knowledge and ability not for myself alone but for the cause of the workers as well.

When I protest that they recognize no freedom of thought or opinion, that they force everyone, for example, to accept dialectical materialism as the only true philosophy, they reply that practice proves the truth of a theory and that the practical conduct of the class struggle will convince me that dialectical materialism is the only effective philosophy in the war of the classes for freedom. They don't see that its efficacy in a class struggle still constitutes no argument for the truth of a theory. All right, all right, they say, Schopenhauer or Nietzsche may be right on the moon. But here on earth Marx and Lenin are right. And besides, they ask, what am I afraid of? I can buy my blue silk neckties and wear my pajamas in peace. Nobody's going to criticize my personal taste—they're no petty bourgeois moralists. To provoke them, I asked, "And how about silk shirts?" There was a visible struggle between their magnanimity toward me and their proletarian feelings. They were

thinking, as I wanted them to, of Brolat.[1] Which tickled me greatly.

For the rest, I've got to admit that never have I encountered so steadfast a world outlook nor so keen an interest in theory as among these workers. The average university student can't compare with them. They ask me thousands of questions—almost all of them intelligent and many so subtle that I have difficulty in answering them. The Communists are far superior to the Social-Democrats in philosophy, economics, and politics. But the Social-Democrats are better acquainted with the history of the workers' movement, particularly that of the past century.

Mother writes proudly that Herrmann is a member of the Hitler youth now, and would like nothing better than to wear his uniform day and night. Hopeless. Four of her relatives fell in the war, her only brother among them. And now she's delighted because her youngest is being made ready for the slaughter too. She adds the usual lamentations—how could *I*, etc. When I view the situation unsentimentally I realize that the ties which bound me to my family no longer exist. I find my relatives sickening—the whole pack of them. Impoverished, but proud of their past; reactionary, yet content for fourteen years to be pensioners of the "Jewish Republic"; resentful of the rich, yet flattered when a rich man deigns to talk to them; and seething with hatred against

[1] Fritz Brolat was a Social-Democratic trade-union leader who became a member of the Berlin municipal government. As such he placed city orders with a clothing firm which rewarded him for the contracts with expensive silk shirts and other marks of esteem.

the "Reds" who want to take from them the last thing which differentiates them from the proletariat—their culture. Now they're all sniffing the morning breeze. Fresh life's beginning to stir on the carrion pit of history, but it's the life of the carrion pit. I feel no hesitation in giving my whole-hearted support to the cause of the workers as against the putrescent class from which I come.

I wonder if Becker is still alive. I shall certainly have to look him up after I'm released. I've been excessively stupid. How we condescended to him as a good fellow and a friend of the people! And how calmly he took our gibes! Making the rounds Saturday after Saturday with his cheap little pamphlets, his copies of the *Fanfare* and *Rote Hilfe,* and the rest of them. And when we did buy them we made it so plain that it was just as a favor to him. I don't believe I once read the things. I never even bothered to wonder what it was that prompted a busy, hard-working man like Becker to sacrifice his time to work of that sort. Just a whim, we thought, and that settled the matter for us.

We lived in different worlds. When he once made the statement that the working class was not only the most progressive in our social system, but the farthest advanced as well, we laughed him to scorn. By what right? What did we know of the workers? Less than we knew of the moon. Of course my sympathy was with him in their struggle for better living conditions. My sympathy! But that was all. Let them worry about their cause themselves. I didn't understand that their cause was the cause

of humanity, of every force for progress. Fascism has hurled me out of my little world into the larger one. I must tell Becker that I've learned many things.

I think the workers like me. They can tell whether a man's honest or not. . . .

I was called before Stormleader Nolte today.

"There's no further charge against you, Herr Michaelis," he said. "You're to be released tomorrow. I hope that for the future you'll give your unqualified support to our Leader, Adolf Hitler."

No *further* charge against me?

There was no charge against me when I was arrested, and that was my crime. In the meantime I had nine months' National Socialist education and lived together with workers. There will be plenty of charges against me from now on, Herr Nolte.

CHAPTER X

WE VOTE FOR HITLER

OUR isolation from the outer world and our hunger for news were aggravated by the ban on visits and letters. We rang the changes on our one never-failing topic of conversation—"release." "Anything new?" was the first question put by the work squads on their return to camp in the evening, and in reply the prisoners of the indoor squads would regale us with the latest rumors. One man had picked up a tidbit in the office, another had heard a conversation between two officers, a third had positive information that the camp was soon to be broken up and its inmates removed to Dachau. We regarded any prospect of transfer with alarm, for all prisoners under "protective arrest," even though they had spent months in one or more camps, were forced to go through another hell of "coördination" and "examination" every time they were admitted to a new camp, each administration hoping to flog new confessions out of them.

Apart from the latrine rumors supplied by the indoor squads our chief source of information was the *Hubertshof Observer*, ten free copies of which were delivered to camp daily to furnish us with the official government news. A copy was allotted to each company to be shared by over a hundred prisoners.

We were adepts now in detecting the bald truth be-

hind the bombastic declamations of the Nazi press. This organ of the ministry of propaganda published a series of articles about our camp describing it as a place which prisoners left with the utmost reluctance and tears in their eyes.

"Extra! Extra!" the news vendors started shouting one October evening. It must be an event of prodigious importance that would bring the *Hubertshof Observer* out with an extra edition. "Germany Withdraws from the League of Nations! The Leader Speaks to His People Tonight!"

The Black Shirts were jubilant. "Things'll start happening now!" The administration issued orders to have the Leader's speech broadcast throughout the camp through loudspeakers. Everyone, without exception, was to listen in.

Darkness had fallen when Schinderknecht blew the whistle which summoned us to the camp courtyard. The searchlights had been set up and the guard doubled. The Black Shirts, arrayed in their best uniforms, boots gleaming, revolvers at their belts, were drawn up on one side of the yard. As a hysterical roar in an Austrian dialect broke from the loudspeaker they burst into rapturous shouts of "Heil Hitler!" Massed darkly on the other side of the yard stood the workers, hatless, ragged, motionless. Impossible to fathom their thoughts. Impossible, that is, for the other side. But a wild joy thrilled that multitude—the German bourgeoisie had been driven a long step forward on the road to catastrophe. Not with impunity had they surrendered the power to

an adventurer. Nazi Germany would have to pay for its political isolation.

November 12 had been set as the date on which new deputies were to be elected to the Reichstag and a vote of confidence taken by the German people in the foreign policy of the Hitler government. The opinion prevailed in camp that as prisoners under "protective arrest" we would be denied the right to vote. We gave no serious thought to our own part in the elections. It was not until November 10 that we learned from an SS-man in the Administration Building that several hundred ballots had been received for the prisoners. That same evening the commandant made a political speech—the first and last I ever heard at camp.

He tried sweetness and light. "I know," he said, "that most of you are decent fellows who have fought honestly for a better Germany. But you've been the victims of irresponsible elements, Jews and Marxians. The minute the fat was in the fire those cowards who led you astray made off as fast as their legs could carry them; and now, being safely abroad, they combine to vomit their venom over our Fatherland and our Leader. And it's you who have to pay for their crimes. You can't run off to Paris or Prague or Moscow like those gentlemen who are always provided with foreign visas and well-stuffed wallets. Your families are in need. You've been sold out and betrayed. Now the National-Socialist government is giving you the chance to repudiate these criminals and find your way back to our people. Acknowledge National-Socialist Germany, acknowledge Adolf Hit-

ler, the worker. Then he will acknowledge you too, and clear the way for you to a new existence."

He climbed off the chair, certain of the effect he had produced. Some of the stoolpigeons ventured a faint "Bravo!" That was all. A complete flop. The painful stillness was broken by the infuriated Zaskowsky, who jumped up on a table and started shouting at us, "Our commandant's speech evidently doesn't suit you. That proves you're not fit to be treated as Germans. But if you won't listen you'll be made to feel. Your ballots will be very closely inspected next Sunday. I needn't say more than that. And if any of you think you can go right on stirring up trouble here in camp you'll find yourself sadly mistaken. Go to bed!"

Back in our sleeping quarters we grinned at each other.

"What the one built up with his head," remarked Schultz, "the other tore down with his ass." This expressed the general feeling. We were in excellent spirits that evening.

We hadn't much time left for discussion of our tactics, and the elections formed the sole topic of conversation the following day. It soon became apparent that two opposing views were taking shape. Excellent political arguments could be found for each, yet they remained irreconcilable.

On the evening of November 11, trusted representatives of the various companies met in the latrine in a final attempt to secure united action.

Comrade Winter of Company Two, former section organizer and known as a loyal Party member, opened the discussion. He spoke calmly and in detail, as though

he were presiding at a legal unit meeting. He had not forgotten his Party jargon either.

"Comrades, we must consider the question: What is the aim of the government and the Secret Police in granting us the franchise? My answer to this question is: They want to test the morale of the prisoners. They know nothing of the real situation here—any more than they know what the workers or the peasants or the urban petty bourgeoisie really think. For them this election is not merely a demonstration for the benefit of foreign countries, but a political barometer in this country. This brings me to the second question: What can we do to frustrate the purpose of the elections here in camp? Comrades, it is obvious that we can hardly hope to bring out a hundred per cent negative vote. Some of the prisoners will be afraid to vote *No* under the very eyes of the Black Shirts. The political neutrals, some of the Social-Democrats, some of our own comrades even, will vote *Yes*, with the result that the Nazis will succeed in getting some idea of the camp's political make-up and will be able at the same time to locate the focal points of resistance in the various companies. To prevent this I propose that we pass the word along to all our comrades to vote *Yes*. Comrades! Is this a correct slogan? Comrades, it is a correct slogan. When people read in the newspapers that we in the concentration camps have voted for the government they will say to themselves that this whole election is nothing but a farce. For what reasonable person will believe that we could possibly be in favor of a government which keeps us imprisoned illegally, tortures us, and murders us? I am therefore in

favor of voting *Yes* in order to expose this election both in Germany and abroad as a fake election, and in order to deprive the Secret Police of any insight into the political line-up among us at camp."

"Comrades!" Kuleke, the fat cabinetmaker of Company Two, took the floor. "I object to Comrade Winter's proposal, which to my mind constitutes a downright betrayal of the Party and the proletariat. What will our comrades here in camp think if we suddenly approach them—since we haven't the time for a detailed explanation of our tactics—and tell them to vote for Hitler? Will they understand? No, they will not understand. They will interpret our course as a capitulation. Many of them will say, 'If our functionaries have reached the point where they're eating out of the Nazis' hands, why should we go on fighting?' Besides, comrades, how can we adopt so dangerous a tactical plan without the consent of the Party? We neglected to get our instructions in time. It's too late for that now. But for that very reason we're bound to hew to the old line. I propose that we instruct our comrades to come out tomorrow with a solid vote of *No*."

Fritz was the next speaker.

"Comrades," he said, "we've got to face facts. As Comrade Winter has already explained, any number of the prisoners, for any number of reasons, will turn in an affirmative vote. They'll be prompted by the fear of marked ballots, by the fear of aggravated conditions here in camp, by the hope of a speedier release. We know this and there's nothing we can do to help it. We're powerless to secure a unanimous negative vote. We *can*, on the

other hand, secure an almost hundred per cent affirmative vote. And it's my opinion that all Comrade Winter's arguments to that end are absolutely conclusive. The Party will understand that, in view of our situation, there was nothing else we could do. And as to Comrade Kuleke's statement regarding a change in tactics, I can only say that one of the fundamental laws of tactics requires that they should be changed the moment new conditions make it necessary."

Another comrade, who was a stranger to me, backed the stand taken by Winter and Fritz. "There's still another point we have to consider. Hitler has withdrawn from the League of Nations, and is now asking the people to approve his decision. The Party, too, has always looked upon the League of Nations as an alliance of the victorious imperialistic governments, and its program of liberation, both social and national, calls for fight against both Versailles and Geneva. It's my opinion, therefore, that we will not be placing ourselves in opposition to the Party if we vote for Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations."

"There you have it," cried the cabinetmaker so vehemently that our lookout at the latrine door motioned a warning. "Your defeatist tactics are beginning to bear fruit already. We've got to the point where functionaries are suggesting that the Party support Hitler's foreign policy. Fine tactics! So you think, because both the Party program and Hitler's program call for secession from the League of Nations, that it's one and the same thing! It makes no difference to you whether

it's Hitler's Germany or a proletarian Germany that withdraws from the League of Nations! Haven't you got it through your head yet that Hitler is the agent of German imperialism and that the German bourgeoisie expect him to lead them back along the same old path? The Communist Party must wage relentless war against every measure of policy, internal or foreign, adopted by the Nazi government, and must show the working masses what the outcome is for them—hunger, terror, and more wholesale massacres."

"Yes, comrades." Winter took the floor again. "We're all agreed with Comrade Kuleke on that point. It's self-evident that under no circumstances can we lend our support to Hitler's policies, and I must confess that I'm beginning to feel misgivings myself as to whether our instructions may not cause considerable confusion among the less experienced of our comrades. Therefore I propose that we start at once on a systematic campaign here in camp for the purpose of clarifying the situation. If each of you will take aside ten comrades in his own company and explain to them the significance of our tactics, I'm sure that by ten tomorrow morning we will have worked our way through the entire camp."

"And I repeat," returned the cabinetmaker in a voice whose agitation he could barely control, "that I shall never lend myself to the furtherance of such policies without explicit instructions from the Party. What you're doing is inexcusable. Every comrade who doesn't know his own mind, every coward, everyone who wants to follow the line of least resistance, will take shelter be-

hind these instructions of yours to vote *Yes*. And to plenty of them this first vote for Hitler—though you label it tactics a hundred times over—will be a starting point, so that next time they'll vote *Yes* without any tactics. Instead of keeping them in the Party and strengthening their class consciousness you're driving them into the camp of the fascists. Those of you who back the affirmative vote are playing the lowest conceivable form of politics. And the Party will call you to account for it."

I too spoke in favor of the negative vote, but it was impossible to arrive at any agreement. Each comrade would have to decide for himself how he ought to vote. We separated with heavy hearts. This was the first time we had failed to see eye to eye in a matter of grave political importance.

Sunday morning arrived. Schinderknecht was in a genial mood. No boot inspection, no spoon inspection, no bowl inspection. He ushered us into the dining room at eight and left us there undisturbed till ten. During these two hours the controversy of the previous day was renewed on a wider scale among the prisoners. Those in favor of the affirmative vote gained ground rapidly. One latrine rumor followed another. It was said that a tin container had been prepared, just large enough to hold the ballot envelopes. With this container inside the ballot box it would be possible to determine how each of us had voted. The Black Shirts had only to compare the sequence of our voting cards as we handed them in

with the sequence of the ballots inside the container.[1] Others insisted that the envelopes would be marked. Besides, they said, the Black Shirts would make arbitrary tests, simply taking your envelope from your hand if they felt like it and inspecting the ballot. Zaskowsky's threat was quoted on all sides. In the midst of the confusion Fritz suddenly came up to me.

"Have you heard? The Party's issued instructions to vote *Yes*."

"Where did you get that from?"

"One of the churchgoers brought the information back with him."

"Point him out to me."

"I don't know myself who it was."

"Who told you?"

"Herbiger of Company Three."

"He would. It's just a dirty scheme they've cooked up here in the administration. Nothing but a swindle."

The news spread like wildfire and, with spies everywhere on the alert, any attempt to counteract this rumor was extremely difficult.

From ten to three in the afternoon we stood in a line outside the Administration Building, which was used as the polling place and presided over by the election committee—one stormleader and two troopleaders—who handed us our voting cards and ballots. We voted by

[1] With a container of the proper size fitted into the ballot box, the ballots, each in its envelope, fall on top of one another in a neat pile. At the same time the voting cards—a form of credential necessary in Germany when a man votes outside his own district—are handed in and these are also piled up on top of one another. In this way, if both ballots and cards are counted in sequence, the ballot can be checked against the name on each card and its authorship ascertained.

companies and in alphabetical order. After marking our ballots at a table placed in plain view in a corner, we turned them over to the stormleader sitting behind the ballot box. He dropped them into the box while one of the troopleaders crossed our names off the list.

The results were announced shortly before bedtime. The vast majority had voted in the affirmative, twenty-two per cent had turned in blank ballots, thirteen per cent had voted *No.* The camp administration seemed very well satisfied. They had probably expected something far worse. Their good humor, incidentally, lasted only until Monday morning, at which time the results that began coming in from other camps were found to be far more favorable to the government than our own, the sum total of the negative votes and the blank ballots amounting to not more than between ten and fifteen per cent.

Whether the Black Shirts at Dachau, Papenburg, Brandenburg, Sonnenburg, Oranienburg, Torgau, and so on were better mental arithmeticians than those at Hubertshof, whether the "secret" balloting had been conducted still more "secretly" there than with us, whether the comrades in the other camps had reached an agreement as to how they should vote, we did not know. All we knew was what the commandant told us—that he was going to adopt "altogether different measures" and God help those who had dared defy the government right here in camp.

For the next few days the atmosphere was charged. Spies denounced comrades for having voted *No* and for having influenced others to do the same. There was a

great deal of flogging. The coop was crowded. Schinderknecht, in his stupidity, finally let the cat out of the bag. What had particularly enraged the administration were the following lines on some of the ballots:

CPG only!
RFB lives!

CHAPTER XI

GOERING'S AMNESTY

A WEEK after the elections the *Hubertshofer Beobachter* carried the report that, in recognition of the excellent spirit displayed in the balloting, the government would release a large number of political prisoners. The Leader had promised an amnesty. For the next few weeks we could talk of nothing but this "act of grace," as it was called in the press. Most of the prisoners regarded the whole affair as another Nazi swindle; yet not one of them but cherished a faint hope that there might be something in it.

All sorts of rumors ran like wildfire through the camp. The Secret Police of Berlin, it was said, had asked for information as to the number of Berliners in camp and the record of each one's behavior. The Prussian prefects had been instructed to prepare lists of the prisoners who came from their districts and to send these lists to the ministry of the interior. For the time, the only tangible outcome of the announcement was that the administration of our camp suspended all releases. It did not want to run short of material. On the ground that the Secret Police intended to concern themselves with collective releases only in order to impress upon the prisoners the significance of the event, all individual releases were indefinitely postponed.

We read in the *Hubertshof Observer* that it was Goering, the Prussian Premier, with whom the idea of amnesty had originated. "Lametta Hermann" [1] the resplendent, foe of vivisection and the Jewish method of slaughtering cattle, felt that the time had come to extend his love of animals to his prisoners in the concentration camps.

Toward the end of November the camp administration took stock. A general inspection was called, and as each prisoner stepped forward in answer to his name he was questioned as to the date and reason of his arrest. It transpired in the process that the names of prisoners who had been transferred to other camps months before were still being carried on the rolls, that newly admitted prisoners had not been registered, that August Müller was serving the three-year prison term to which Karl Müller had been sentenced, and that several of the names could no longer be identified at all, since their bearers had mysteriously vanished.

Many of the prisoners were at a loss as to how to reply to the roll-calling officer's demand for the reason of their arrest. Whereupon he would pretend great indignation.

"What? You don't know what you were arrested for? Then you haven't been here long enough. We'll give you time to find out. Next!"

Those who followed learned to reply that they had been taken into protective custody because they were Communists, Social-Democrats, pacifists, or Jews. Those unfortunates who could give no such plausible reason for

[1] Literally, Tinsel Hermann, a derisive nickname prompted by Goering's extensive wardrobe of multicolored uniforms.

their enmity to the state invented political crimes to justify their presence in camp. A favorite self-accusation was one's failure to salute the swastika flag. The slander of Hugenberg [2] also recurred at intervals. Those unable to hit upon any idea at all were set down as impenitents, barred as a matter of course from any share in the mercy of the Third Reich.

The inventory, which dragged along over a period of several days, was followed by weeks of inaction. It was during that interval that a group of foreign journalists visited the camp. Word of the impending visit was received on the afternoon preceding it, and two hundred prisoners were assigned to Schinderknecht to put the camp into proper order. The latrines were emptied and sprinkled with lime. Thirty prisoners crawled on their knees about the courtyard, plucking out all the little blades of grass. The wet walls of the sleeping quarters were rubbed dry and the windows cleaned till even the opaque panes of the former wine cellar admitted a mild gleam of light. Our beds were provided with fresh sheets for the first time in four months and all the counterpanes were gathered up and spread over the pallets of Company One—the parade company which was always put on display for inspections. At evening roll call the

[2] Hugenberg, leader of the German Nationals, enemy of the National Socialists, and a well-known reactionary, was a member of the first Hitler cabinet and head of various important ministries. He was later forced out, but while he was still with the government the Nazis used his presence among them as a pretext for their inability to do anything for the workers, peasants, and middle classes. Hugenberg, they said, a friend of big industry and himself a millionaire, was a stumbling-block in the path of their good intentions. An affront to Hugenberg, therefore, was a lesser offense than one directed against a National Socialist; yet being directed against a member of the government, it was sufficiently heinous to explain an arrest.

stormleader alluded to the importance of the next day's visit as a means of suppressing the atrocity lies abroad.

A number of the work squads were kept at camp the following day, ours among them. We had to wash the guard rooms, scrub the steps, polish the motor cars, clean up the shops. We learned from the troopers that the foreign journalists would be accompanied by a high official of the Secret Police, Diels himself in all likelihood. At noon we smelled the delicious odor of broiling meat, but it came from the SS cauldron. At about four two huge Mercedes-Benz automobiles drove into the courtyard. The commandant rushed out of the Administration Building to welcome the gentlemen. He personally acted as their guide. The journalists inspected Company One's quarters, cast a glance into the dining room where we were all lined up, and nodded approval of the spick and span kitchen and the fat SS cooks who for this special occasion put on white aprons for the first time. The commandant explained that the government was trying with true Prussian simplicity, economy, and cleanliness to undo the spiritual harm worked upon the people by fourteen years of Marxian agitation. The camp, he said, was not a penal but an educational institution for his countrymen who had been led astray. One of the correspondents asked for permission to interview the prisoners.

"By all means," the commandant hastened to reply. "Fröben," he added to the adjutant standing beside him. "Get Fröben." Fröben was a prisoner who knew foreign languages; but he was a stoolpigeon.

The commandant introduced him to the journalist.

"This man," he said, "is a prisoner himself and will act as interpreter, so that you'll be sure to get the prisoners' exact meaning."

The journalist approached an elderly prisoner. "Why were you arrested?"

"I was a Communist."

Discreetly the commandant and the rest of the officers withdrew a few paces.

"He was a Communist," translated the stoolpigeon.

"Was the Communist Party illegal at that time?" asked the journalist.

"Is the Communist Party illegal at this time?" translated the stoolpigeon.

"You misunderstood my question," remarked the journalist pleasantly in fluent German. "I asked the gentleman whether the Communist Party was illegal at the time he belonged to it."

The stoolpigeon stammered an apology.

"No," said the prisoner.

"Were you guilty of any other political offense?" The journalist addressed the prisoner in German.

"No."

"Then you're here simply because you belonged to a party which opposed the party now in power?"

The prisoner remained silent.

"Have you any complaint to make of the treatment you receive?"

"No."

"Do you know of cases where prisoners under protective arrest have been subjected to corporal punishment?"

"I know nothing."

"Are you telling the truth?" asked the journalist.

"Don't ask such stupid questions," murmured the prisoner.

The journalist was taken aback for a moment, but promptly recovered his equanimity. "That's all I want to know," he said courteously. "Thank you very much."

He rejoined the group which was listening to the commandant hold forth.

"Are you satisfied with the interview?" the commandant asked.

"Thanks very much, yes. May I ask whether you keep members of former opposing parties here, even though there's no specific charge against them?"

"No. If we do have any such cases they represent particularly active and dangerous elements who, we must assume, would continue their subversive activity even under the National-Socialist régime."

"And how long do you keep such prisoners?"

"Until we're convinced that under our influence their sentiments have changed."

"And how do you determine that such a change has taken place?"

"Oh, one can't mistake the evidence. We watch each prisoner's behavior—how he conducts himself at work, whether he complies with camp regulations willingly, what society he seeks, and so on."

The journalist walked up to a prisoner, and asked in German:

"How old are you?"

"Eighteen."

"What is your trade?"

"I'm a farm hand."

"What were you arrested for?"

"I chased the landowner's son out of the house."

"How do you mean? You chased him out of his own house?"

"No. Out of ours."

"What was he doing in your house?"

"We live in tenants' quarters."

"What's that?"

"The house belongs to the estate. We're allowed to live there as long as we work on the estate."

"I don't understand. What has that to do with your arrest?"

"He was one of the SA."

"And you?"

"I didn't belong to any political organization."

"Was your family active in politics?"

"My father."

"In what party?"

"He was with the Steel Helmets."

The journalist turned to the commandant. "How do you explain this case, sir?" he asked.

"Your name?" the commandant barked at the prisoner.

"Kalmeit."

"Polack?"

"No."

"And you're trying to tell us that you're here simply because of a personal quarrel with a Storm Trooper?"

"No," stammered the lad. "He was a stormleader."

The commandant turned to the adjutant. "Documents in the case of Prisoner Kalmeit, please."

A painful silence ensued. Kalmeit stood like a tree, his broad peasant face white and sweaty. He knew as well as any of us what he was in for, once the journalists were gone. The troopleader whom the adjutant had sent to the Administration Building returned empty-handed.

"I'm sorry," the commandant explained to the journalist. "The documents haven't been sent on to us yet. The prefect of his district still has them."

"How long has Herr Kalmeit been in camp?" inquired the journalist.

"How long have you been here?" asked the commandant.

"This is the nineteenth week," the boy said.

"About four months," the commandant replied.

"Would it be possible for me to see the record you keep of the prisoners' conduct?"

The commandant's affable countenance turned several shades more official. "Very sorry—material of that kind is strictly confidential." His mood had chilled. "The gentlemen," he continued, his tone perceptibly cooler, "have seen all the essentials. We have nothing to conceal. I am sure I can rely on the strict accuracy of any reports to appear in your esteemed newspapers."

The journalists left. They had been shown neither the regular coop nor the standing coops; they knew nothing of the "coördination" ceremonies in the Police Department; they could hardly suspect that the moment the camp gate had been closed behind them Kalmeit would be thrashed with the blackjack by the commandant him-

self and locked up in the standing coop; they had a dim notion that the records kept by the camp administration didn't wholly conform with the principles of Prussian order and exactitude. All that they knew with any certainty was that, should their "esteemed newspapers" abroad print a single word in criticism of the educational institutions of the Third Reich, they would be promptly banned from Germany.

The *Hubertshofer Beobachter* reported that the amnesty would be extended to cover five thousand prisoners under protective arrest and that Premier Goering had expressed a desire to have the investigation speeded up so that the men released might be able to spend the Christmas holidays in the bosom of their families.

We also read that in other camps the amnesty was already being put into effect. Our administration remained inactive. The nearer Christmas approached the fainter grew our hopes.

Unrest spread through the camp. Many of the prisoners had been separated from their families since March and April, with no news as to their welfare, as to how they were struggling through the winter, as to whether they had the most necessary articles of food. The weather had been good until November; then a bitter cold set in. It was still dark when we set out to work in the morning and we were frozen stiff. We had no coats, our shabby clothes had been reduced in the course of the summer to rags, our shoes were torn, and the watery gruel they gave us to eat was miserably inadequate for the hard physical labor we had to do. The rainy days were the worst. The moisture penetrated the cellar and water

trickled down the walls, the stench of the straw pallets was abominable, and the dirt-stiffened sheets were always damp to the touch. We had no opportunity of drying our wet clothes and shoes. On one occasion our guards made the experiment of quitting work earlier than usual. They met with a handsome reception from Schinderknecht, who made us march all the way back, two hours to the dyke, two hours for the return trip to camp. The guards, soaked to the skin despite their military cloaks, swore furiously. We were not asked to do any more shoveling that day. They invited us all to the fire to warm ourselves.

Among the Black Shirts newly enrolled in the guard as a result of the events following the dismissal of troopers from the first watch was a man of about twenty-six, tall, blond, blue-eyed, as though he had been cut to measure from the Nazi race pattern. On several occasions I had noticed that he was watching me. One day I was waiting for the return of the handcar—which was being hauled up the embankment slope by eight fellow prisoners to be dumped at the top. The blond SS-man spoke to me, asking what my name was, what I'd been arrested for, and whether there was any prospect of my being released at Christmas time.

As the comrades with the handcar approached, he withdrew a few paces; when I had shoveled it full of earth again and the others had started up the slope with it he approached me once more and continued the conversation.

Had I ever been in Russia? Was it really possible to get work there? I told him that depended on one's training.

A metal worker or an electrical engineer would unquestionably find employment there. Since I did not know what he was driving at, I was extremely reserved. It struck me that he addressed me as *Sie*, whereas we were ordinarily addressed as *Du* by both officers and men. Did I plan to return to Russia after my release? I thought, "That's what he is trying to get out of me."

"No," I said.

"You needn't be afraid of me," he said. Then he went over to the neighboring squad and didn't come near me for the rest of the day.

For a whole week he was on duty with other squads and I didn't see him. The next time he was assigned to us I was one of the eight men hauling the handcar while another fellow did the shoveling. While the handcar was being loaded the guard told me to look after the fire and pile up some fresh wood. I realized that he was anxious to get me to himself for a while but I gave him no encouragement. The devil knew what lay behind it all. When we were returning our tools to the construction shed that afternoon I happened to be standing a few paces from the others, and as he passed he slipped a cigarette into my coat pocket.

"There's a ban on smoking," I said, looking him straight in the eye. There seemed to be something fishy about the whole affair.

"You know your own business," he replied and went to join the other guards. I managed to get rid of the cigarette on the way home. Maybe they were trying to catch me in the act of breaking camp regulations. By this time I had grown uneasy and that evening I told the

Schieber the whole story. He advised me to make no change in the line of conduct I had laid down for myself.

"Let him make the overtures. You'll be able to tell soon enough whether he's the real thing. And if there's anything rotten behind it, you can't be too careful."

A few nights later I woke to discover that the light in our sleeping quarters had been turned on. The guard was passing slowly between the rows of beds, reading the names of prisoners chalked on the bunks. It was my SS-man. I didn't know whether he had seen me; he made no sign but walked slowly out of the cellar again and turned out the light.

I could not get back to sleep. What did he want? I recalled the questions he had put to me and the replies I had made. They could not twist a halter out of them to hang me with. Maybe it was something quite different.

Shortly before Christmas a closed military-police car drove into the camp yard and a Storm Trooper, drenched in blood, was removed from it. It was said at first that he had been attacked by Communists. But when he was placed in the sleeping quarters assigned to special prisoners we knew what was wrong with him. The special prisoners were SA- or SS-men detained in camp for the commission of such offenses as drunkenness, overstaying their leave, and fighting—but also for breaches of political trust. Their sleeping quarters were separated from ours, and there was much bad feeling between them and the regular prisoners—far more, for example, than existed between the prisoners and some of the troopers. This particular SA-man was kept in camp

for two days only; then an ambulance took him away. What happened to him eventually we were never able to discover.

The next time my SS-man was on duty with our squad I decided to give him an opening for conversation. I was anxious to see whether he would be willing to discuss this incident with me. On our way to work I asked my neighbors who was doing the shoveling that day. Shoveling was the most difficult part of the work and we took it in turn, everyone doing his best to get out of it.

"It's your turn today, Heinrich," a number of the prisoners informed him.

"What?" cried Heinrich, little elated at the prospect. "Me again?"

"Never mind," I said. "I'll shovel today."

"What's wrong with you, man?" gibed the others. "Got more energy than you know what to do with?"

"Bravo, Karl," Heinrich said. "Some day I'll spit in *your* soup."

This time it was I who started the conversation with the blond guard.

"What was the matter with the SA-man they brought in a few days ago—the one that was taken off in the ambulance?"

"He betrayed a secret order given him by the standard bearer."

"Betrayed? Whom could he betray it to? Some foreign country?"

"Do you think there's no one in this country who's interested in a certain kind of information?"

"That depends on the kind of information you mean."

"Well, in this case he was supposed to have notified the Communists of some imminent action to be taken by the Secret Police."

"Is that so?" I remarked incredulously. "Well, he may have just dropped a remark that was passed on in some distorted form. That sort of thing happens all the time."

"Possibly, but one can't be too careful."

The handcar approached. We lapsed into silence. One can't be too careful. What did he mean by that? Who can't be too careful? Our comrades who were working among the Black Shirts and the Storm Troopers? Or was it just a general statement? Like me, he avoided any explicit remarks. This wasn't the sort of language ordinarily used by an SS-man or a provocateur.

"Do you come from Berlin?" he asked, when the handcar had disappeared over the crest of the slope.

"I was born in Düsseldorf, but I lived in Berlin for a long time."

"You're an electrical engineer. Do you know Franz Helling by any chance?"

I was startled. But I only said, "Franz Helling, Franz Helling? The name seems familiar to me somehow, but I can't place it at the moment."

"I thought you might know him," he said casually. "He knows you. And we happened to be talking about you recently."

"Is he the fellow who worked with me at Siemens-Schuckert? A tall, dark chap?"

"That's right—that's the one I mean."

"Yes, I know him very well."

"He sent you his greetings."

"Thank you."

"I'll probably see him when I go home at Christmas time. Shall I give him any message?"

"If you'll be so kind. Tell him I'm waiting for the amnesty—I may be affected. If not, perhaps he could help me find a lawyer to speed up my release."

"Good. I'll do that. My name, by the way, is Julius Stetten."

We had no further conversation that day, but what we'd had was more than enough for me. Did Stetten know who Franz Helling was? Was he working hand and glove with him? Was he one of us? I was more and more inclined to believe so. On the other hand, it might all be part of a far-flung plan to trap us. I mustn't implicate anyone else in the affair for the present. I discussed it only with the Schieber, and we decided to wait until after Christmas before taking the initiative.

Our hopes for some action under the amnesty were kept alive only by the realization that in four weeks not a single prisoner had been released. But when the comrades learned that the camp police had been holding forty-six release orders for a period of over two weeks, their restiveness increased.

The prisoners were more deeply embittered over this arbitrary procedure of the camp administration than over the basic injustice of the whole idea of "protective custody." You had to make the best of your imprisonment under the circumstances and it would have been futile to waste any words over it. But that a subordinate authority should fail to comply with instructions issued

by the ministry lash ed them to a fury. It was during those days before Christmas that the idea of engineering their own release took form in many minds.

Thus the festival of love drew near, pervading the camp with its spirit. Schinderknecht had ordered our work squad to get a Christmas tree for the dining room, knowing full well that we should have to steal it from the government forest. The commandant suspended the ban on visitors and smoking, and sent out word that the prisoners might have their musical instruments shipped or brought them from home. We were allowed to stay up till nine-thirty. On Christmas Eve the commandant, escorted by his staff, passed through the camp and with his own hand opened the locks of the coop doors—a Nazi Christ Child with a paunch and the Iron Cross, Second Class.

Visiting time for our company was fixed for the half hour between four and four-thirty on the afternoon of Christmas Day. I wasn't expecting anyone from home—but someone might come from Berlin. I tried to suppress my hopes, however, lest I be too deeply disappointed.

Christmas Day, beginning at eight o'clock in the morning, hundreds of people stood waiting outside the camp, most of them women, many with children in their arms. At a quarter to four in the afternoon we (Company Eight) had to line up outside of sleeping quarters. At five to four we were brought to the door of the dining room, as the visitors to the prisoners of Company Seven were filing out. A little girl holding on to her mother's hand kept turning her head to look back into

the dining room and asked, sobbing, "Why doesn't he come with us? Why isn't he coming home?"

Sharp at four we entered the dining room and were seated along one side of the tables which had been placed end to end to divide the room in two. Our backs were to the doors and windows and we could not see the visitors until they began filing past us. Generally the prisoner recognized his relatives before they recognized him. Nearly all of us had visitors. Near me sat August Mahnke, whose mother came. She opened her bag and laid out on the table in front of him a sausage, a bar of chocolate, five packs of cigarettes and a home-made cake. He did not thank her. She too did not know how to open the conversation. Finally she said, "Father has gotten old. He's sorry that you got along so badly. He sends his regards."

She drew her sleeve over her eyes. Mahnke leaned across the table and took her hand in his. I thought, there is nothing more tragic than these old workingwomen. For thirty or forty years they have slaved in the treadmill of capitalism, brought up children in the hope that some day their lot would be better than their parents'. And now, on the eve of death, they see their children hopelessly in the claws of that power which has already destroyed their own lives. Yet they do not complain, they do not reproach their children, even when they do not understand their actions. A son, a daughter is in difficulties (when were there not difficulties?) and they help them.

A pale, haggard-faced woman passed by me, obviously in the last stages of pregnancy. Laboriously she steered

her ungainly body down the room, and was two steps by me before I suddenly recognized her.

"Anna!" I cried, leaping up. She turned, and was obliged to look twice to convince herself that it was I. We clasped hands across the table.

"I'm here as your wife," she said quickly, having made certain that no guard was standing near. "First, I'm to tell you that we're all well. Your mother sends you this and there's a trifle from me as well. I've got something from *her* too. But I've got to tie my shoe first. Heavens, is my belly heavy! Let me put my foot up on the bench there."

The toe of her shoe bumped against my leg. I reached down, felt a paper, and thrust it into my pocket.

"I could not come that time," she said. "I was too far gone with this. But we got your letter and everything you wanted was done. Your old apartment has been rented but they gave me your furniture as your supposed wife and nothing was missing—not even the list. And how are things with you?"

"Just the same. Perhaps a shade worse at the moment. The amnesty's haunting the place and doing all sorts of mischief."

"Do you think you'll come under it?"

"I have no idea."

"Helling thinks your time's up."

"Is that so?" I managed to retain my composure. But it was all clear now. Anna had got in touch with Helling and my blonde SS-man was Helling's contact here.

"Helling thinks," Anna continued in the same level tone, "that if you're not included in this batch, you'll be

released not later than the middle or end of January. It can't take much longer. It mustn't take much longer." The "mustn't" was faintly stressed. I tried to read her face. "Otto's sick too."

"Since when?" I felt my knees turning to water.

"A week ago. He's in the same hospital in Berlin where you were that time."

It was only now that I realized how strong had been my unacknowledged hope of a speedy release; only now, when that hope collapsed. Otto had been caught. Caught at the same work I had been doing up to the time of my arrest. It was probable that the Secret Police would come upon material incriminating me as well. I could not help thinking what lay in store for me when they found out that I had lied at my hearings. Anna saw what was passing through my mind.

"There's nothing to get upset about. The medical examination takes time, you know, and besides you can't tell whether they'll be able to locate the trouble. Just the same, it would be wonderful if you could——" I prodded her with my foot. Stormleader von Zaskowsky, in civilian attire, was standing right behind her. Without a quiver she finished her sentence: "—be released. Who knows how my confinement's going to turn out or whether I'll ever see you again?"

"Nowadays," I remarked smugly, "with the clinics so well equipped and our government so sorely in need of children, women shouldn't worry about confinements."

The fat fairy was apparently charmed by my conscientiousness in the matter of providing the state with

cannon fodder. He surveyed me for a moment before resuming his leisurely progress.

"Do you know any more about how it happened?" I asked her.

"A perfectly stupid accident. They caught him in a block raid [3] and took him along to the Alex [4] because he couldn't give a satisfactory account of himself. They discovered there who he was."

"Did he have anything on him?"

"We don't know."

"How do you know Helling?"

"He came to me for information about you and some other friends."

"Did he say anything about what steps I ought to take to bring about my release?"

"He said you'd hear from him shortly. That's all I know. Except that you can talk to Stetten about it. He gave me explicit instructions to tell you that."

"And how are things with you, Anna? What do you hear from Erich?"

"He's dead."

I wanted to say something comforting, but could think of nothing to say. Her husband had been arrested in the spring. Now they had killed him. And she hadn't been able to do a thing to help him. He had died alone in one of the torture cells.

"Everything's going to be different, Anna."

[3] Referring to an activity of the Secret Police which consists in surrounding a certain area of the city without warning and searching all houses and passers-by within that area.

[4] The popular name for Police Headquarters in Alexanderplatz, Berlin.

What senseless babble! Erich would never come back. For the first time I saw a look of despair on her face.

A sudden stir passed through the ranks at the tables. All heads turned toward the lower end of the room, where the guard was leading one of the prisoners away. Zaskowsky had overheard him talking to his wife of the treatment we received at camp. For a moment the room was paralyzed into silence; then some children began to cry. It was obvious that the incident had upset the troopleader on duty, whom we knew as a quiet person, loath to make life unnecessarily difficult for the prisoners. He didn't relish having the Christmas visit terminated in this fashion. But Zaskowsky was his superior officer and he had no choice but to hold his tongue. All he could do was to prolong our half hour by five minutes, after which we had to leave the dining room.

The beds in our sleeping quarters were strewn with packages. Even the few prisoners for whom no visitors had appeared had at least received packages.

Schultz called me over to his bunk and displayed, beaming, two huge sausages sent by Bertha. Beside them lay another package that he didn't know what to make of. He kept spelling out the name of the sender. The address was correct: Richard Schultz, Company Eight, No. 467—but the sender? He couldn't recall the name. The name meant nothing to him.

"I don't know it. Damned if I know it!"

"Well, take a look and see what's inside."

He unwrapped it, and drew from the tissue paper three large, bright handkerchiefs, two packs of tobacco,

forty cigarettes, apples, another sausage, and a half pound of butter in an aluminum container.

"Well, you won't starve to death at any rate," I told him.

"Still, I'd like to know who sent it," he kept repeating, racking his head in an effort to unravel the mystery. It was only after I came to the bunks of the eight comrades from Priegnitz that I was able to give him a clue.

"See?" they boasted, stealthily exhibiting the Rote Hilfe [5] packages sent them under fabricated names by their local group. "Our fellows are right on the job."

Schultz was overjoyed that his little local I.W.A. group was still functioning and hadn't forgotten him.

In the twilight of the second story I read Käthe's letter. How good it was to see her handwriting again! She wrote that she was with comrades in Paris, penniless but well, and was even hoping to be able to find a job. Only I was please not to worry about her. She was sure we'd be seeing each other soon, and she was longing for the day when she could stick her nose into my stupid face again.

These visiting days had their two sides. Our friends' departure left us in a state of heightened unrest. A thousand rumors and bits of news, a thousand hopes and disappointments had been carried in, creating an atmosphere of anxiety which made our existence still harder to bear.

On Christmas Day, during the visiting period of Company Four, the commandant suddenly made his ap-

[5] International Workers' Aid, a revolutionary workers' relief organization with branches all over the world.

pearance in the dining room, accompanied by his staff and two gentlemen in civilian clothes. The prisoner who saw him first bellowed, "Attention!" and everyone jumped up. Even the women rose in confusion.

"At ease!" The commandant acknowledged the tribute with the stateliness of a cavalry captain. He ordered the prisoners to clear the tables and line up in the courtyard. There the adjutant read aloud the names of the prisoners who, under the terms of the amnesty, were to be released the following day. Fifty-eight names were read. More than ninety men had been brought to camp since the news of the amnesty was first published and no prisoners had been released. There were more prisoners in the camp than before. The fifty-eight included Schultz, Felix from the shoemaker's shop, Fritz, Kuleke the cabinetmaker, and myself. We saw the faces of the seven hundred left behind, and could not rejoice.

The two gentlemen in civilian clothes were officials of the Secret Police, who had come to impress upon us the significance of the amnesty. They both made speeches.

"We don't expect you all to leave camp as confirmed National Socialists, but we're sure that you'll make your way through our new Germany with your eyes open. You'll see for yourselves that we've rid the country, once and for all, of the corruption of the old system, and given the worker the place he deserves in the community. We needn't remind you that this amnesty declared by the government is a sign of its impregnable strength. Woe to the enemy who continues to stir up the people against the state! And woe to any of you who ever again sets himself to oppose the will of our Leader, Reichs-

kanzler Adolf Hitler! There will be no mercy for you a second time."

In a brief and spirited address the commandant exhorted us to confute the false rumors circulated concerning his camp at home and abroad, and to denounce those who were responsible for such atrocity lies. This concluded the dignified performance.

There was a great hubbub in our sleeping quarters that night. Despite the keen disappointment caused by the amnesty swindle no one begrudged us our release. We gave away our fine Christmas packages to the others. Schultz gazed mournfully after his three sausages. Most of us packed our belongings into our cartons that evening, so as to be in readiness to leave camp at any moment. I gave most of my food to the Schieber, who had not been amnestied. When I asked him about the prospects of his own release, he said, "I think my time's up."

"Did your family get word?"

"Not that. Whom would they send word to, with my wife being constantly on the go, my older son in prison, and the younger abroad?"

"Then why do you think they'll let you out soon?"

"I've got to go to Leipzig.[6] I'm to be tried for high treason on January 16. And that's something I'd just as lief get out of."

"If that's it, I can help you," I said. "We'll get hold of Stetten."

"I think I'll do it alone."

"Have you made any preparations?"

[6] Seat of the highest court of justice in Germany.

"There's not much to prepare. I've thought out how it could be done."

"From here or from work?"

"From work. I'll report for duty with a forest squad and make off first thing in the morning."

"Have you any money?"

"Two marks eighty."

"That won't take you far."

"No, but I'm relying on my two hours' head start. After all, there's nothing else for me to do."

I advised him against it. The thing needed organizing and I persuaded him that I had a better plan. I told him that Stetten would return from Berlin with further information. But since I could no longer be there and Stetten had as yet approached no one but me, contact must be established between him and the Schieber. I wrote a note, saying that I had been released and that the Schieber was taking my place. The Schieber was to get the note into Stetten's hands. Before going to bed we went over all the details again.

Next morning the men scheduled for release stood outside the office from seven o'clock on, waiting to be dismissed. We were weighed again. Everyone had gained; according to the camp statistics no prisoner ever lost weight there. The Black Shirts were amiably disposed and refrained from buffeting us when we entered the room with the query as to whether we might enter. We were given two long declarations to sign, one for the Secret Police, one for the camp administration, in which we bound ourselves to commit no further offense, either by word or deed, written or spoken, against the govern-

ment, and waived all claims to compensation for any damage or loss sustained during our period under protective arrest. We likewise swore that we had suffered no harm and that we acknowledged any measures taken against us by the state to have been fully and wholly justified. No one hesitated for a moment to sign this statement. We were given red release cards which stated that we had been kept in protective custody over such and such a period of time. We were to present them to our local police authorities. Since we were being released on parole we were to remain under police supervision and report to headquarters daily until further notice.

Twenty-three other workers were leaving camp at the same time with us. They were being taken to Hanover in police cars to be tried for high treason. The huge camp gate clanged behind them.

We made our way through the small door, past the guard, into the open. No one turned his head to look back. No one said a word. The peace of the holiday season lay over the little town. A few of the guards, off duty, were sauntering about the streets. We made our farewells at the station and each of us went his own way.

CHAPTER XII

FREE

THE train was almost empty. Passenger traffic was light during the holidays. We had seated ourselves in different compartments—Fritz, Felix, three other Berliners who had been released, and I—feeling that we should be less conspicuous by ourselves.

It was a curious sensation, being free again. I could still feel the eyes of the SS guard boring into the back of my neck.

Instinctively I found myself lapsing into the habits of illegal days. Anna lived in Charlottenburg. "I can ride as far as the Zoo station," I thought—then decided it would be better to get out at Friedrichstrasse and take the underground. Force of habit.

Night had fallen by the time the train pulled in—too late to go to Anna's. Fritz insisted that I go home with him; but, unwilling to intrude upon his meeting with his family, I refused. Not until I had assured him that an old friend was expecting me would he let me go.

I checked my package at a café frequented by workers, and set out for a stroll through the streets of Berlin. They seemed to me quieter than five months ago. Unter den Linden was dead. In Friedrichstadt the girls whose Nazi clientele had saved them from Commissar Lippert's moral purge went tripping back and forth, shivering with cold. I passed Wertheim's, the

Jewish department store, its huge display windows ablaze with a thousand lights. The vast building showed no signs as yet of having been subleased to small shopkeepers, as the Nazis had promised. In the cafés of Potsdamer Platz the old musicians were playing Wagner's thunderous music in SA uniforms. The new Columbus House—the name stirred memories—rose black against the sky, hardly a light visible over its immense façade. No tenants. Woolworth had opened a five- and ten-cent store on the ground floor. The poor devils of the League for the Trading Middle Class who were still waiting for the abolition of chain and department stores had to bite their lips when they passed through Potsdamer Platz. I walked along Bellevuestrasse to Kemperplatz (which had been renamed Skagerack Platz [1]) and saw that the quiet old café at the end of the street had undergone a National-Socialist metamorphosis. Dance music sounded from within and dozens of expensive cars, decorated with swastika pennants, were parked outside. A taxi driver, waiting for a fare, told me that the café now belonged to the wealthy Steinmeyer—a member of the Nazi Party glorified in the official *Angriff* as the ideal modern café manager, owner not only of two cafés in Friedrichstrasse but of one of its night clubs whose ladies enjoyed high favor with gentlemen from the provinces.

The Tiergarten lay silent and dark, its broad stretches of lawn covered with snow. No SA uniforms, no swastikas, no Wagner music. I sat down on a bench. Here I had often made appointments with comrades. The last

[1] The Germans call the Battle of Jutland the Battle of Skagerack.

one had been with Anton. He was dead, and I was out again—till the next time. A sentence flashed through my mind—"We revolutionaries are dead men on furlough." Wasn't it Eugen Léviné who had said that to his Bavarian executioners? 1919. Another week, and it would be 1934.

I thought of all the unknown soldiers of the German revolution. Anton had been one of the most faithful. The last time I had waited for him here my attention had been attracted by an elderly gentleman, carrying a stick and gloves and walking with the easy stride of the pensioned officer. I was startled when he finally sat down beside me—still more startled when he revealed himself as Anton. How pleased he had been at my failure to recognize him! But a spy recognized him. Anton had smuggled a letter out of prison shortly before his death, saying that he was going to hang himself because he couldn't endure the guilt of having, through his blind confidence, delivered two comrades into the hands of the Secret Police. Was that any reason why he should have taken his life? He was no traitor. But the traitors don't commit suicide. I wondered what his mother was doing. She was a devout Catholic, and Anton had been her only child.

My thoughts turned to my own mother—her small, careworn face with the kind eyes. I was sure she hadn't gone to the doctor's yet for her new glasses—and she could hardly read any more with the old ones. I'd have to borrow some money and send it to her. But she'd use it for the house, as she always did. Cooking, eating, bedmaking, sweeping—what an existence! And millions

of German middle-class families were living the same existence—absolutely incapable of understanding the forces that govern the world, in which the corner allotted to them keeps growing smaller and smaller.

Never before had I been so keenly conscious of the sorry trinity of God, family, and small private ownership—never before had I so clearly understood what had driven these millions to fascism. Small private ownership in its death agony staging a final revolt against big private ownership which was devouring it, and against social ownership, of which the small private owners were in mortal terror. They were battling for the rights of the middle classes, and, with a clear conscience, were doing the work of their executioners and ours. They should have been our allies. None but the workers could free them from the idiocy of their existence. They would accept our leadership some day, though today they persecuted us in the name of God, of honor, and of the national community. If only they could know what they were doing! They were forcing us to take up the cudgels against them, too, in sheer self-defense. I recalled the story of an old Spartakus [2] fighter who had gone to the front in the World War as a revolutionary and, fully aware of what he was doing, had been obliged to thrust his bayonet into the bodies of French class comrades. It was either he or they. The military machine of the ruling class left no alternative open to him.

I was cold. I got up and made my way through the

[2] Spartakus-Bund, revolutionary organization formed during the war by Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, which later developed into the Communist Party.

streets of the old western sections of Berlin. I caught the last train at Nollendorf Platz and rode back to the Stadtbahnhof to reclaim the package I had left at the café. The owner handed it to me across the counter and poured out a whisky for me.

Nodding toward the carton where the camp censor's seal was still visible, he said, "Long time since you had one, I'll bet."

"Five months. Prosit!"

"Prosit! Out today?"

"Yes."

"Your family here?"

"No."

"Where are you spending the night?"

"I don't know yet."

"You can sleep in the little clubroom there, if you like. I'll put a mattress down for you. You haven't been spoiled, I'll bet."

"Thanks. But I'd like to look in on a friend of mine first, and see whether he can put me up."

"As you like. I'm open late. If your friend can't take care of you, just come back here."

I wanted to pay for the drink, but he wouldn't have it.

"Never mind, never mind. I don't suppose you've saved a fortune in the last five months."

I made up the story about the friend because his offer had embarrassed me. Once out in the street I did not know what to do. The camp administration had given us just enough money to cover the fare home and not a penny more. They did not care what became of us

afterwards. I had a few extra coins, returned to me on my release from Columbia, which I had kept hidden the whole time I was at camp. They would pay for a night's lodging. Still, it might not be a bad idea to walk past George's place and see whether his light was still burning. He lived in Karlstrasse, only ten minutes away.

George was still up and nearly killed me for joy. He threw to the floor the books and clothes strewn over the old sofa, and made me stretch out.

"The place doesn't look very tidy today," he apologized. I laughed. It looked exactly as it always had. He made coffee, and dug a bit of stale cake out of some hiding place. I glanced at the books that lay within arm's reach: Stolzenberg's "Gas Formulæ"; a volume on ballistics; a manual on shooting; another on hand grenades; and "How to Fight Tanks."

"What are you working at now?" I asked.

"My old hobby—army engineering."

"For whom?"

"The government. Absolutely legal. And decently paid, too."

"Are you in touch with the Party?"

"In touch?" he protested, aggrieved. "The Party gets my recommendations before Goering does."

When the coffee was ready he pulled up a chair.

"Well, come on," I said. "Let's hear what's going on."

"Where shall I begin? I'd better give you a general idea of the situation first, as I see it in connection with my work. The economic situation's perfectly obvious. After Hugenberg grew unbearable—he stank too foully of bank capital and big industry—they appointed as

minister of economics Herr Schmidt, up to that point a dark horse. Politically speaking, a sheet of blank paper. His maiden speech was a long blast of capitalist propaganda and infuriated the petty bourgeois elements of the SA, especially after their League for the Trading Middle Class had been transformed into a sort of higher institution for rabbit breeding.

"Then came Walther Darré, the minister of agriculture, who declared that the big landed estates, whether they were mortgaged or not, would not be touched. And because he couldn't give the peasants any land, and the minister of finance couldn't remit their taxes, they invented the entailment law, which makes the all-time record for swindle. It revives the medieval regulation by which only the oldest son inherits his father's land. This expropriates the younger sons and daughters—and leaves the favored heir in one hell of a hole because the same law forbids him to sell the land and thus cuts him off from all credit. They're hoping in that way to provide themselves with a dependable army of kulaks on the land, but for every kulak they create they're creating three farm proletarians who are just itching for the chance to present their claims to their privileged older brothers some day. From all I hear, there's more discontent in the villages just now than there is in the cities. The peasants' disappointment is all the keener because they really had believed in the Nazis.

"But even in the cities things look rotten. Wages are being cut and reëmployment is nothing but a lot of hot air. What the unemployed used to get as relief, without working for it, they now get as wages for hard

labor. On top of that comes this shameless government subsidy of big business—in other words, socialization marches on just as it did under Social-Democracy. That's common knowledge.

"Then there's the failure of their foreign policy. Rosenberg's protestations of love to his English fellow-Aryans are jeered at by the damned British—God punish England! [3] France is openly hostile, and seeks an alliance with Soviet Russia. The Americans hold themselves completely aloof and want their money before they'll commit themselves to anything. Which leaves Italy, Japan, and Poland as assets.

"Mussolini drops a friendly word now and then. It costs him nothing, but everyone knows he'll never take sides with Germany in earnest—especially if such a move could be construed as a direct threat to France—and as far as the Austrian situation's concerned he'll stand no nonsense. The Triple Alliance [4] was a political miscarriage from the very first, but trying to warm it up now after these twenty years is nothing but the purest necrophilism.

"Japan. Oh, yes, we're making violent love now to Wilhelm's yellow peril—we've even raised them to the rank of Aryans. They're the very allies we need for an invasion of the Soviet Union, but they're not a damned bit of use when it comes to such things as armaments, debt revision, protective alliances, and the like. On the contrary, seeking their friendship simply makes the Eng-

[3] *Gott strafe England!*—German greeting during the war.

[4] Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy. Italy deserted in 1915 and fought against her former allies.

lish and Americans more suspicious of us and heightens our state of isolation.

"Only with Poland have our relations improved. After ten years of sabotage the trade agreement's finally been concluded. The Danzig problem's been buried for the time being, and no good German ever breathes the word 'Corridor' nowadays. The Poles are laughing up their sleeves. We've paid the whole reckoning.

"Well—so the Nazis haven't been able to keep a single one of their promises, nationalistic or 'socialistic.' The one thing that keeps the Reichswehr and the so-called national-revolutionary elements in the SA appeased, for the time being, is all the secret activity in connection with war preparations; and in that respect I must say these fellows are absolute geniuses. You've no conception of what's going on in that direction. Road building, motorization, poison gas, airplanes, submarines, bacteriology—and an idealogical preparation, besides, that would make the kaisers' Germany look like a pacifist women's club. There's no lack of money and human energy and sweat for that. And it's the one point in the program on which big business, the Reichswehr, the Junkers, and the SA are in complete agreement. There's profit in it for all of them.

"That won't hold them together indefinitely, however. The more radical elements—the petty bourgeoisie, that is—are playing along with them in the hope of achieving the "totalitarian state." Roehm's ambitious to be head of the Reichswehr; what he wants is to get a few hundred thousand of his SA men into the army, so as to break the backbone of the German Nationals and

the Steel Helmets, and then elevate himself to the status of commander-in-chief—all of which is a source of considerable anxiety to the Reichswehr.

"The general staff's appalled by the political situation abroad, and France's overtures to the Soviet Union are getting them more and more worried. But Blomberg's completely under the Nazis' thumb. They presented him with an estate in East Prussia, just as the Junkers presented the old man with one. But the Reichswehr chieftains, with Schleicher in the background, still favor an eastern alliance, and Schleicher still seems to be hanging onto his old idea of joining with Gregor Strasser to organize the Christian and Reformist Trade Unions and part of the SA into an anti-Hitler front.

"The relations between the SA and the SS are strained. The SS is developing more and more into a supervisory machine to check up on the SA, and the Brown Shirts loathe the 'Sunday Soldiers,' as they call them.

"The 'National Bolsheviks' in the SA are gaining ground. You'll find some splendid fellows among them —decent, courageous, not corrupted, and intelligent enough to see that all their hopes are being blasted. I talked to one of them a few days ago. All these years he never doubted for an instant that Hitler would place the interests of the people above those of the Behrenstrasse[8] and the East Elbian land robbers. He approved of all the methods Hitler was using on his way to power —the money of the bankers and big business men, the soothing assurances he gave them that the points in his

[8] The Wall Street of Berlin.

program which dealt with land reform and the nationalization of cartels and trusts weren't to be taken too seriously, his promises to foreign countries that our debts would be paid, and so on. Like thousands of others he believed that the end justifies the means. Once the Nazis had the power, they would show these gentlemen who was master in the house. And when he compared Hitler's ingenious tactics in acquiring power with Lenin's antiquated, laborious, pitiful class-war strategy, he laughed.

"But now they've got the power. He thinks they are in a position now to nationalize the monopolies without shedding a drop of blood, to do away with capitalism—yet he sees that nothing happens. Political economy's suddenly changed back into that sensitive, highly intricate organism that can't be disturbed with impunity. All they have actually accomplished is the destruction of every defensive weapon forged by labor against capital over a period of decades. The poor sap still believes Hitler is sticking to his original grand promises to the people, but for the moment the Leader's hand seems to be tied. First the boobs blamed it on Hugenberg. But now the Nazis have practically everything their own way, and still nothing happens. Can it be that these boys really haven't got the power—that they can't rise to eminence on the shoulders of the eminent and then kick them out from under—that Lenin's way is the only way, after all? Believe me, Karl," George concluded, "plenty of people are thinking along these lines nowadays."

"What are these disillusioned elements doing?" I asked.

"Until two months ago not very much. But within the last couple of weeks I've come across three interesting cases. Through my work I happen to know a good many SA officers and men. Last winter I gave a course on modern military problems to a group of ten men, all of whom called themselves 'revolutionists.' Using the German, Italian, and Soviet Russian experiences as a springboard, I tried to explain the advantages of a unified, politically trained class army and the weakness of the military machine of the bourgeoisie—the fascist bourgeoisie as well as any other—during a period of intensified class struggle.

"Well, when Hitler seized power, and during the landslide of the first few months, all ten of these men were convinced that the dawn of the German national community would do away with class distinctions, that this damned dialectic materialism was a malicious invention of uprooted intellectuals, and that the Communist Party had gone bankrupt because it pursued an anachronistic policy. I washed my hands of them. Yet none of them denounced me.

"About two weeks ago one of them suddenly appeared here, and after we had discussed the weather and Goering's latest uniform for a while, he began unburdening his heart. All this, he said, was hopeless, this corruption. Compared with this gang, the Sozis[6] had been babes in arms. Goebbels' secretary had embezzled

[6] Nickname for the Social-Democrats.

winter relief funds; Ernst[7] was giving wild parties on SA money; Roehm's clique of pansies were growing more and more brazen; Hitler knew all about it but didn't lift a finger. As for the Junkers and Ruhr barons, their business had never been better.

" 'Well, well,' I said to him. 'So the wolves devour the sheep after all—even in the national community.'

" 'Listen,' he said, 'you're a Communist, aren't you?'

" 'What are you talking about?' I said. 'You know the Communist Party is outlawed. It no longer exists.'

" 'Seriously,' he said, 'I see now what an idiot I've been all this time. Goebbels' play acting went to my head; though in justice to myself I must say that this is the first big political reorganization I've ever consciously lived through. Better people than I were swept off their feet by the impetus of this movement. But I give you my word, I see now who's back of the whole thing, pulling the strings. I'm not doing Oldenburg-Januschau's[8] dirty work for him. I am not a strike-breaker for Thyssen and Krupp. And plenty of my comrades feel the same way about it. If you can use me, please do.'

"I gave him a good raking over the coals," George went on. "I told him that people like him and his friends meant nothing but danger to us. They were unreliable, toppled over at the first puff of wind, changed their minds from one day to the next; and what made them absolutely worthless when it came to doing underground

[7] Leader of the Berlin-Brandenburg SA, killed by Hitler during the June purge.

[8] An East Prussian Junker and an intimate of Hindenburg.

work, without any romance about it, was their arrogance, their political ignorance, their delusion that they are called upon to lead the working classes. He swallowed it all and was pretty crestfallen, especially when I got through rubbing in the fact that it was up to people like himself to prove their political trustworthiness, that pretty speeches weren't a damned bit of use to us.

"He came back a few days later, this time with another fellow from the same group. They wanted me to put them in touch with the Central Committee—nothing more nor less. I laughed in their faces, and assured them that the Central Committee had discontinued its office hours for the time being. Well, then, couldn't I arrange to get them some sort of contact with the Party? I refused, and told them in so many words that I wouldn't be responsible to the Party for them. Well, then, how *could* they prove their sincerity in coming to me? I finally told them that if they were in earnest about fighting against Hitler and for the Party there were any number of ways in which they could make themselves useful, and that I'd be glad to help them.

"The following evening they brought me two secret circulars of the SA chief of staff, and since then a third man has joined us. We meet regularly and discuss what's to be done. That's one instance for you. Of course, I don't want to generalize. Those three came to me because they knew me, and because something of what I tried to teach them must have stuck. Still it does prove that people are beginning to remember that they've got brains in their heads, and find the courage to use them."

When George had finished telling me about the general situation he asked me a thousand questions about the concentration camp. It was past four in the morning when we finally got to sleep.

Anna could hardly believe her eyes when I walked into the little kitchen. Her sister promptly put on her hat and coat and disappeared.

"Helling wanted to know the minute we heard from you," Anna explained. "And now, sit down and have a decent meal. Or would you like a bath first?"

"A bath, if you don't mind."

She took out a fresh shirt from the bureau. I caught sight of her husband's linen, arranged in neat piles.

"Did you see Erich before he died?" I said.

"No. I didn't even know he was sick. I got a letter from the hospital one day, saying that my husband had died of inflammation of the kidneys. I went right out there and claimed the body. But the doctor said he'd already been buried. I told him that my husband had never had kidney trouble. I told him to his face that they'd murdered him. He just shrugged his shoulders. 'Nothing I can do for you. Sorry.' That was the end of it." Her voice was full of hatred and bitterness. "What a foul lot they are! Doctors, professors, lawyers, parsons, actors, artists—all eating out of Goebbels' hand. I don't believe the world has ever bred such a spineless crew. And it's not only that they're forced to do these things. They jump gladly at the chance. If I'd had a thousand marks I could have got Erich out. But no lawyer will take the case of a prisoner under pro-

tective arrest till he's sure of his money. Extortionists—that's all they are. They've got their connections with the Secret Police and the ministry of the interior, and those who can pay come first. A bunch of ghouls and carrion hunters—that's what the German legal profession is, now that it's been 'purged.' " Then she asked, "What are you going to do now?"

"Depends on what work the Party gives me."

"Can you go back to your old firm?"

"I'm going to drop in there today. If the old personnel manager's still in charge, I'm hoping they'll take me back. When do you expect the child?"

"In a week or two. It bothers me a good deal already, especially when I've got steps to climb. That's why I had to give up my Party work."

"What were you doing last?"

"Collecting dues. It means such a lot of running around since we've been reorganized into groups of five."

"How many of the old Party members are still paying dues in the district?"

"There've been a lot of changes. A good many of the comrades have moved away, and been assigned to other districts. But then too, comrades from other sections have moved here. Since November there's been a steady increase in the number who are paying dues. We're almost half way to our 1932 top."

"Where's August?"

"Still in Berlin. I saw him once in the subway."

"And Rudolf?"

"Sent to another district."

"Heard anything from Otto?"

"Hans was the last to see him in Columbia. That's all I know about him since he was arrested."

"Ah—you saw Hans?"

"Yes. He was released a week ago."

"Do you know his address? I'd like to see him."

"He lives with his mother. I can send my sister there, if you like."

"Don't bother. I'll drop in there myself."

When I had finished my meal Anna brought out a little memorandum book and settled her account with me. She had dismantled my apartment and sold the furniture, keeping an accurate record of all receipts and disbursements. My most precious possessions—my books —she had been unable to save. They had been seized by the police.

Meantime her sister returned. Helling would not be free till evening. He wanted me to meet him at Aschinger's at eight.

From Anna's I went to my old firm. Clean, well-fed, in a freshly pressed suit, and with a few marks in my pocket, I felt surer of myself than I had the day before.

Old Volk in the porter's cubicle had a swastika pinned to his coat—the first change I noticed as I entered the old place.

"Good afternoon, Herr Volk. How's everything?"

He stared at me as though I had risen from the grave.

"Why—it's you, Herr Billinger."

"Yes, me. Well, what's new around here? I see you're a party member, now."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Everyone belongs to the National Socialist trade unions or the SA nowadays. When they made Kalisky personnel manager he gave us the choice between joining one of the Nazi organizations or being thrown out. So we all became Nazis."

"Kalisky's personnel manager now? Then I can save myself the trouble of going up."

Kalisky had been an ambitious bookkeeper who, before Hitler's call to power, had scrupulously avoided affiliating himself with any political party.

"Go up anyway. Can't do any harm. Shall I announce you?"

"All right. Tell him I'd like to speak to him."

Volk picked up the phone. "Herr Sturmfuehrer, Herr Billinger would like to speak to you—yes, sir—Herr Billinger—he used to work for us. Very well, sir. Heil Hitler!" He hung up. "You're to wait in the anteroom."

A new secretary, with platinum blonde hair and a swastika pinned to her waist, sat in Kalisky's anteroom. Portraits of Hitler and Goering hung on the wall.

"Good afternoon," I said.

"Heil Hitler!" she replied icily. "What do you want?"

"I was told to wait here for Herr Kalisky. My name's Billinger."

"Have you been announced to the Herr Sturmfuehrer?"

"I have been announced to the Herr Sturmfuehrer."

"Be seated."

The Herr Sturmfuehrer kept me waiting a full hour before admitting me to his presence.

"Good afternoon, Herr Kalisky," I said.

"Heil Hitler!" he snarled back. I stood lost in silent admiration of the ex-bookkeeper's version of the German greeting—the graceful upsweep of the right arm, the nonchalant backward droop of the head. This was the Hitler variant, executed with the unmistakable Austrian charm. Goering favored the more masculine form, with the stiffened arm vigorously outthrust.

Since Kalisky remained standing, neglecting the formality of inviting me to be seated, I pushed over a chair for myself. He had no choice but to sit down too.

"Herr Kalisky," I began, "I was released from protective custody yesterday. The Prussian premier, Herr Goering——"

"General Goering," he interrupted me.

"—General Goering has, as you doubtless know, announced that no difficulties are to be placed in the way of political prisoners, released under the terms of the amnesty, in their efforts to make a new life for themselves. That is what brings me here. I should like to know whether I may resume my former duties with the firm."

"Unfortunately we're not in a position at the moment to take on new help. I'll make a note of your name, however. Where were you last employed?"

I was struck dumb. The man's impudence was astounding. He had been a daily visitor to our department in the old days, flattered when the engineers exchanged a few words with him.

"In the construction department—you remember?—right next to the bookkeeper's cage."

"Oh, yes. Very well, Herr Billinger. I'll remember you if an opportunity should present itself."

We rose.

"Auf Wiedersehen," I said.

"Heil Hitler! I should like to call your attention, Herr Billinger, to the fact that the German greeting is used exclusively nowadays in all German factories and offices."

"Is that so? Six months can bring about a good many changes. There are lots of things I'll have to catch up with."

On my way downstairs I decided to look in on Hinrichs, the chief clerk. I retraced my steps down the corridor. As I passed Kalisky's anteroom I heard the secretary say, "He was engaged by Binder too. Here are the papers." Binder was the former personnel manager, who had grown gray in the service of the firm, who had always kept in personal touch with the employees and enjoyed stressing a patriarchal note in his relations with them. Not satisfied with having got rid of him, Kalisky was apparently gathering political material against him to make his victory conclusive.

In Hinrichs' old room sat a man I did not know, with a swastika in his lapel. No, Herr Hinrichs did not work here any more. No, he was sorry. He didn't know Herr Hinrichs' present whereabouts. Heil Hitler!

"Listen, Volk," I said to the old porter on my way out. "What I want to know is, how many times a day do you have to say 'Heil Hitler'?"

The old man peered around to see whether anyone was in earshot, then lowered his voice. "I was just say-

ing to my wife yesterday, they're making a Lord God out of the man. He's bound to go crazy."

"He doesn't have to go," I said. "Auf Wiedersehen."

"Oh—so he didn't take you back?"

"He's not the fellow to stick burrs into his own skin."

The porter proffered his hand. "Auf Wiedersehen, Herr Billinger. I'm an old man, and I've seen a good many come and go. My best wishes to you. Auf Wiedersehen."

The SA-men were clattering their collection boxes in the street, just as they'd been doing six months before. The money collected by thousands of Brown Shirts during the day was swilled away by a few leaders at night. I walked to the bus stop to get a bus to Mommsenstrasse. As I stood there waiting, and watching the traffic around me, I was suddenly engulfed in a wave of despair. In camp I had been among my comrades, among anti-fascists, among hundreds of men all animated by the same idea: Death to the brown torturers. Our sense of brotherhood had kept our heads above water. Alone now, facing another stretch of grinding labor, surrounded on all sides by swastikas, SA-men, and spies, my nerves threatened to go back on me.

Was this Germany, for which hundreds of thousands were fighting and suffering? These Kaliskys? These idiots on the street corners with their tin boxes, trying to beg themselves a new Fatherland; the virgins breaking into hysterical cries of "Hail!" when the leader told them to stop working and studying so that they could sit at home and breed children? These war cripples who would have liked nothing better than to stump along

on their wooden legs with the soldiers mounting guard at the Brandenburg Tor. This was not our Germany. A wave of nausea rose in my throat. They must be destroyed, root and branch. At the same moment I shook my head over my own folly. This was what came of camp isolation. I'd have to accustom myself to the atmosphere of the national community, even though the stink of the "newly awakened" flunkeyism gagged me.

Hans' mother opened the door. She eyed me suspiciously when I asked for her son.

"He's not at home. Can I give him a message?"

"I'd like to see him myself. You see, we were at Columbia together."

She asked me to come in and wait. He'd be right back.

"He went to police headquarters. He's got to report there every day."

I had forgotten we had to report to the police. She returned to her washtub and went on with her work.

"So you're out now, too. I don't suppose you'll forget that experience. Hans doesn't tell me anything. It upsets me too much. But the first time I got his underwear, I knew enough. The shirt was full of blood and pus. He'd have been in a good deal longer if it weren't for my eldest son. They didn't even have him on the lists in Prinz Albrechtstrasse, and they don't let anyone out of Columbia House without an order from Prinz Albrechtstrasse. It got so that my eldest son used to go to the Gestapa every day, till finally they investigated. The whole business was just spite work on the part of a Nazi in our neighborhood, because Hans once grabbed

a revolver away from him." She lapsed into silence, and I could see that her suspicions were stirring again.

"Did you know Hans before?"

"Yes, since 1928. We did the same kind of work in the Party."

"You can't trust a soul these days. Everybody tells tales on everybody else. They've turned our house upside down three times already because people said we had weapons hidden here. You even start suspecting perfectly innocent people. A man who used to be Hans' friend lives here in the house, but we haven't had anything to do with him since he joined the SA last winter. Well, he belongs to the *sturm* that arrested Hans—their meeting place is right near here, and we were sure he was at the bottom of it. A few weeks after they came for Hans I met him on the stairs. Suddenly he starts talking to me.

" 'Frau Riedel,' he says, 'please don't think I gave Hans away. There was just nothing I could do to stop them.'

" 'That's all right,' I told him. 'At least this way you get to know people for what they are.' And left him standing there.

"That evening his mother came up. I didn't want to let her in at first, but suddenly she starts crying and says her son's in a terrible state because he didn't warn Hans. He heard them say the night before that they were coming for Hans next morning, and he didn't sleep all night. But he was afraid to do anything, because he'd be the first one they'd suspect. Of course I couldn't hold it against the woman. After that they always asked

about Hans, and her son helped my eldest boy to get him out. Now he wants Hans to join his sturm. I'm telling him he should. What's the good of all this? If the least little thing happens here in the house or the street they'll come after Hans again, whether he's to blame or not. And next time he won't come back. But if he's in the SA they'll leave him alone. And what you are under your uniform is nobody's business."

She straightened her bent back, walked to the door, and listened to a sound on the stairs.

"There he comes. I know his step. But he doesn't run up the way he used to. He's grown older too." She sighed. "Yes—people don't last long in times like these."

She set some coffee on the stove and picked up her marketing bag. "I'll just run down to the baker's for some cake."

I heard Hans' voice in the hall. "Where are you off to, mother?"

"You've got company. He's waiting for you inside. I'll be right back."

"Well," said Hans, "so here you are again. Let's have a look at you. You're kind of skinny. Not quite so fat and rosy as in the old Bruening days. When did you get out?"

"Yesterday. And you?"

"Ten days ago."

"I hear they wanted to give you a life job at Columbia."

"Yes—I was part of the stock in trade. They just forgot all about me."

"How many prisoners have they now?"

"About the same as in your day. But now, as a rule, they don't keep them so long. They're examined and co-ordinated, and as soon as they're fit for travel again they're shipped off to the camps and prisons."

"Is there still much flogging?"

"Day in and day out. They beat over forty prisoners to death in the last three months. Literally, beat them to death. But let's don't talk about it. I can't bear to think about it any more."

For a while neither of us spoke.

"You know, Karl, I'm no mollycoddle, and I can stand a lot of knocking around. But how anyone can go on beating prisoners day after day—with the same cruelty, the same hatred—that's beyond me. I came away from that place with a real case of shock. When a child shouts on the street it gives me gooseflesh. And time and again I've found myself thinking: Why don't you stick your gun in your pocket and go down there and blaze away at everything brown? I'd like to blow up the whole of Berlin, so as not to have to go on looking at that brown manure."

"I feel just the same way. But that'll pass. We've got to get used to the fresh air again."

"Fresh air! I'll never get the smell of Columbia out of my nostrils."

"First of all, you've got to take a good rest. Then, when we're back at work again, these impressions'll fade."

"How're you going to rest? They're at me again now to join the SA. A year ago I'd have thought nothing of playing up to them. I'd have laughed myself sick over

the idiots. Now I just can't get my arm up, and every time I have to say 'Heil Hitler!' I want to bite my tongue off. I know that's all sentimental drivel, but I just can't do it any more."

"Have you reported to the Party yet?"

"Of course. The first day. I wrote a report on Columbia, and gave the Party the names of all the SS-men and comrades whom I knew personally."

"Do you know what happened to Ernst?"

"Dead."

I hadn't the heart to ask any more questions. Hans stared into space.

"Karl," he said hoarsely, "we'll avenge them."

He concealed all signs of agitation from his mother, who came in just then. He helped her set the table and managed to recapture his gay air.

"I've told mother I'm a perfect cook now. Battling Georgie Braun was my teacher. You remember Georgie, with the cauliflower ears? As long as Georgie ran the Columbia kitchen I lacked nothing. But one fine day they caught Georgie with the goods. He'd been keeping double accounts—one for the government and one for himself." He dipped a piece of cake into his cup. "Mother, the coffee cake's delicious. You're still the best of us all. What are you looking at the clock for? You're not thinking of running out again, are you? Mother, Karl can sleep here tonight, can't he?"

"Of course. He can have Willem's bed."

But I told them that I would have to leave at once if I meant to reach police headquarters before the office closed.

"I'll go with you," said Hans. "That'll speed things up. They know me by now."

In the street I asked him about Otto.

"He's in the south wing—alone first, then with three other comrades. I had a chance to talk with him both before the examination and after. They didn't find a thing, and he didn't tell them anything that mattered. I think he'll come through all right."

"Did he say anything to you about the work?"

"Only that a comrade was to be notified. But that was taken care of before I got out."

"Hello, Hans." On the corner, a youth greeted him.

"Hello, Willi."

"Going to church?"

"No—that job's done for today." To me he said, "You see, they know I've got to report to the police every day. I ought to get out of this neighborhood. I'm as well known around here as a spotted dog."

The officer at headquarters looked up in surprise.

"Well, Herr Riedel. Isn't once a day enough for you?"

"Sergeant, this gentleman's anxious to make your acquaintance, too, and present himself to you daily."

The officer took the release card I'd brought from camp, and entered my name on a list.

"Don't forget to report any change of address here."

"Must I report to you at a certain time each day?"

"You can come any time during office hours," he replied in a friendly tone. That was all.

I arranged to meet Hans at Anna's on New Year's Eve. As I rode to Aschinger's I felt that I'd been caught up once more into the rhythm of the old life.

CHAPTER XIII

ILLEGAL

FRANZ HELLING was at Aschinger's before me, busy eating a dish of his favorite pork and beans. He greeted me with a "Heil Hitler!" and wiped his mouth with his napkin.

"Hello, Franz."

He shook his head reproachfully.

"I thought they'd got that much at least through your skull. I see I'll have to start you all over from the very beginning. Sit down. The German greeting is 'Heil Hitler!' If somebody asks you what time is it, you say, 'Five-thirty. Heil Hitler!' When you're in uniform, you accompany this statement with an outstretched arm, fingers close together. When you're out of uniform—that is, if you're a Brown Shirt, in bed; if you're a Black Shirt, never—you fling your arm as far back as possible over your shoulder. The little finger sticks out a trifle, like Frau Goebbels' little finger when she embraces her tootsy-wootsy."

"Shut up."

"Moreover," he continued in the same tone, "it was unpardonable of me to ask you to come here. The zone in which this café is located has been banned by our club. Too many of our friends have been lost in this part of town. But, I ask myself, where are you safest? Where your colleagues are *not* swarming about. And

that's why I always make straight for the proscribed area, as a matter of principle. But I don't advise you to do likewise for, contrary to police regulations, you've grown extraordinarily stupid-looking."

He surveyed me from head to foot.

"Or did you always look like this? I suppose I've been idealizing you since I heard that the Hubertshof halo was shining round your head. Let me do the talking now, and don't interrupt. My wife stopped listening to my chatter long ago, and when I meet that friend of mine whose office used to be near the Volksbuehne,[1] he shows no interest in anything but my papers. The minute he gets hold of them he's up and away, leaving me to pay for his coffee. If it weren't for my Brown Shirts I'd have forgotten how to talk long ago. That bunch'll listen to me for hours, especially when I tell them about the Dinaric influence on the formation of the German skull.

"Where was I? Oh, yes—Hubertshof. All the decent fellows are being arrested, and I'm still running around loose. I can't get to sleep nights for thinking of that first Party cleansing after the revolution. What am I going to say when the head of the commission taps me on the chest and asks, 'What were you doing in the fight against Hitler fascism on the night of December 29, 1933?' Eating pork and beans at Aschinger's. People like you have an alibi. But me?

"Listen, I know you're a blockhead, but God knows I didn't expect you to be coy with Julius for that

[1] Karl Liebknecht House, former headquarters of the Communist Party of Germany, lies opposite the Volksbuehne in Berlin.

length of time. The poor fellow wrote me the most melancholy letters about how little Karola refused to have anything to do with him, and how he couldn't very well rape her under the circumstances. We spend weeks sniffing around you—and just when you wake up you go and get released, and all love's labor is lost."

I pacified him with the assurance that I had provided for another contact. He was not especially enthusiastic, however, over the plans for the Schieber's escape.

"With all due respect to your noble heart, it's more important to establish contact with the thousands inside than to help a handful get out. But since you've gone so far with it we'll have to see what can be done. Only don't take the law into your own hands that way again. Now come with me, and don't ask any more questions than you have to."

We hopped on a bus, rode for about ten minutes, waited at the next stop for the bus to take on passengers, jumped out after it had got under way again, looked back to see whether anyone had left the bus after us, took a taxi to the nearest subway station, repeated the maneuver, then walked half a block to our destination.

"Here we are," said Helling, and rang the bell.

A maid opened the door.

"Heil Hitler!" said Franz, kicking me in the shins.

"Heil Hitler!" I repeated.

"Is the doctor at home?"

"He's expecting you, sir."

We followed her into a room, where a well-dressed man came forward and greeted Helling cordially.

"Dr. Armhofer," said Helling, presenting me. "Dr. Weigand."

The maid brought in a tea tray. "Well, Marie," said Dr. Weigand, "I suppose you have your own plans for tonight, since my wife's not in. We won't need you any longer." The girl said thank you and went out.

"Now," said Franz to me, "you march yourself into the next room and write your report. Names of all SS officers, exhaustive description of the Police Department, morale of the comrades, names and addresses of spies, frame of mind among the Black Shirts, relations between Black Shirts and prisoners, special prisoners, reasons for their arrest, and so on."

I glanced at Weigand.

"Go ahead," Franz reassured me. "You don't have to worry about etiquette here." He turned to Weigand. "They got him so used to good manners that he finds it hard to behave like a normal European again."

Weigand led the way to the study, opened the typewriter for me, and left me to my own devices. I looked around, envying the doctor his splendid library. Several new books which had come out since my arrest were lying on the desk. But I suppressed my evil tendency to regard all books as common property and refrained from sticking any of them into my pocket. You could barely hear the typewriter, a noiseless of American make. From force of habit I covered the carbon with six sheets of paper to prevent the Secret Police from tracing the machine should the report ever fall into their hands.

I reëntered the room an hour later, just as Weigand

was asking, "But with the Reichswehr and two million trained Brown Shirts and Black Shirts, couldn't Hitler crush any internal resistance?"

"That would mean that the Hitler dictatorship had entered its second phase," Franz replied. "Hitler could arm the Black Shirts to the teeth, but without the support of the masses he wouldn't have the same value to the bourgeoisie as the Hitler of 1933, who was followed blindly by millions of peasants and petty bourgeois, and even by some of the workers. The Nazi dictatorship would inevitably develop into a military dictatorship. Of course they'll use Hitler as a stalking horse as long as he has a mass following, but with every measure he's forced to put through he reveals himself more and more clearly as the tool of big business."

"We're discussing a topic that's on everyone's tongue in Berlin today," Weigand explained to me. "The coming military dictatorship. Polite society's full of it at the moment—the German Nationals, mostly, of course —but the Nazis too, when they're safely by themselves. What I don't understand, though," he resumed, turning back to Helling, "is your contention that a military dictatorship would be a sign of weakness—that it would be easier to overthrow than the Nazi régime in its present form."

"Weigand," said Franz gloomily, "you have no political sense."

Weigand smiled at me. "Herr Helling never tires of giving me political instruction—with little effect, however."

"With a military dictatorship," Franz went on im-

perturbably, "the bourgeoisie would have to expose their political machinery to the light of day, and that they couldn't afford to do for long. Unless you can serve oppression and exploitation up with some fine sauce—democracy, let us say, or the national community—even a Weimar Coalitionist [2] is bound to see through it in the end."

"That's a dig at me," Weigand explained for my benefit. "All right. Then what's to prevent them from draping the military dictatorship in some nice new little cloak? They know that the monarchists are active. Why not once more: 'Mit Gott für Kaiser und Vaterland'?"

"You can't take people in with that kind of tripe any longer. Apart from Herr von Gayl,[3] God rest his soul, and his friends at the Herrenklub, who do you think's going to fall for that mummery? No, the divine right of kings went out forever in 1918—even Ebert and Scheidemann couldn't save it. Besides, if only on competitive grounds, the Nazis are bound to suppress all monarchist propaganda."

"I'm not so sure that there mightn't still be an excellent chance for a 'people's kaiser.' But assuming you're right, I still don't see how the bourgeoisie—with or without Hitler, with or without a kaiser—could rule at all under a military dictatorship. What would their program be?"

"They'd do away with all the idiotic measures spon-

[2] The Weimar Coalition was composed of the bourgeois centrist parties and the Social-Democratic Party.

[3] An obscure Junker who was dragged out by Papen and included in the cabinet to please the monarchist landed nobility.

sored by the Nazis—the measures, I mean, that they considered harmful or unnecessary to themselves, anti-Semitism first of all—thus improving their relations with capital abroad and getting themselves more economic credits. The international financiers—the Jewish ones included—are just waiting for some such evidence of Germany's return to civilization to rush to her aid. Bendlerstrasse [4] will certainly adopt a more elastic foreign policy—return to Geneva, probably, and get official sanction from France, England and Italy for re-armament. It would be vitally important to them to stave off war as long as they weren't prepared for it, just as a successful war must remain the goal of all their policies. A military dictatorship could afford to adopt a flexible foreign policy but that would make its internal policies seem all the more worm-eaten by comparison. Two essentials would be lacking—the support of the masses and stirring slogans. Nationalism, "socialism," the national community—all three have been thoroughly discredited within a year. Herr Schleicher may emerge from oblivion for a while. The old wire puller's still on the job, and he hasn't yet abandoned his favorite notion of establishing his social empire. Wels and Leipart haven't abandoned it either."

The doorbell rang, and Weigand caught my involuntary start.

"My wife," he said reassuringly, and went to open the door. "You mustn't go yet. She'll have dozens of questions to ask you."

"Simply odious," we heard Frau Weigand saying to

[4] General staff headquarters.

her husband in the hall. "That fat George [5] is a diamond in the rough. I couldn't sit it through."

She was a handsome, well-groomed woman, of evident culture, who greeted us with the artfully assumed simplicity of the lady of fashion.

"I keep telling myself that I'll never go to a German film again. Yet I can't keep away, for I simply refuse to believe that we've gone so hopelessly to the dogs."

"To the dogs is right," commented Franz dryly.

"No, but really, Herr Helling, isn't it frightful? Everything that made life worth living—art, music, literature, the theater—it's all dead now. Would you have believed that our culture could be so utterly destroyed?"

"It's not much of a loss."

"How can you talk like that, Herr Helling! Think of such names as Thomas Mann and Max Reinhardt, think of our Philharmonic concerts, think of—of——"

"Well, they've given you a Rosalinde von Schirach [6] in exchange, and we still have a good many of your old friends left—Heinrich George, Gottfried Benn——"

"Stop it!" she interrupted imperiously. "Do you know, I never expected anything better of that puffy George, even though he did once appear in revolutionary plays. But Benn's a real tragedy, as far as I'm concerned. A man like that, who rose so magnificently superior to the greedy grubbers around him! And now

[5] A German actor who, after years of flirtation with revolutionary theories, became the favorite Nazi stage and screen star.

[6] A lady with the most atrocious voice heard on the concert stage in generations. She was unknown until her brother, Baldur von Schirach, became leader of the Hitler youth.

to be the poet laureate of these parvenus, content to add his voice to that chorus of lickspittles and bombastic mediocrities! What a downfall for a man who once held that the groundwork of all our culture was intellectual integrity!"

"The groundwork of our culture," said Franz with the provocative bluntness which had marked his manner throughout the evening, "is the exploitation of the masses. And that groundwork we've still got solidly under us, don't worry."

"You know," she defended herself, "that I have no social prejudices. But what we're going through now simply strengthens me in my belief that true art can't be decreed or regulated. And that goes for your art, too."

"Yes," said Franz, "you're right. It's one and the same thing—whether you're trying to galvanize a corpse or create a new society. One group decrees *Potemkin,* the other the Horst Wessel film."

"Why make fun of me? I'm honest in saying that the Germany I loved is dead for me. And dead for plenty of others, too, who aren't willing to give up the ancient German culture for the cheap tastes of an Austrian house painter."

"But you could resign yourself to all the other things that are happening to Germany under that man's leadership?"

"I must really come to my wife's rescue," Weigand interposed. "You don't seriously believe that the fate of men like Erich Muehsam and Karl von Ossietzky means nothing to us, or that we don't give a thought to the thousands who are suffering in the prisons and concen-

tration camps." Frau Weigand dabbed at her eyes. "Hertha," he went on, "Dr. Armhofer has just been released from a concentration camp. Now you've got an eyewitness who can give you an accurate picture of conditions."

"Tell me one thing, Dr. Armhofer," said Frau Weigand, turning to me. "Is it true that they beat the prisoners?"

"Very decent people," Helling said, once we were out in the street again. "Trustworthy, and not such cowards as most of our former sympathizers. But even they, as you see, have no inkling of what's going on."

I gave him my report on Hubertshof, and the name and address of the Schieber. Franz wanted to investigate the Schieber's Party record and then talk to Julius Stetten himself. He decided that there was no need of our meeting within the next few days, and we made an appointment for the day after New Year's.

The following evening I met our district representative, to make arrangements for my future work. He was a stranger to me, having been transferred only recently from central Germany to the Berlin-Brandenburg district.

"There are two aspects," he told me, "to this matter of you resuming your old work. If you're caught it's going to be doubly unpleasant for you. On the other hand, you know the ropes and we've got no one else just now."

I took over my former work. I found that Otto had

made considerable progress during the months of my imprisonment and saw many indications of improvement in our underground work—an impression confirmed by the comrades I met. It was true that the Secret Police, better organized now, had abandoned the crude methods which had characterized the first phase of their activity. On the other hand, the widespread voluntary espionage was decreasing. Disillusionment had followed with amazing rapidity upon the enthusiasm of the first months. Goebbels' winter relief program and the "one-pot" [7] campaign were provoking ironic comment at the Nazi relief stations. A parody of the Horst Wessel song was going the rounds. Its opening line, "Banners high! Ranks tight!" had been transformed by popular waggery into "Prices high! Trusts tight!"

It was within the Party, however, that the greatest strides had been made. The comrades had learned how to work illegally. Gone were the carelessness and heedlessness of the early days, which had claimed so many victims. Words like "comrade," "subdistrict," "district leadership," were no longer heard; the telephone was used with the utmost caution; and orders, wherever possible, were conveyed by word of mouth. Party leadership had been still further decentralized, which did away with the crippling effect produced by the murders and arrests of leading functionaries and considerably complicated the activity of agents and spies. I was par-

[7] The ministry of propaganda had issued orders to the effect that, on one Sunday in each month, all families were to prepare an extremely simple meal and to contribute the money thus saved to the Nazi winter relief work.

ticularly impressed by the reticence of comrades with regard to their work. It was taken for granted that no one should question his neighbor as to his Party function or current activity. More—to safeguard themselves against the risk of divulging information under torture, the comrades were loath to be burdened with any details that weren't absolutely essential to their work.

The *Rote Fahne* appeared regularly, and the Party's courage and devotion made a profound impression even on those workers who had hitherto held aloof. The comrades told me that more and more SPG workers and local groups were presenting themselves to the Party and expressing their willingness to distribute literature and aid in its output.

We met at Anna's on New Year's Eve. Hans had conquered the depression of his first few days of "freedom" and made even Anna laugh with his account of an evening among the Brown Shirts, to whose quarters he had been dragged by his former friend, the SA-man.

"And guess whom I met today," he remarked incidentally. "Daniel—Daniel from the lion's den."

We plied him with questions and gave him no peace till he finally agreed to go and fetch Daniel.

"But on two conditions only," he insisted. "First, you've got to treat us to a bottle of wine, because after all, it *is* New Year's. And second, Elisabeth's got to go with me."

After some haggling his demands were met. The resistance of Anna's young sister did not strike me as altogether convincing.

"Karl," said Anna after they had left, "I'm being

haunted these days with all sorts of premonitions of death. Suppose I should die in childbirth—what's to become of the baby?" I tried to talk her out of her gloomy state. The trouble was that she was shut up at home all day with her thoughts of Erich—she ought to be given some easy but responsible work to do. She agreed with me in that and told me that once recovered from her confinement, she was planning to work with the International Workers' Aid, devoting herself particularly to the problems of the wives of prisoners. But if anything did go wrong with her, wouldn't I please see that her child was taken care of? She dreaded the thought of its being brought up in some Nazi orphan asylum.

"Do you think we'll live to see *our* Germany?" she asked me. "I'm only twenty-eight, but I'm so tired, Karl. So often I find myself thinking, 'If only it were over!' Erich and I were together four years, but how much did we really see of each other? He was out every night after work on some Party errand, and so was I four nights out of the seven. If only we'd had a child sooner . . . but he didn't want one. 'It'll take too much of our time,' he kept saying. 'Let's wait until we can have free children.' And now I've got to bring up my child alone; and in the Third Reich, at that."

Life flowed back into the kitchen with the return of the others. Daniel greeted us with a loud "Hello!" Despite his emaciation and the fact that they had knocked out his teeth in Sonnenburg, he was still the same.

"Have you heard the song Bert Brecht composed especially for us?" he asked, the moment he came in, and began singing in an undertone:

Es steht zu Sonnenburg
Ein deutsches Lager—
Insassen und Posten
Sind beide mager.[8]

"Stop showing off," I protested. "We've formed a club of ex-Hubertshof men."

"What are *you* talking about, Karlo!" Daniel cried, embracing us all again. "You and your five months!"

"Listen, Daniel," Hans broke in. "Tell us the truth. How were you really caught. We've been hearing the wildest rumors about your arrest. Was it honestly the scooter?"

Daniel eyed him suspiciously, but Hans returned his gaze without twitching a muscle, till at length he exploded. We coaxed him to tell us the story which, with frequent interruptions from Daniel, he proceeded to do.

Daniel was a many-sided genius. He could write brilliant articles and pamphlets, but he was chiefly interested in the technical problems of underground agitation—the construction of mimeograph machines, the painting of revolutionary slogans on housetops, the combination of indelible colors. Shortly before his arrest he had concocted a scheme which he believed would revolutionize the primitive methods employed by our paste and paint squads. He circulated the news of his invention among the comrades by a small pamphlet which he mimeographed himself, entitled:

"Brushless painting,
Potless pasting."

[8] In Sonnenburg there is a German camp; inmates and guards are both haggard.

The idea was to reduce all necessary apparatus to a minimum—to do away with such things as paste-pots, paint-pots, brushes, posters, etc., which might so easily become the instruments of doom. To replace these objects he had contrived a species of salt shaker which was to hold a mixture of paint and chemicals to be used in street writing. His trump card, however, was a huge die to be attached underneath an automobile and released by the driver through a foot lever. With this device, Daniel contended, we could cover rows of streets with our slogans in less than no time.

"But," explained Hans, "the devil of it was that Daniel didn't have a car. So one night he showed up with a scooter under his arm—a child's scooter—and underneath this child's scooter he had built his printing machine. And he wanted me to go out painting with him on the scooter."

Tears rolled down our cheeks as Hans described how Daniel had proposed that they go scooting down the Kurfuerstendamm, stamping "DOWN WITH HITLER" along its length.

"Gross misrepresentation of facts," commented Daniel gravely, and drew from his pocket a copy of the *Rote Fahne,* from which he read an account of the method employed by some comrades in the Wedding district to distribute their pamphlets. They made their way to a roof, balanced a plank over its edge, weighted the street end with a package of leaflets and the other end with a leaky pail of water. As the water leaked out the plank teetered toward the street, till the leaflets began slipping off and fluttering down to the ground. Mean-

while, sufficient time had elapsed to permit the comrades to reach safety.

"There—you see?" crowed Daniel. "The Party wants us to think out new methods. It's your head you've got to put to work—your *head*."

The unaccustomed wine had exhilarated us all, and it was midnight before we separated. I walked to the subway with Hans and Daniel. Despite the lateness of the hour the smart amusement places were still absorbing streams of people to celebrate the New Year.

On the way to the station Daniel gave me the first accurate account I had heard of the shooting of Alfred Kattner, the police spy, and the murder—ordered in reprisal by the Secret Police—of our four comrades, Scheer, Schoenhaar, Steinfurt, and Schwarz. Schwarz was the comrade who, a few months earlier, had thrown himself under a truck to save one of the comrades working within the ranks of the police. The authorities had placed him under medical care till his injuries healed, that he might be in a state of perfect health when they killed him. Daniel told us, too, that during the Reichstag Fire trial the Party had printed its own reports of the proceedings of that travesty of justice and sent them daily to the foreign correspondents. Despite its far-flung machinery the Secret Police had failed to track down the offenders. "We could teach them a thing or two in that line," growled Daniel.

His experience at Sonnenburg corresponded with Hans' at Columbia and mine at Hubertshof. The number of comrades who had deserted to the Nazis during captivity was negligible. The spirit of others had been

crushed by torture and they could no longer be counted on for the illegal struggle. Even those, however, did not average more than fifteen to twenty per cent. Nor were they lost for good. A new revolutionary wave would sweep most of them back to us again. The effect on the majority of the prisoners in all camps had been only to make them better and more steadfast comrades.

"They thought they could exterminate us," said Daniel. "Instead of which they made good Bolsheviks out of us."

When we took leave he promised to let us hear from him soon again.

Helling had seen Julius Stetten over the New Year and discussed with him the possibilities of the projected flight of the Schieber. Stetten had already heard the details from the Schieber himself. On receiving the reports the Party decided to aid the Schieber's escape, since his imminent trial might mean death to other comrades as well. I was told to make ready to accompany the driver of a delivery truck to Hubertshof on Thursday night and point out to him the peculiarities of the region.

At eleven o'clock Thursday night I took my stand in Grosse Frankfurterstrasse. One of those huge trucks used for long-distance deliveries came to an abrupt halt at my corner. A man clambered down from beside the driver and joined a truckman in the trailer behind. I took his place. The driver gave me a sheepskin coat whose collar reached above my head. He explained the route he took every Thursday, and I told him that a twenty-five-mile detour would be necessary to get us in

the neighborhood of Hubertshof. That would be all right, he said; he could easily make it by morning.

The roads were poor and the truck sped along at such a rate that I was jounced and jolted violently.

"We're going to have good roads soon," I said.

"Let 'em go to it," the driver replied. "What they build now we won't have to spend money on later."

I was curious to know whether he was a Party comrade but hesitated to ask. Once, when we were held up at a railway crossing, the two men in the trailer jumped down and called to the driver, "How about it, Max?"

"Not today," he called back.

Without a word they resumed their places.

"We generally stop here for a drink to warm ourselves," the driver explained to me.

It was about three in the morning when we found ourselves nearing Hubertshof. We drove along the highway which I had tramped so often with the old Dyke Squad Number Two. The place looked different under the glare of the headlights. I showed the driver where the footpath met the highway. About six hundred yards beyond, the fir forest, unusually dense at that point, grew close to the road. This was the place.

"Next Thursday," I said.

He nodded. We glanced at the clock. It was three-seven. At six sharp we reached the place where the merchandise was to be delivered. The truck was to start back at seven by the same route, and to repass the spot I had pointed out at eleven.

I took the next train to Berlin and reported to Franz,

who told me that I had been traveling with three Social-Democrat workers.

Early Saturday morning I was awakened by a ring of the doorbell. My ears had grown peculiarly sensitive to the sound of doorbells since my arrest. I could hear Elisabeth talking to a man—then everything was quiet again. But I had grown restless and decided to get up. A telegram addressed to Anna lay on the little hall table.

"It must be for you," Anna called through the door.

I opened it and read: "Arrive Anhalter 8 PM Kisses Friedl." It had been wired from the train.

"Anything important?" asked Anna.

"Käthe's coming tonight."

"Really! Marvelous!"

I had assured myself twenty times during the day that it would be sheer madness to meet Käthe myself, and arranged with Elisabeth to go to the train. Yet I found myself standing beside the Anhalter Station shortly before eight. This was really too childish. I crossed Anhalterplatz to Anhalterstrasse and took a seat in the reading room of the *Angriff*, where, to punish myself for my undisciplined behavior, I made myself read a speech by Engel, leader of the Berlin Workers' Front—the "Brown Angel," [9] as the workers called him, who was blowing his own horn again with a vengeance. It wasn't till seven-fifty that I crossed back to the station.

I decided against asking for a card of admission to the platform, and lurked instead among the shadows of the

[9] *Engel* is the German for "angel," and the expression is a play on the title of the film, "The Blue Angel."

great hall. Suddenly I caught sight of Elisabeth passing through the gate with a lady whom I did not know. I followed them, overtook them at the side entrance where the taxis were stationed, and said hello. They turned, and the stranger fell on my neck. I never admitted afterwards that I had not recognized her. It would have meant the utter loss of my domestic prestige. The only things about her that had kept their original color were the brown eyes. Everything else was platinum blonde.

"How do you like me, new German style?" she demanded.

"Like blood and soil," [10] I said.

We were to stay temporarily with a family of our acquaintance, from whom I had rented a room where we could live together without my having to report to the police. Käthe knew more about Germany than I did. She told me how ravenously the comrades in Paris devoured any news they could get from Germany. She told me that they were going on with the work, that our publications appeared there regularly, that they were in constant touch with the Party in the Reich. It was so long since we had seen each other, and our experiences had been so many and so varied, that we hardly knew where to begin to talk. Many comrades whom I had believed dead were safe abroad. Of others no news had been heard.

"How's this one? And that one? And the other?" And we were both anxious to hear far more about each of our friends than the other had to tell.

[10] In German, *Blut und Scholle*—a favorite Nazi expression signifying pride of race and land.

From Käthe I learned for the first time with what tremendous sympathy the workers of other countries had been watching our struggle. She wept with joy and pride when she told me how Dimitroff had turned the tables on the incendiaries in the Reichstag Fire trial, and from accused had become accuser. (I recalled the account in the *Hubertshof Observer:* "Dimitroff Insolent Again and Must Be Removed.") It was good to realize the international solidarity of the working class and to feel that we were not alone and forsaken.

Weigand had placed his car at Helling's disposal. I packed a few traveling essentials into a bag, called for the car at noon on Thursday, and parked in a side street off Alexanderplatz, near the suburban depot. Hans, rigged up in grand style and looking the complete gentleman driver, arrived at one. They could hardly get here before two. We crossed to a restaurant through whose windows we could watch the depot exit, and ordered lunch. I had described the Schiebər to Hans in detail, though I wasn't sure myself that I should be able to recognize him at a glance. Heaven knows how they might have togged him out in the truck. Every few minutes a train would disgorge a crowd of people, and as they thronged through the narrow exit I tried to see how many faces I could scan before the crowd scattered on the street. We waited till two. Then we left the restaurant and Hans watched the car, while I—to give myself something to do—entered a tobacco shop and bought cigarettes, one eye always on the exit.

At two-thirty, Hans, blue with the cold, abandoned the car and joined me.

"Getting dark early," he remarked with a glance at the sky. "Looks like snow." We went to the automat for a cup of coffee.

Maybe he was in their clutches already, while we waited for him here. Maybe something had gone wrong in the forest at the very start. Senseless, to sit here brooding over all the details on which success depended. Start off on that tack, and of course you could not help realizing that it was a hundred-to-one chance. If only he hadn't left the train at some other point, if only he weren't waiting for us somewhere else! Maybe the truck had returned. We'd know at least then whether they brought him. Should I send Hans to Helling?

"There he is," Hans said casually.

I looked. There, from the depot, in a hat instead of the old cap, his sunken cheeks reddened by the cold, came the Schieber. Within half an hour we had left Berlin behind us and were speeding on our way to the border.

When darkness fell the Schieber changed his clothes completely. It was nearing eight when we stopped at a well-known health resort about thirty-five miles from the border. There was no sense in going any farther, since we were not expected at the rendezvous till the following noon. Hans, being the most elegant of the three, went to a hotel with the car, while the Schieber and I took modest tourist accommodations. We registered as Wilhelm and Rudolf Erhard, merchants from Breslau, here for the winter sports, and had supper sent

up to our room. The Schieber scarcely touched his food.

"This goes against the grain—it's like deserting."

"You won't be gone long. Eat something."

"I can't. Those three fellows in the truck stuffed everything they had into me."

"Did they find you without any trouble?"

"It went like clockwork. They didn't even have to stop. I jumped on."

"And the guards?"

"I couldn't hear a sound behind me. They may not have discovered it till evening."

We were up early next morning, and walked across the mountain ridge to A., knapsacks strapped to our backs. At the first inn we met Hans. We went on to F., three miles from the border. Hans left the car in the hotel garage and, after lunching at the hotel, we continued on our way to the lodge, which was situated high in the mountains, close to the border.

We found a dozen or more guests assembled there, giving the place the gay, comradely air of a large, haphazard family party. One of the men wore his left arm in a sling. He had sprained it while skiing. There was wonderful skiing country behind the lodge, he told me —long, smooth slopes. You could reach R. in half an hour. Had I ever been there? "No," I replied, "but my friend's anxious to go. Only he doesn't ski."

"Then we'll walk," he said. "Do you know Helling?"

They started out that afternoon.

The Schieber was pale.

"Auf Wiedersehen, Karl. Auf Wiedersehen, Hans. I'm not going to stay long—I tell you that right now."

"Good luck. Shall we give Schinderknecht your regards?"

"He hasn't seen the last of me. Nor the others either."

Fifty paces down the road he turned and lifted his fist in the Communist salute.

We watched them as they walked slowly down the mountain. In the cold clarity of the atmosphere their figures were visible at a great distance.

"Not bad, I'll bet," I said, "to be watching this business from the outside for a while."

Hans uttered a vague sound, and faced about.

"Come on," he said, "back to the trenches!"